BeST
Inclusion

Better Sport Through Inclusion

STUDY OF BARRIERS TO A MORE INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE FOR THE SPORT SECTOR IN TERMS OF GENDER

Co-funded by
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1. BeST INCLUSION PROJECT

The Better Sport Through Inclusion project (BeST Inclusion) is a 3-year initiative (2022-2025) aimed at promoting inclusivity in the European sports industry workforce. This project was developed after the ESSA-Sport project findings from the European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE), which highlighted the need to address this issue. The European Association of Sport Employers (EASE), a non-profit organization and independent membership association of national sport and active leisure employer organizations, is leading the initiative and aims to enhance the representation of sport employers and promote social dialogue in Europe.

The overall objective of BeST Inclusion is to create a guide of best practices and recommendations that can be applied across the European Union to improve inclusivity in the sports sector workforce. The focus will be on three aspects: gender, age, and disability. To achieve this objective, the project brings together sports employers, research and academic institutions, and expert partners.

The project aims to promote the exchange of knowledge and good practices by bringing together experts, researchers, and sports employers. **Each partner will provide their own perspective to enhance inclusivity in the sports sector, contributing to the development of best practices and recommendations as needed.**

A working group has been established for each topic covered in the project. Initially, the partners were tasked with organizing **3 European roundtables** to assess the current state of inclusivity in sports. Then, **3 studies** have been conducted on the inclusivity of the European sports sector workforce, each overseen by an academic partner.

The next step involves organizing **9 national roundtables** to identify inclusive national best practices. Based on the results of these roundtables, the expert partners will create **a guide to best**

practice. Finally, a set of recommendations for a more inclusive workforce across the sports industry will be presented for trial and review by sports employers.

1.1. BeST Inclusion Gender Working Group

The Gender Working Group brings together two partners who are deeply involved in the empowerment and visibility of women in the sport sector, both at national and European level.

- **Alice Milliat Association**: The Alice Milliat Association was created with the purpose of acting so that women have a fairer place in the world of sport, whether on the field or within the governing bodies. Through its actions the association defends gender equality in sport, promotes a better representation of sportswomen and fights against sexism, stereotypes and any form of discrimination or violence in sport.

- **University of Murcia**: The Faculty of Sport Sciences of the University of Murcia has developed a strong expertise about the role of women in sport through the participation in "Woman + Sport" Program developed by the Spanish Higher Sports Council. They are currently taking part in projects related to sports and women developed through Spanish Federations of Olympic Wrestling, Weightlifting, Canoeing and Rowing.

2. INTRODUCTION

The human being, as a natural being, seeks to adapt to the new situations that their environment presents to them. In this sense, the contemporary world has allowed them to adapt and favour the development of their skills and talents for the benefit of a society that promotes employability. Furthermore, it is important to take into account the effects that different economic crises can have on gender (Kontola & Lombardo, 2017), as it is generally the case that during crises women are more affected because they tend to occupy positions that are more easily replaced by automation processes (Botric & Broz, 2022).

Achieving meaningful equality between men and women is a major task for countries around the world in order to build a prosperous, sustainable, and peaceful civilization (United Nations, 2020). The development of new policies and changes in legislation are important aspects in achieving gender equality (Pastor & Acosta, 2016). The European Commission (2020) encourages the development of policies based on inclusive management, as well as the generation of new innovative initiatives that promote equitable possibilities and active participation. In turn, the use of equality plans is regarded as an effective instrument for addressing the gender perspective holistically (Rovira, 2021).

Fewer chances for advancement (Capranica et al., 2013), devaluation of paid jobs (González et al., 2019), and accessibility in leadership positions (Powell, 2018) are examples of discriminatory conditions now highlighted in society. Society must also be responsible for pursuing substantial change that breaches down the conventional division of distinct gender roles within societal regulations, values, and beliefs (Trolan, 2013). Individuals who do not comply to established gender roles and expectations may face discrimination and prejudice in society (Lee & Cunninham, 2016).

Although in recent years the share of women in the labour market has increased, there are still differences in many sectors, which makes women more vulnerable (Brunet & Jefers, 2017). For example, after the economic crisis of 2008 it seemed that the gap between men and women in the labour sector narrowed, however, this narrowing was caused by a deterioration in the situation of men, not by an improvement in the situation of women (Peinado & Serrano, 2019).

Although employment inequality has always been evident in the sports sector for many years, there has always been a large gap in the employability of men and women. This situation became more evident with the COVID-19 pandemic and has been further highlighted by the great

advances, actions and importance that women have acquired in recent years and their equality on a global level.

The forced confinement of most of the world's population and the closure of shops and services, including those in the sports sector, has had a major effect on both employability and consumer attitudes (Guthrie et al., 2021). Along these lines, the sectors most affected by the closure and cessation of activity in many sectors were those employing the highest proportion of women, such as tourism and hospitality (Fana et al., 2020). Thus, De Paz Nieves et al. (2021) found that in this context women were more likely to leave work for wages and therefore have a slower recovery.

According to the gendered employability data in sport reported by the SKILLS (2021) project, there has been a continuous and slight increase in the proportion of employed men to women over the last decade (2011: Men 52.1% - Women: 47.9%; 2020: 55.9% - Women: 44.1%). SKILLS (2021) also showed this trend by sector in employability in 2020 in both the fitness sector and in sports organisations. While in the fitness sector the evolution was from a proportion of women in 2011 of 46.1% decreasing to 42.5% in 2020. Similar results for the sports organisations sector where in 2011 the proportion of women was 44.4% and decreased to 42.3% in 2020.

However, these data differ slightly from those reported by the European Commission (2021, 2022) in which they show an increase in the proportion of women from 2020 to 2022 from 43.4% in 2020 to 45.4% in 2022. In addition, the increase in the number of jobs in recent years has been higher for women than for men, with an 11% increase in the number of new female employees in the last year. On the other hand, Williams et al. (2015) indicate that the current labour market is extremely volatile, constantly changing and evolving. Thus, employability has become a very important issue in the labour and educational sphere (Artess et al. 2017), as during practically all academic life there is talk of employment, work, job opportunities. Low et al. (2020) personal resources and labour market conditions are factors that contribute to employability.

The term sport employability refers to the ability to obtain and maintain employment in the field of sport. Competences related to the world of sport are developed, as well as skills, knowledge, values and attitudes (Artess et al. 2017) that enable the person to attain a job in the labour market, in this case specifically in sport. In order to maintain employment, whether at a sporting or other level, there has to be a continuous recycling of information, skills and knowledge about the job being undertaken, as well as a certain degree of adaptation to what happens over time (Commers et al., 2022).

In relation to sport employability, there are different areas from which an individual starts in sport employability, i.e., different routes into employment. In this case, qualifications are sought at all times (Wagner, 2021). In this sense, regardless of the degree, either higher education or specific certified courses, one can count on the existence of one's own experience, voluntary work, network of contacts.

It can also be observed that some employees in the sports world are former athletes or sportsmen and sportswomen who have stopped their sporting activity, who have the relevant training and a great deal of experience as practitioners in their job. For example, López-Subijana et al. (2020) found that athletes who obtained a high level of qualification during their sporting career were more likely to be employed in another job after retirement. In addition, these authors found gender differences, where the proportion of women was highest in a monthly salary below €1500 (38.5) with the lowest percentage in salaries above €2500 (16.9%), while men had a lower proportion in low salary (16.5%) and a higher proportion in earnings above €2500 per month (41.4%).

