

This is a postprint version of the following published document:

Valiente, Celia. (2020). The impact of gender quotas in sport management: the case of Spain. *Sport in Society*.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2020.1819244>

© Taylor & Francis Group

The Impact of Gender Quotas on Sport Management: The Case of Spain

Celia Valiente, Department of Social Sciences, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Getafe (Madrid), Spain, celia.valiente@uc3m.es

Abstract

This article investigates the impact of gender quotas on sport management by analyzing the gender quota established in 2014 in Spain on boards of national sport federations (of at least three women or 33% of board members). Drawing on published and on-line documents and eighty-six interviews of female and male federation board members, I find that the Spanish gender quota increased the proportion of women board members (but not the proportion of women federation presidents). Economic sanctions for non-compliance made the quota effective. The quota had the effect within federations of making gender inequality more visible. Thus, this research concludes that gender quotas have substantial consequences for sport management other than the numerical increment of women managers.

Keywords: quotas, Spain, sport, gender, management

Introduction

Women are severely under-represented in decision making positions in sport. According to data from the Sydney Scoreboard,[1] on global average women account for 20% of board directors, 16% of chief executives and 11% of board chairs (also named ‘board members’, ‘board presidents’ and ‘general secretaries’ respectively in some countries such as Spain) (Adriaanse 2015, 149). The weak presence of women in the high ranks of sport management stands in stark contrast to the increasing presence of girls and women among sport practitioners and elite athletes in the last decades (Burton and Leberman 2017, 1-2; Evans and Pfister 2020).

To overcome the weak presence of women in the management of organized sport, (very few) countries have adopted gender quotas in sport decision-making (from now on, ‘gender quotas’ or simply ‘quotas’). A gender quota is a mandatory requirement that a proportion (or a given number) of highly-ranked decision making positions in sport organizations be occupied by women (or either gender). Gender quotas should be distinguished from gender targets, which are of a voluntary nature (Adriaanse 2017, 87-88). As a pioneering country, Norway adopted quotas in sport management already in 1987 (Sisjord, Fasting, and Sand 2017, 509). In Costa Rica in 2011, full parity was required in sport governing bodies (Piscopo 2015, 43). In 2014, France mandated parity for leadership positions in sport federations (Caprais, Sabatier, and Rubi 2020; Lépinard 2016, 231). Also in 2014, Spain established a quota for boards of National Sport Federations (NSFs) of at least three women or 33% of board members. In other countries, for example, Australia, some sport organizations have instituted gender quotas (Adriaanse 2017; Adriaanse and Schofield 2014).

The objective of this article consists of analyzing the effects of the gender quota established in Spain in 2014. This is the first in-depth scholarly research study on quotas in sport management in Spain. The case of Spain is relevant because it is one of the very few countries with gender quotas for sport management. Existing scholarship on quotas in sport management (based on the case of Norway) suggests that quotas have the impact of

increasing women's presence among sport managers (but not among those who occupy the highest positions of sport organizations). These expectations are corroborated by this research. On the other hand, previous studies seem to indicate that for quotas to be implemented, sanctions for non-compliance should exist. This point is confirmed by this study, which also confirms that economic sanctions are effective. Furthermore, this article documents another potential effect of quotas not firmly established in academic studies: that in sport organizations, quotas make gender inequality more visible.

This article is organized as follows. First, I review the literature on the effects of quotas in sport management and raise four research questions. Second, I justify the selection of the empirical case. Third, I describe the data and methods. Four, I present the research results. Lastly, I discuss these results and draw conclusions and future lines of inquiry.

Literature Review and Research Questions

What do we know about the effects of quotas on sport management? Research from Norway is predominant in the literature, since it was at the vanguard in the institution of gender quotas.[2] The umbrella organization named Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports had a gender quota for decision making positions since 1987. This quota was strengthened in 1990 and incorporated into the sport laws (Fasting and Sisjord 2019, 136; Hovden 2000, 18-19; Sisjord, Fasting, and Sand 2017; Skirstad 2009, 209). This quota mandates that both genders have to be present in all appointed and elected decision-making bodies. The composition of these bodies has to be guided by the gender composition of membership in sport organizations. When these bodies have more than three members, at least two should be women (Hovden 2012, 289; Sisjord, Fasting, and Sand 2017, 509). Gender quotas have existed in Norway for three decades. This time span makes Norway a unique case by permitting researchers to study the implementation of quotas in the short- and medium-term. This longitudinal type of research is not yet possible in the remaining countries with gender quotas in sport management due to the recent adoption of quotas.