It can be seen that many of them decide not to disengage from sport, reinserting themselves into the labour market through training, based on their previous experience. Among this employability, there are different types of jobs ranging from the athlete and/or sportsperson themselves, the coach and physical trainer, sports managers, physical education professionals, teachers responsible for teaching sport, to professionals related to sports medicine, journalists specialising in sport, sports marketing professionals (Forsyth et al., 2019). On the other hand, certain cases of discrimination have been detected when it comes to finding a job, in this case in the field of sport. From gender inequality, in which women encounter certain barriers such as unequal pay, difficulty in accessing leadership and/or decision-making positions. Therefore, after learning about these types of employment inequalities, different mechanisms are sought to end them. These include policies that promote equal pay (Valiente, 2022), as well as equality in the recruitment of job candidates. There is also the promotion of inclusion and diversity as well as the existence of development programmes aimed at gradually reducing this inequality (Forsyth et al., 2019). For example, government support in the form of wage subsidies provided by many governments during the COVID-19 pandemic was also linked to female participation (Webster et al., 2022).

Thus, one of the main inequalities found in society today, not only in terms of sports employability, is gender inequality. Today, gender equality is a fundamental right and an important

value underlying any democratic society (Sonia & Vasilica, 2019). In relation to this, it is found that gender equality is a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 5 dictated by the United Nations, its main goal being "to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life" (Lesch et al., 2022). This SDG is one of the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda.

In the face of the barriers that hinder women from getting a job, there are various factors that could affect them to a greater or lesser extent, in this case the social factor will be the one that can most affect women's trajectory in the professional process (Katz et al., 2018).

Although this report intends to focus mainly on paid work, it is also important to mention that in the current context, it is impossible to understand the functioning of the sport structure without the work of volunteers. Most sports organisations are small organisations or sports clubs that function mainly with the aim of promoting sport in one of its modalities and thanks to the voluntary work of their members. This fact is corroborated to the extent that Project SKILL (2021) showed that 82.5% of sport organisations involved volunteering in their organisations.

Furthermore, a recent study on leadership in sport volunteering found that, as far as sport-related studies are concerned, there is less female participation in sport organisations either due to lack of integration, lack of support, pressure to adapt to the norms of society and the sport environment (Lesch et al., 2022). However, it is also important to consider the concept of the "glass ceiling" (Sonia & Vasilica, 2019), which describes the vertical barriers that prevent women from reaching positions of high responsibility and leadership. Other types of horizontal barriers such as socio-economic and cultural barriers are also encountered (M'mbaha & Chepyator-Thomson, 2019). These barriers limit women's opportunities for career advancement or their own access to the labour market.

This study is linked to the EU-funded project BeST Inclusion. In this case, this study aims to analyse the situation of sports organisations in terms of employability with regard to gender and to find out the perception of managers on their perception of addressing the gender perspective in the organisations themselves.

3. METHOD

This report includes information from different actions. On the one hand, it includes a search protocol and information of a systematic review found on employability in the sport sector considering the gender perspective in the scientific literature, as well as the main conclusions of a European round table on gender and the main results of a pilot study to assess the conditions of women in the European sport labour market.

3.1. Systematic review

3.1.1. Study design and protocol

From the beginning, the Prisma in Exercise, Rehabilitation, Sport medicine and SporTs science (PERSiST) guidelines (Ardern et al., 2022) based on the sport science adaptation of the Prisma 2020 statements (Page et al., 2021) were followed for this systematic review. Subsequently, items related to gender perspective and employability were established and a survey was conducted through an ad hoc questionnaire.

3.1.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The inclusion criteria established in the systematic review were: i) Publications in English, Spanish, French or Portuguese; ii) Qualitative and quantitative studies; iii) Articles that included women in female sport leadership positions as a sample; iv) Journal articles; v) Articles published since 2018. Whereas. The exclusion criteria used were: i) Articles in a language other than English, Spanish, French or Portuguese; ii) Conference proceedings, books, book chapters, doctoral theses and other types of publications; iii) Articles published before 2018; iv) Theoretical studies or reviews; v) Duplicate articles; vi) Articles that do not analyse women in leadership positions; vii) Articles that do not measure gender inequality in sport leadership; viii) Theoretical studies or reviews.

3.1.3. Search strategy.

The search strategy is divided into three main blocks: community, factors and sport, each with their corresponding search terms. The search terms (Table 1) were registered in the databases

Web of Science, Scopus and SportDiscus, and the search process was initiated on 1 February 2023 until 27 May 2023. The selected articles were published from 2018 to the current date.

Table 1. Search terms of the systematic review.

Search category	Terms
Community	A. ("Gender gap" OR "Sex role" OR "Disparity" OR "Gender ideology")
	B. ("Gender diverse" OR "Feminis" OR "Gender balance" OR "Literature")
	C. (male OR woman OR women OR Female)
	D. (experience OR Barrier OR Literature OR Segregat)
Factors	E. (Industry OR Business OR Sector OR Organisation OR Company)
	F. (Empower OR Leader OR "decision making")
	G. (Salary OR Sponsor OR "Wage dispersion" OR "Income inequality")
	H. Inequality
Sport	I. Sport
Combination	1 and 2 and 3

The systematic review followed the PRISMA methodology (Page et al., 2020), expressed as a flow chart (Figure 1). After the initial search of the three databases, a total of 872 results were obtained. After eliminating duplicate papers, the records were simplified to 474. A title and abstract review phase of the articles was then carried out, resulting in the elimination of 401 papers, leaving a total of 73 articles for eligibility. Finally, applying the exclusion criteria, 19 articles were selected for inclusion in the systematic review.
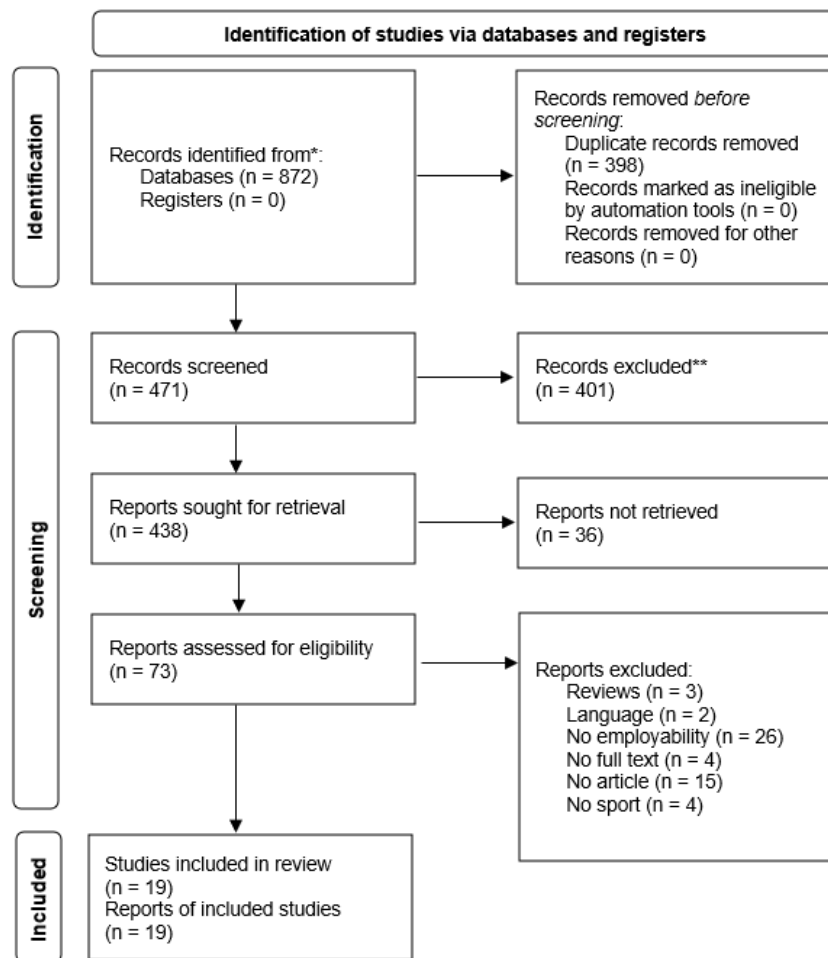
Figure 1. Prisma Flow diagram. Source: Page et al. (2021).