In Norway, a clear impact of gender quotas has been an increase in women's presence

on boards and committees of sport organizations. Women's presence on boards of federations increased from 22% in 1990 to 37% in 2008 (Sisjord, Fasting, and Sand 2017, 515). The increment has varied across sport organizations, since it has been more intense in national sport federations and regional confederations than in local sport clubs (Hovden 2000, 19; 2010, 191; 2012; Sisjord, Fasting, and Sand 2017, 506, 514).

Globally speaking, women's quotas in politics have been adopted in more countries (and earlier) than women's quotas in the economic and social domains (Adriaanse 2017). Thus, the conclusions of research on quotas in politics (and to a lesser extent also in corporate boards) can illuminate studies in sport management.

In countries across the world, research on quotas for legislatures and corporate boards also documents numerous cases in which the proportion of women elected parliamentarians or appointed to company boards rose after quota adoption. Furthermore, this rise due to quotas was more pronounced than the (mild) increase that had taken place before the establishment of quotas (Hughes et al. 2019, 233-34; Hughes, Paxton, and Krook 2017, 340-42). The concept of 'descriptive representation' coined by Pitkin (1967) refers to the extent to which the personal characteristics of the represented group and the representatives coincide. If the presence of women among decision makers increases, so does women's descriptive representation. Nonetheless, in countries across the world in some other cases, quotas did not produce a marked increment in women's presence in legislatures and corporate boards (Hughes, Paxton, and Krook 2017, 340). Given these mixed results, it is still necessary to investigate the numerical impact of gender quotas. From these research findings, one can infer the following research question:

RQ1. Do gender quotas increase women's presence in sport management?

Not all highly-ranked decision making positions in organized sport are equally important. Regarding the most influential positions, for instance, chairs or presidents of executive committees, studies on sport in Norway show that quotas have not had a significant effect. This is understandable, since gender quotas are usually applied to the composition of decision-making bodies as a whole, but not targeted particularly at the highest posts (Fasting

and Sisjord 2019, 137; Hovden 2015, 39). Seen from another perspective, a glass ceiling seems to exist in sport organizations. It is true that few women reached the summit of sport leadership (Fasting and Sisjord 2019, 134; Hovden 2000, 19; 2010, 191). But, as Hovden (2015, 39) stated, ‘women still appear as spectacular exceptions in the most influential organizational power positions.’ Similar findings were reached for two of the three national sport organizations in Australia with gender quotas analyzed by Adriaanse and Schofield (2014, 491-92—also Adriaanse 2017, 92-93). In contrast, in countries across the world in some cases, quotas for legislatures and corporate boards have had an ‘acceleration effect’ on women’s future access to top posts (Hughes, Paxton, and Krook 2017, 342). Given these contradictory findings, it is important to study the effects (if any) of quotas on the highest posts in sport management. From insights of research on quotas in decision-making, one can elaborate the following research question:

RQ2. Do gender quotas increase women’s presence in the highest positions of sport management?

Gender quotas in sport management are very controversial devices (Adriaanse 2017, 88). This is one of the reasons that explain why very few countries have adopted them (Hovden, Elling, and Knoppers 2019, 202). Once adopted, gender quotas have to be implemented. As Hovden (2015, 39) claimed, ‘quotas are threatening the power and privileges of hegemonic organizational groups, and the implementation phase is thus most often shaped by strong resistance.’ Given the controversies around (and resistance against) quotas, weak implementation is likely.

Are sanctions necessary to avoid weak implementation? Studies on gender quotas in sport management, corporate boards and legislatures appear to answer this question in the affirmative (Adriaanse 2017; Hughes et al. 2019; Hughes, Paxton, and Krook 2017; Sisjord, Fasting, and Sand 2017). However, as shown next, some reservations can be made to this consensus in the literature, as in some cases of quotas in sport management, sanctions existed but were finally not applied. Moreover, in some cases of quotas in politics, sanctions existed and were applied but women’s presence in decision-making did not increase.