3.2. European roundtable in gender inclusion

3.2.1. Participants profile

Through this roundtable, we wanted to represent as many profiles (experts, employees, and relevant speakers in the sport sector) and nationalities as possible in order to have a European overview of the problem. We managed to bring together 18 speakers from 9 countries (Belgium, England, France, Finland, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden).

The session started with a brief introduction of the BeST Inclusion project by AMA, followed by a presentation on the topic of discussion – Sport Workforce & Gender – provided by the University of Murcia. We then asked the panel of participants to introduce themselves and to react to the data that had just been communicated, particularly with regard to their personal and professional experience.

3.2.2. Procedure

The European Roundtable on Sport Workforce & Gender took place virtually on the 23rd of November, from 12h to 14h CET. The group was then divided into 2 breakout sessions and asked to discuss the theme based on the following questions:

- What are the barriers to women's access to jobs in the sports labor market?
- What kind of measures can be taken to address this gender gap? What kind of recommendations? Incentives or sanctions?

3.3. Sport Employability Survey

3.3.1. Procedure

The study was carried out by means of an online questionnaire using the "Survey" tool of the University of Murcia. The questionnaire was translated into four languages (English, French, Italian, Spanish). The data collection period took place between April and June 2023. The distribution was done through a banner and a link. The different organisations in the consortium identified sports organisations among their contacts to whom they forwarded the survey by electronic means, as well as subsequent reminders.

3.3.2. Data analysis

The results were analysed with the SPSSv28.0 statistical software. Descriptive statistics were estimated for both qualitative variables (frequencies and percentages) and quantitative variables (minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation).

4. RESULTS

4.1. Systematic review main results

4.1.1. Location of the studies

With regard to the country of origin (Figure 2), we found that the articles came from 13 different countries, spread all over the world, with a predominantly European origin. Among the European countries, 9 out of 19 were reviewed, accounting for 52.6%. The country from which the most articles were found was Australia and the United Kingdom (15.8%), followed by Spain, Canada, and the United States, with a total of two articles each, the rest a single study.
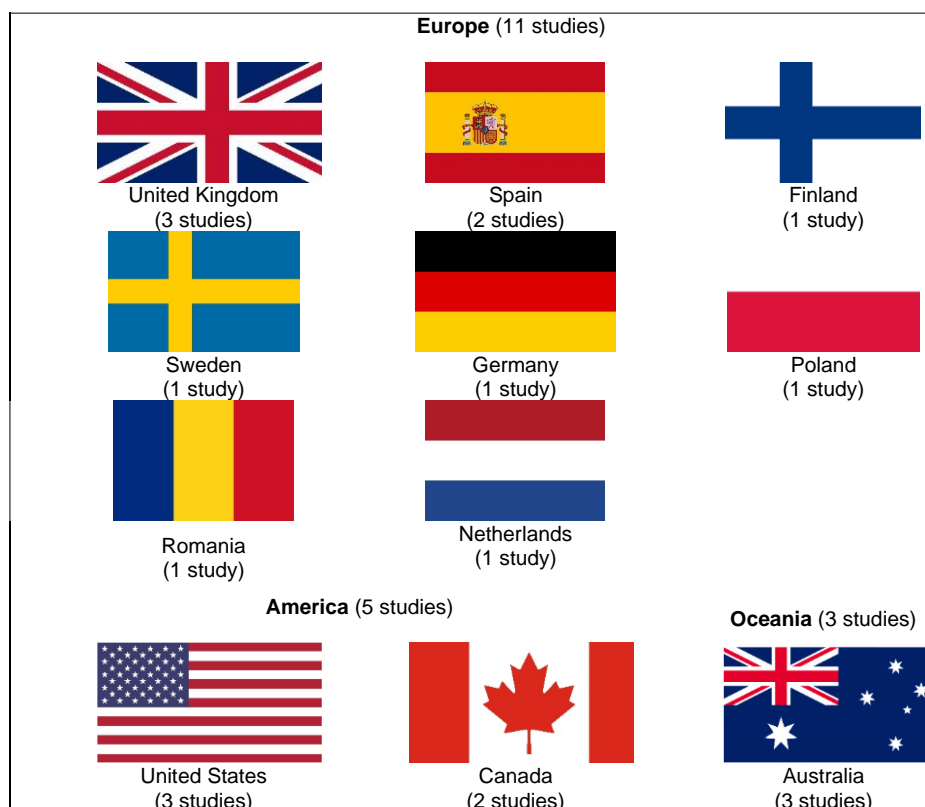
Figure 2. Study location of systematic review.

4.1.2. *Type of entity.*

In the analysis carried out, with regard to the type of entity (Figure 3), it was observed that the majority of sports federations (26.3%) and sports organisations (36.9%) were identified, which were not specified in the articles. This was followed by sports clubs (15.8%), governing bodies (10.5%), IOC (5.3%), universities (5.3%).
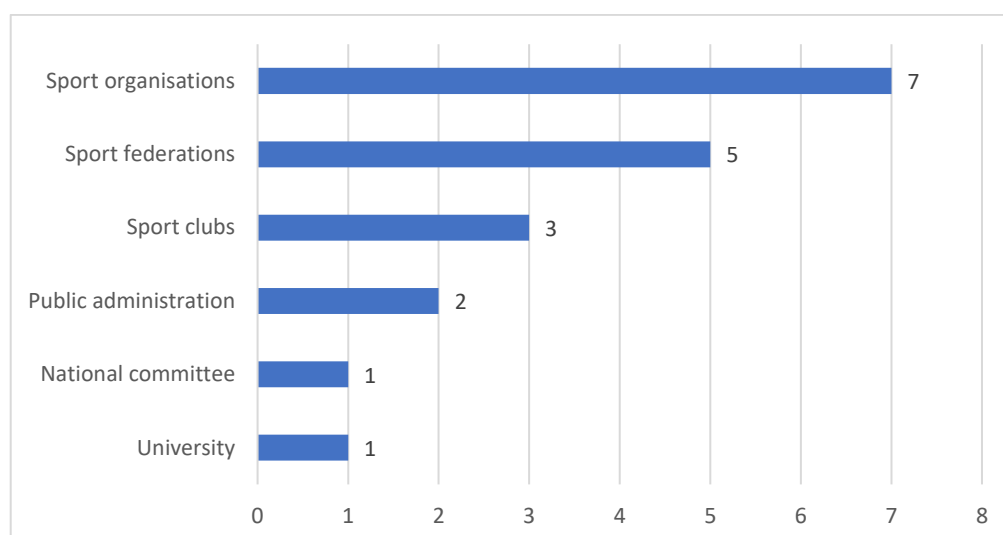
Figure 3. Type of entity evaluated.

4.1.3.   Approach and type of instrument used.

The approach used in the articles was divided into 3 types of methods, in this case qualitative (47.4%), quantitative (36.8%) and mixed (15.8%) (Table 2). Different measurement instruments were used, in some cases more than one per article. The following were identified: in 1 article focus groups and participant observation, in 4 articles descriptive analyses were found, in 6 articles questionnaires. Semi-structured interviews were the instrument that appeared most frequently during the review, with a total of nine articles (Table 2).

Table 2. Method and instruments.

Variable	N	%
Approach		
Qualitative	9	47.4
Quantitative	7	36.8
Mixed	3	15.8
Instrument		
Closed questionnaires	6	28.6
Semi-structured interviews	9	42.9
Focus group discussions	1	4.8
Participant observation	1	4.8
Descriptive analysis	4	19.0

4.1.4. Main findings

Regarding the main findings, gender barriers (Figure 4) were found that limited and hindered women in the field of sport employability, in this case. Among these barriers mainly three different types were found: structural barriers (31%), socio-economic barriers (41.4%) and cultural barriers (27.6%).
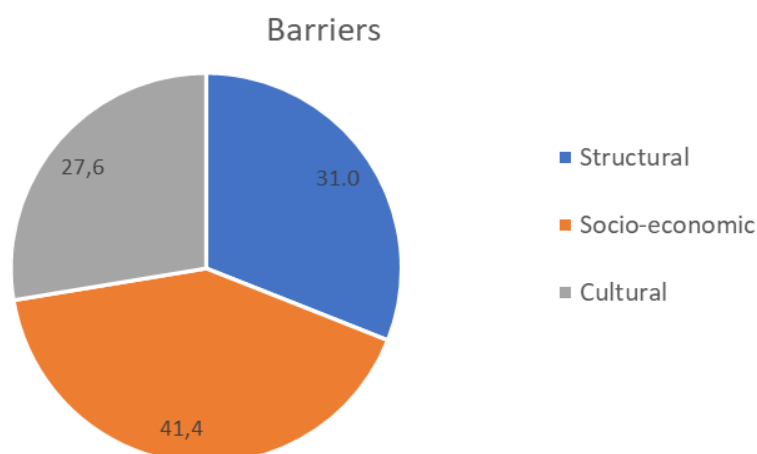
Barriers

Figure 4. Barriers of women accessibility to a employment.

Among the structural barriers, another classification of barriers was identified, such as the pay gap (27.3%), the glass ceiling (45.5%), selection processes (9.1%) and leadership capacity (18.2%). Therefore, the glass ceiling, in this case a type of vertical gender segregation, was highlighted as a structural barrier (Table 3). On the other hand, the socio-economic barriers that were found were living conditions (14.3%), family responsibilities (28.6%), number of opportunities (14.3%) and network of contacts (42.9%), being the most notable specific barrier in the whole review, as it was manifested in a greater number of articles (N = 9).

Finally, concerning cultural barriers, work experience (18.8%), self-confidence (43.8%) and gender stereotypes and discrimination (37.5%) were found (Table 3). In short, the barriers with the highest number of items found were the lack of networks, in this case the lack of networks, as networks are mainly created among men; the confidence that women develop in themselves; and the vertical segregation barriers, which were the wage gap and the glass ceiling.

Table 3. Type of barriers of women employment accessibility.

Types of barriers	N	%
Structural barrier		
Wage gap	3	27.3
Glass ceiling	5	45.5
Selection processes	1	9.1
Leadership	2	18.2
Socioeconomic barrier		
Living conditions	3	14.3
Family responsibilities	6	28.6
Opportunities	3	14.3
Network of contacts	9	42.9
Cultural barrier		
Experience	3	18.8
Trust	7	43.8
Gender stereotypes and discrimination	6	37.5

4.2. Gender inclusion roundtable results

The main outcomes of the roundtable can be grouped into five main blocks: (i) legislation and regulation, (ii) norms and culture, (iii) education, (iv) transparency, and (v) visibility.

The first block 'Legislation and Regulation' included comments on four basic aspects:

- *Quotas*: the need to promote laws and norms that lead to equality within the structures of organisations was commented on, however, there is no specific law that obliges this requirement, there are only indications or recommendations but they are not mandatory.

- *Media obligations*: the need to promote the appearance of women's sport on television was identified, where in most countries the sport that is broadcast in the prime time slots is usually male. It is also advocated to eliminate the sexualisation of women through images that could lead to situations of sexual violence.

- *Parental leave*: existing regulations in countries often allow more time for women than for men, however, women are more likely to benefit from maternity leave. Examples were given that in the case of arbitration after maternity leave, the woman had to arbitrate at a lower level, whereas if the leave was due to injury or illness, she maintained her level.

- *Sanctions*: it was recalled that any act of sexism or discrimination is prohibited and punishable by law. In addition, public aid should be conditional on the development of equality policies within organisations.

The second block 'Norms and Culture' implies that this is a sector with a very marked and masculinised organisational culture and that it is necessary to modify this culture and promote new ways of recruitment, communication and be more creative in highlighting women on the same level and highlighting their work and position as men. More full-time jobs for women should also be promoted.

The third block 'Education' included two points that were discussed:

- *Raising awareness*: education is seen as a key factor for change and should be promoted within schools and clubs should promote this cultural change among young people and systems should provide more information about the opportunities offered by sport for women as well.

- *Training*: it is necessary to promote access to training and coaching for women in sport with specific programmes and above all, to motivate women and value their skills.

The fourth block 'Transparency' also included two main points that were addressed:

- *Recruitment process*: they express a lack of transparency in recruitment processes, given that sport is often a very closed market, therefore open processes with mixed teams of evaluators should be promoted.

- *Data*: within the sports market there is a great lack of data on the presence of women within hierarchies and employment, and it is necessary to promote studies that provide credible and realistic information on this situation in order to have better strategies and promote the inclusion of women in a better way.

Finally, the fifth block 'Visibility' was divided into two areas of interest:

- *Role modes*: there is a lack of female role models in sport, leadership positions are often occupied by men, while women occupy second level positions. An important action is to promote women's leadership in sport and in decision-making positions in sport committees and bodies.

- *Media and communication*: it is important that strategies are put in place to improve the image and position of women in the media, because if women have a greater presence

they can be role models for future women with a sporting vocation. The under-representation of women in sports journalism was also mentioned.

4.3. Overall results of the survey

4.3.1. Country of organisation

Figure 5 shows the country of location of the 64 organisations that responded to the questionnaire. Finland stands out with 42.2%, followed by Ireland with 21.9% and Italy (12.5%). To a lesser extent Spain and France with 7.8% and 6.6% respectively. The Netherlands had two organisations and Austria, Belgium, Croatia and the Czech Republic had one organisation.

Figure 5. Country of organisations participated in the study

4.3.2. Type of organization.

Regarding the type of organisation (Figure 6), 37.5% were National sport governing body/sport federation, followed by 29.7% were sport clubs. To a lesser extent, 10.9% were other type of organisation, 9.4% were national sport organisations. Municipalities or local authorities or fitness centres accounted for 4.7% of the organisations respectively, and Population specific sport organisation (women, young, people with disability) with a 3.1%.
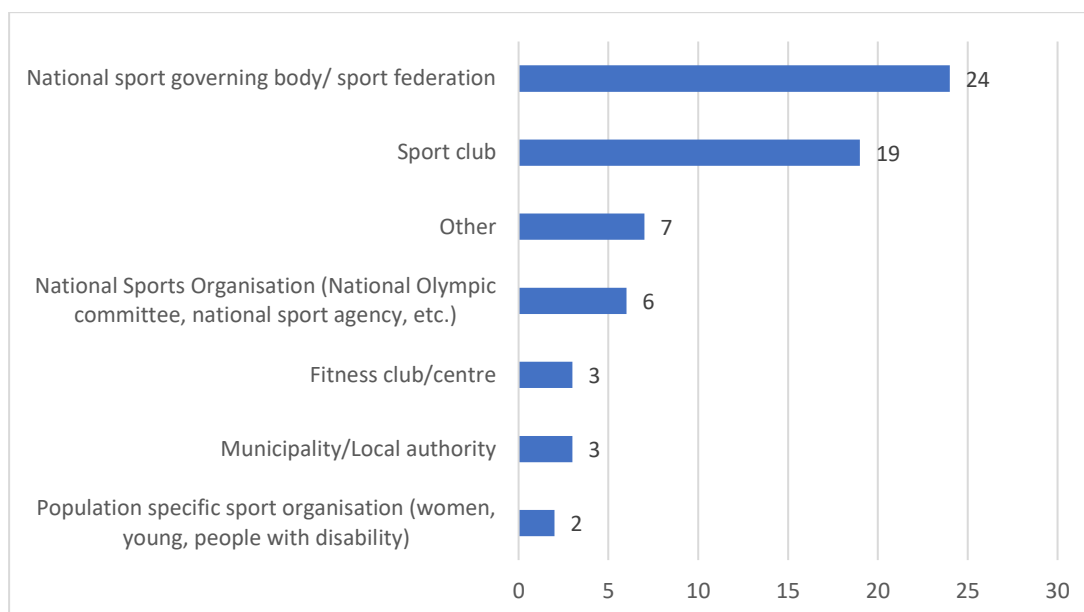
Figure 6. Type of organisation participated in the study.

4.3.3. Number of employees in each of the following occupation categories.

The average number of employees of the participating organisations was 48.5 employees with a minimum of two employees and a maximum of 1789. As for the type of employee (Figure 7) that the organisations were most likely to have were office or staff management and sport coaches, where 18 and 14 organisations indicated having more than ten people employed with these profiles.

The same was true for the organisations that indicated having less than five employees with these two profiles. As for the least prominent professional profiles in the organisations, they were professional players or athletes, fitness instructors or personal trainers, and other.
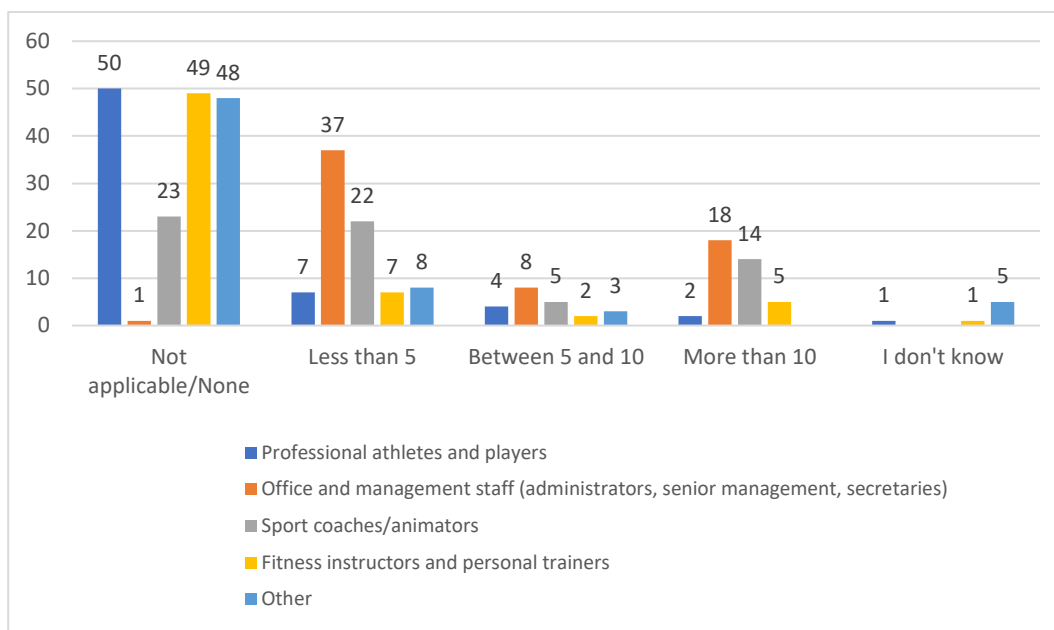
Figure 7. Number of employees in each of the following occupation categories.

4.3.4.   Number of your employees you employ by position.

The results of the number of women employees by position are shown in Table 4. Sport coaches/animators was the profile with the highest number of women employed (M=20.41), following of office and management staff with 4.84 employees. Another positions representativeness was very low with an average number of women less than one employee.

Table 4. Number of women employees by position.

Variable	Min	Max	M	SD
Professional athletes and players				
Women	0	23	0.64	3.1
Office and management staff (administrators. Senior management. Secretaries)				
Women	0	25	4.84	5.9
Sport coaches/animators				
Women	0	829	20.41	105.8
Fitness instructors and personal trainers				
Women	0	25	1.09	4.1
Other				
Women	0	23	0.69	3.1
Note: Min.: minimum; Max: maximum; M: media; SD: Standard deviation				

4.3.5.   Number of whole-time equivalent employees identify by specific characteristics.

Figure 8 shows the number of employees by specific characteristics (individuals with disabilities, women, young or senior). In this case, 13 organisations indicated that they have more than 10 female employees, followed by nine organisations that have more than 10 young employees. Among the organisations that have between five and ten specific employees, it is worth noting that 15 organisations indicated women in this range, followed by six organisations with respect to senior employees. This is also the range in which five organisations indicated that they employed between five and ten individuals with disabilities. Finally, a total of 38 organisations indicated that they had less than five senior employees among their staff, followed by young staff (N=36) and women (N=31).
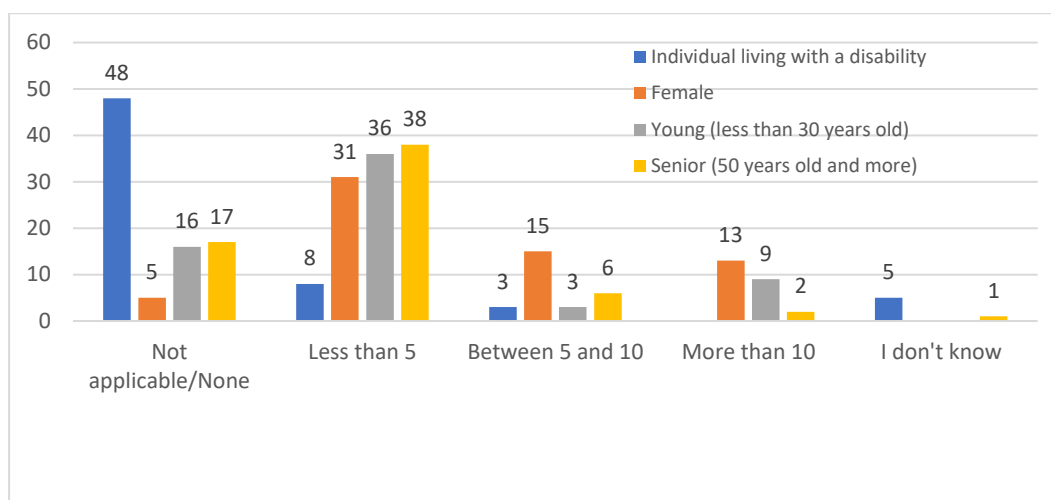
Figure 8. Number of whole-time equivalent employees identify by specific characteristics.

4.3.6.   *Number of people under the categories of employment.*

The number of people under the categories of employment (Figure 9) showed that the vast majority of organisations did not apply or did not have people under most categories of employment, except full-time permanent. This category was the most prominent in all three employability ranges, more than ten people (N=15 organisations), between five and ten workers (N=9 organisations) and less than five employees (N=33 organisations). Among the other categories, all were mostly in the range of less than five employees: permanent part-time workers (N=19), temporary full-time (N=17), temporary part-time and workers employed by another organisation (N=11 each) or other (N=8).
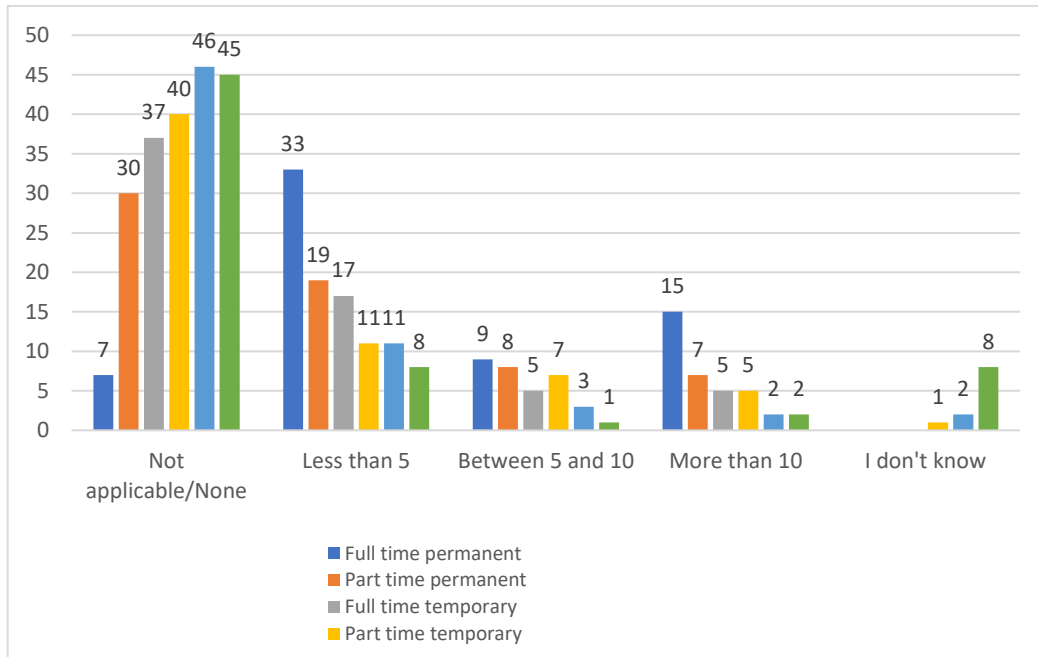
Figure 9. Number of people under the categories of employment.

4.3.7. *Number of employees by each category of employment.*

The results of the descriptive means of the number of women employees by employment category (Table 5) showed results of a higher proportion of permanent (full-time or part-time) workers. For women, permanent part-time workers had the high average number of employees of 5.98, followed by permanent full-time employees with approximately one employee less. There were not many women employees in temporary employment or working through another company.

Table 5. Number of employees by each category of employment.

Variable	Min	Max	M	SD
Full time permanent				
Women	0	35	4.30	6.5
Part time permanent				
Women	0	150	5.98	20.8
Full time temporary				
Women	0	10	0.82	2.1
Part time temporary				
Women	0	52	1.81	7.3
Working under contract with another employer				
Women	0	6	0.33	1.0
Other				
Women	0	10	0.42	1.6

Note: Min.: minimum; Max: maximum; M: media; SD: Standard deviation

4.3.8. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) policy.

Figure 10 shows the proportion of sport organisations that indicated that they had an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy. Almost two thirds of the organisations indicated that they did have such a policy (62.5%), followed by those organisations that did not know if they had such a policy (20.3%), and only 17.2% of the organisations surveyed did not have such a policy.
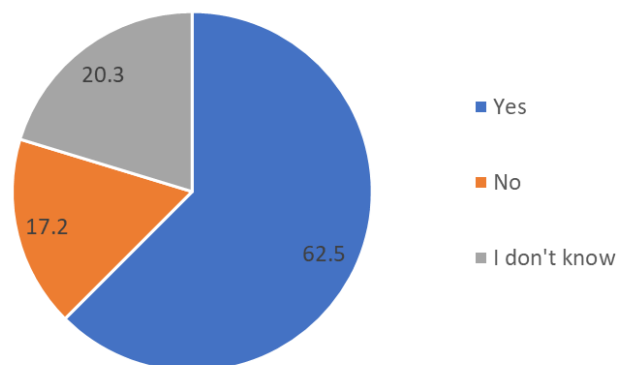
Figure 10. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) policy in sport organisations.

4.3.9. Perception of the promotion of gender equality in sports organisations.

The results on the perception of the promotion of equality policies in sport organisations are shown in Table 6. The highest scoring aspects were the belief that the existence of gender equality is beneficial to the organisation (M=4.58), followed by the consideration that women have the right training and skills to work in their organisation (M=4.50), and thirdly, that the organisation finds it easy to recruit women with the right competences and skills (M=4.48).

On the other hand, the worst rated aspects were that the cost of hiring a woman was higher than that of a man (M=1.98), that more women perform activities with less responsibility than men within the organisation (M=1.92), and the worst rated aspects were that a man was considered more important than a woman when hiring a new employee (M=1.91).

Table 6. Perception of the promotion of gender equality in sports organisations.

Item	Variable	M	SD
1.	I believe that the existence of gender equality between men and women can be beneficial for my organisation	4.58	0.8
2.	I believe that there are equal opportunities for women and men in my organisation	4.41	0.9
3.	I am aware that there is support available for women's employability	2.73	1.3
4.	Recruitment costs for women are facilitated by public policies	2.39	1.1
5.	Women's salaries are lower than those of men	2.58	1.3
6.	Our organisation can easily recruit women with the right skills and competences	4.48	0.9
7.	I believe that my organisation's recruitment and selection processes are objective and inclusive. Regardless of a person's sex or gender	4.28	1.0
8.	Our organisation has a recruitment policy that facilitates gender equality within the workforce	3.91	1.1
9.	Women have the right skills and training to work in our organisation	4.50	0.9
10.	I believe that women report more cases of harassment at work than men	3.08	1.2
11.	I am aware of the work-life balance and maternity measures for women and men in my organisation	3.95	1.0
12.	I consider that the cost of hiring a woman is higher than the cost of hiring a man	1.98	1.1
13.	Between two candidates with the same profile. Our organisation prefers to hire a man rather than a woman	1.91	1.1
14.	The organisation promotes adequate work-life balance and maternity measures for both women and men	3.73	1.2
15.	There is gender equality in leadership and decision-making positions in my organisation	3.81	1.2
16.	Women in my organisation perform tasks with less responsibility than those performed by men	1.92	1.1

5. DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to analyse the situation of sports organisations in terms of employability with regard to gender and to find out the perception of those in charge about their perception of addressing the gender perspective in their own organisations. In addition, a review of previous scientific literature was carried out to contextualise the study and the situation of employability in academia.

5.1. Systematic review of the literature.

The results showed that, although much progress has been made in terms of gender equality, there are still some inequalities that hinder women in finding, moving up, getting into, and keeping senior positions. This has been a major challenge for women's groups for many years and has become a major issue in recent years.

As a contribution, this review provided a classification of gender barriers that has not been found in other reviews, as it established an organisation of them that has not been seen in others. The aim of the work has been to analyse these barriers, so that is the essence of the work, which can contribute to other reviews and research. Regarding the methods used in the review, in this case they have been qualitative and quantitative almost equally, while in another review carried out in 2020 (Evans & Pfister, 2020) on women in sport leadership, it was highlighted that the method used had been qualitative.

In terms of the main findings, it was possible to analyse gender inequalities by looking at the different barriers that women face. In this case, three types of barriers were identified: structural, socio-economic and cultural.

Within these three barriers, we found the different difficulties and obstacles that are identified in the daily life of women to occupy leadership positions and find employment. Firstly, structural barriers were found such as the gender pay gap, which reflected the wage differences between women and men in comparable jobs (Lesch et al., 2022). Their results showed that gender wage gap ranges from 3.7% to 8.0%, with an average of 5.8% difference in payment between men and women.

In addition, they also found that port governing bodies boards with a larger pay gap were more likely to have balanced boards of directors, while the presence of women in sports leadership is affected by the economic and social conditions of the organisations' geographical environment.

Consequently, the glass ceiling was found to be an equally structural, but also invisible and informal barrier that prevents women from moving up (Pape, 2020) or moving up in hierarchical positions to a certain extent (Sonia & Vasilica, 2019). Williams & Hall (2020) or Schlesinger & Weigelt-Schlesinger (2013) consider that jobs in leadership positions are often influenced by a network of contacts for entry and promotion; where companies choose men over women. This lack of accessibility and limited opportunities for advancement results in women not reaching more visible positions and in low paid job opportunities and less important tasks (Norman, 2020; Tjønndal, 2019).

Barriopedro et al. (2018) found that a higher proportion of female athletes (24.7%) than male athletes (11.9%) took more than a year to get their first job, with female athletes more prevalent in part-time jobs (20.9%) than male athletes (3.1%), and therefore with a lower salary. All these situations are considered by women to be caused by a lack of role models and consequently a lack of opportunities from sports organisations (Borrueco et al., 2023).

For example, different studies address the glass ceiling in the coaching position, women coaches are relegated to coaching unprofessional teams, i.e. coaching junior girls or boys, lower category, non-elite men (Hovden & Tjønndal, 2018; Klavanes et al., 2020).

Another structural barrier that was identified was that only certain types of people with certain qualities and traits are considered suitable for leadership in organisations, in this case this profile was male, so it was argued that selection processes are gendered (Mikkonen et al., 2021). Finally, another structural barrier, which encompasses all of the above, was leadership, which is affected by various cultural barriers (Megheirkouni et al., 2020). Structural barriers were found to affect the availability and quality of opportunities for women in leadership and sport (Norman et al., 2021).

Also, within the structural barriers, the glass ceiling and the pay gap were essentially highlighted. Arguably, these are two aspects of great importance in terms of gender equality in general. The glass ceiling, represented by a metaphor, is nothing more than an issue in the gender-biased organisation of work (Ryan & Dickson, 2018).

Secondly, socio-economic barriers were observed, such as the living conditions and family responsibilities that women have, which may influence their potential to reach leadership positions (Lesch et al., 2022). Regarding the opportunities to get a good employment position, one study were found were lower for women than man, specially in graduate-level jobs, senior roles, and in leadership positions (Forsyth et al., 2019). In addition, networks of contacts created between "old

friends" (Hinojosa-Alcalde et al., 2018) were present. These networks are personal, social or professional ties between people who share certain aspects of their day-to-day lives, in this case, they are informal. These networks are best built by men (Banu-Lawrence et al., 2020), so, getting a leadership position will be easier for them since, "word of mouth" will be more men.

In addition to the socio-cultural barriers, the networks of contacts that are created, in this case among men, were highlighted, especially in the professional sphere. These networks have been and continue to be a great strategy for the selection of leadership positions, which are dominated by men, giving rise to a gender bias (Organista, 2021).

Finally, another barrier identified was cultural, contributing to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. Among these barriers, some were observed as gender stereotypes, in which the standards attributed to women and men in certain positions and jobs were found (M'mbaha & Chepyator-Thomson, 2019). Stereotypes impacted negatively on women's lived experience and marginalise them (Sotiriadou & de Haan, 2019). In addition, self-confidence also emerged as another barrier.

Some women lack confidence in their ability to perform as leaders (Richards et al., 2022). It was suggested that women sometimes tend to have lower levels of confidence than men, as they believe they are not ready to take on certain roles (Cosentino et al., 2021).

Women's experience in leadership positions was identified as a barrier, being metaphorically speaking "the whale that bites its own tail", as in order to eliminate this barrier, women had to be given the opportunity to take on the leadership role, in order to acquire this experience (Piggott & Matthews, 2021). Therefore, cultural barriers were found, among which confidence was the most important. Women tend to have a perceived lack of confidence in themselves to achieve professional and even personal success (Forsyth et al., 2019).

On the other hand, with regard to the roles found in the articles, it was highlighted that they are roles of high positions in sports entities such as federations, clubs and sports organisations in general. This explains that the review focused on the most common and predominant entities, and in the leading roles of the studies practically all of them are important positions in these entities. Chrisholm-Burns et al. (2017) found that women's lived experiences in sport organisations are limited by various factors such as the existence of work-life integration problems, reluctance to take on leadership positions, lack of female role models to reflect on, and lack of policies that support a positive balance of women in sport organisations.

Considering the data reported by EOSE (2022), there is a large difference in the proportion of women employed in the sport sector between countries with different cultures. For example, countries such as Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands or Lithuania have an employability of women above 50%, other countries such as Malta or Germany have almost equal gender representation of their employees in the sport sector (although men slightly higher). Countries with a proportion of more than 45% of female employees are Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Poland and the United Kingdom, while Croatia, Romania and Slovakia have less than 40%. In other words, the northern European countries show a higher representation of women in the sports labour market, while the southern and eastern European countries are those with the greatest inequality in employability in sport.

In short, within employability in sport, women have encountered different barriers or obstacles due to their gender that have made it difficult for them to obtain employment or to rise to leadership positions. Dwyer et al. (2019) found in an Australian population the existence of gender inequality in sporting jobs with regard to the under-representation of women in management positions within the sector, their insecurity with their jobs and the excessive working hours they have to work.

In this line, a recent review identified some studies that do not show differences in satisfaction according to the gender of the workers, most of the studies analysed show that satisfaction is worse among women than among men. (González-Bravo et al., 2022). Employees' job satisfaction can be influenced by multiple factors such as the salary received, professional achievements, the possibility or not of promotion within the organisation, leadership, responsibility, working conditions and the relationship with colleagues (Fallari et al., 2015; Imran et al., 2010; Sánchez-Alcaráz et al., 2014). Smucker et al. (2003) reaffirms this fact in that he found that women in sports journalism ended up leaving their jobs due to the lack of opportunities they had for promotion within the organisation.

Despite all of the above, it was perceived that there were more articles to review over time, which meant a progressive advance in this topic. Another review of the literature on the subject (Alfaro et al., 2013) also spoke of barriers that hinder women from obtaining key positions, as there was data showing that there was no minimum representation of a female profile in management or leadership positions. The evidence presented corroborated that, despite the increasing number of women in these positions, this under-representation still exists (Alfaro et al., 2013).

This gender imbalance in leadership positions can be treated as a gender inequality, noting that there is a certain tradition of sport sciences in general being a male-dominated field (Martínez-Rosales et al., 2021).

M'mbaha and Chepyator-Thomson (2019) said that in Kenya, the leadership structure is male-dominated, although it was noted in the literature review and, through legislation, that there is increasing progress, thanks to the promotion of education and representation of women in these fields. Martinez-Rosales et al. (2021) stated that according to their own findings, women are beginning to enter this field over time.

On the other hand, noting that there is progress in gender equity, although not yet complete, different methods were explored to close the remaining gender gap in sport leadership. For example, continuing to raise awareness in society about the under-representation of women (Thornton & Etxebarria, 2021) or the existence of a gender quota imposed by law, as in the case of Spain (Valiente, 2022), through which it was found that the proportion of women in sports leadership positions is increasing. All these aspects were treated during the roundtable where the experts that attempt this group gave similar strategies.

5.2. Gender specific results

The overall results of the study are rather limited given the low sample size. In addition, more than half of the sport organisations that participated in the study were sport federations or clubs. Therefore, the average number of employees of around 40 employees per organisation is not so high.

It is important to note that with the exception of large sports federations or clubs, they do not usually have a large number of staff on their payroll due to their often-limited budgets. This average is perhaps skewed in the sense that there is one organisation that indicated the existence of more than 1,000 employees compared to the rest of the sports organisations.

This justification is also reaffirmed when considering the number of employees considering the target groups of the Best Inclusion project (individuals with disabilities, women, young people under 30 and seniors over 50). Focus on women profile, in which most of the organisations indicated that they either did not have any high women employees in their sport organisations because the most proportion was situated less than five women employees.

The highest number of workers in the surveyed sports organisations was among females. The job profile that generates the highest number of jobs is that of sports coach or animator,

followed by administrative or management staff. The number of women professional athletes was very low, considering that the vast majority of organisations worldwide are not usually organisations involving professional sports clubs.

However, it should also be noted that the highest proportion of staff employed by the sports organisations surveyed were employed on a temporary or permanent or temporary basis, with far fewer full-time contracts. All these results contrast with the fact that almost two-thirds of the organisations have some form of equality, diversity and inclusion policy within the organisation.

The perception of the managers of sport organisations regarding gender inequality that may exist within their organisation showed the existence of three clearly differentiated lines of opinion.

Firstly, there were the items referring to the development of policies and the presence of women within the organisation in which the managers considered that equality and the presence of women within their organisation benefits them, that there is no difference in the recruitment of women compared to men, or that women have the right training and skills to carry out tasks in the organisation.

Secondly, there are a number of aspects that were controversial with moderate scores, for example, the existence of support to help women's employability, government support for women's recruitment costs, or women's lower pay relative to men's. In addition, at the personal level of women, there was also some difference of opinion on the existence of adequate work-life balance or maternity balance, women reporting more cases of abuse than men, or women reporting more cases of abuse than men.

In addition, at the personal level of women, there was also some difference of opinion on the existence of adequate work-life balance or maternity, women reporting more cases of abuse than men, or women's representation in decision-making positions.

Finally, there was a more generalised opinion that hiring a woman is more costly than hiring a man, that a man is always prioritised over a woman in a position or that women have less responsible roles and tasks.

6. CONCLUSION

The main conclusions that can be drawn from this study are:

1. Most of the studies of employability in the scientific literature take place in the European context.
2. The scientific studies are equally distributed between qualitative and quantitative studies and focus on sport organisations and federations for the most part.
3. Three types of barriers to better access of women to the labour market are identified: socio-economic, structural and cultural.
4. The employability survey, although with a limited sample, has mostly evaluated sports federations and clubs rather than other types of sports organisations.
5. The sports organisations analysed in general have few women employees, where the vast majority have part-time contracts.
6. Women are the most represented staff in the sports organisations analysed, mainly occupying positions as sports coaches or animators.
7. The majority of organisations have equality, diversity and inclusion policies in place.
8. The perception of gender inequality shows that the managers of sports organisations consider that the presence of women is beneficial for the organisation, that they are adequately trained and that they do not perceive differences when hiring women compared to men.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into account the results obtained in the review with the analysis of the articles, the opinion and comments drawn from the gender roundtable and the results of the survey and perception of managers of sport organisations, the BeST Inclusion Gender Group proposes some useful recommendations that from a practical point of view can help to improve employability in the sport sector from a gender perspective.

1. To promote the design and implementation of equality plans in sports organisations that comply with current national and European regulations.

2. To carry out training actions to improve education and awareness-raising on equality in the sports context.

3. To establish an equality officer within the sports organisations to develop the subject and control it.

4. To provide comprehensive training for the women involved in sport with autonomy and problem-solving skills. In this way, to face adverse unequal situations and to be transmitters of positive values of sport practice, such as respect for any person regardless of sex, gender, ethnicity or ability.

5. To promote mentoring programmes with people who have overcome adverse situations of gender inequality in the context of sport.

6. To develop lines of action within sports organisations that create a sporting climate based on respect, inclusion, equal opportunities and access to decision-making positions without discrimination.

7. To carry out promotional campaigns to increase the employability of women in the sports sector in different types of organisations.

8. To develop initiatives that benefit organisations that make a strong commitment to gender equality in their organisations.

9. To carry out an institutional gender diagnosis within the sports organisation or institution, with the aim of identifying and acting upon situations that make effective equality impossible.

10. To design and implement codes of conduct and measures with specific rules aimed at the prevention and identification of unequal opportunities and discrimination in the sport context.

11. To implement non-sexist language communication and the elimination of gender stereotypes in the practice of physical activity and sport, making society responsible, in all sporting contexts.

12. To carry out awareness-raising campaigns that challenge gender prejudices and stereotypes in order to promote accessibility and growth in inclusive and equitable employability in the sports sector.

13. To establish employability, accessibility and internal promotion programmes for women in management and governing bodies of entities in the physical activity and sport sector.

14. To facilitate access to and promote the creation of a network of women in leadership positions within the sport context.

15. To design and implement programmes to reconcile work and sport with family life, in accordance with the principle of co-responsibility for personal, family and work life.

16. To adopt protocols with non-discriminatory rules and conditions in situations of pregnancy, maternity-paternity and return to work.

17. To promote training, research and dissemination on the current situation of effective equality in physical exercise and sport, especially through the gender perspective, for all agents involved in the sporting context.

18. To develop tools and informative material on good practices for the transfer and implementation of initiatives on effective equality in sport.

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