With respect to organized sport in Norway, generally speaking and with exceptions, quotas increased women's presence among sport managers of NSFs and regional sport confederations to the threshold mandated by the quota, but this was less often the case of local sport clubs. Exceptions of compliance (although only in special circumstances) were foreseen already at the outset of the quota policy (Hovden 2000, 29). In 2007, exemptions to the gender quota in sport were clarified. The decision on an exception is based on efforts made to fulfill the quota, former applications for exemption, and gender distribution in membership of the sport organization. The competent authority can reject an application for exception and call a new election to board members (Hovden 2015, 40; Sisjord, Fasting, and Sand 2017, 509). However, sanctions were often not imposed when local sport clubs did not comply with the quota regulation. Subsequently, gender quotas did have the effect of increasing women's presence in sport leadership, but this increment did not reach the level established by the quota regulation, as some local sport clubs fulfilled the quota requirement but others did not (Hovden 2010, 191; Sisjord, Fasting, and Sand 2017, 512-15).

As for the corporate world, in 2003, Norway introduced a 40% gender quota for boards of public limited-liability companies. Sanctions were established in 2005. If companies did not fulfil the quota by 1 January 2008, the sanction for non-compliance was forced dissolution. Research characterized this sanction as effective because women's presence in corporate boards reached the level established by the quota (Adriaanse 2017, 88-89; Hughes, Paxton, and Krook 2017, 340-41; Sisjord, Fasting, and Sand 2017, 507).

Regarding quotas for legislatures across the world, an example of an effective sanction is the prohibition that the non-compliant political party participates in elections (Hughes et al. 2019, 223; Hughes, Paxton, and Krook 2017, 340-41). However, other sanctions to non-compliant political parties proved ineffective, for example, the payment of a fine or the reduction of public campaign funds. These less effective sanctions tend to be of 'monetary nature' (Hughes et al. 2019, 223).

In brief, reviewing research on sanctions for non-compliance with gender quotas in sport, corporate boards and legislatures, one cannot but agree with Hovden (2015, 40), who

affirmed that ‘more comparative studies are, however, needed to gain more knowledge about the efficacy of different types of sanctions.’ From these research results, one can infer the following research question:

RQ3. Which sanctions for non-compliance make gender quotas effective?

As stated above, perhaps the main effect of gender quotas is the considerably higher number of women occupying decision making positions in sports, that is, the increase of women’s descriptive representation. The concept of ‘substantive representation’, also coined by Pitkin (1967) names a situation in which the concerns and interests of the represented group are advanced. The literature on the effects of quotas in sport management also suggests, tentatively, effects on women’s substantive representation. These effects take place because women in sport management think and act differently in some regards than men in similar posts (Hovden 2013). Hovden (2006; 2013) studied women occupying leadership positions in Norwegian sport organizations from the 1970s onwards, that is, before and after the establishment of gender quotas. In general and with important exceptions, in comparison with their male counterparts, these women were more prone to see gender inequality as an important problem in their sport organizations or in sport in general. On the other hand, part (but only a part) of research on quotas in politics also shows that female officers are more attentive to gender inequality and women’s concerns than male officers, although the general sense given by these studies is that such differences are very small (Hughes, Paxton, and Krook 2017, 343). Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that some men are also aware of gender inequality and supportive of gender equality while some women are not, as shown in studies on sport governance in Australia and Norway (Adriaanse 2013; Adriaanse and Schofield 2014; Hovden 2015, 40-41). From these insights, one may infer the following research question:

RQ4. Do gender quotas make gender inequality issues more visible?

Selection of Empirical Case

Spain is one of the very few countries in the world with gender quotas in sport management

and the Spanish central state is the case selected for analysis in this article. In Spain at the central state level, sport is organized in 65 NSF, which are private non-profit organizations. The central state delegates to NSF the performance of various functions, including the organization of national competitions and the participation of Spain in international sport contests. Because some tasks undertaken by NSF are delegated from the state, the state intervenes in NSF, for instance, dictating their internal structure. NSF are very diverse. In terms of number of federation licences, Spanish federations range between 473 and 1.095,604 (motorboat and football respectively). As for the proportion of female holders of federation licences, NSF range between 1% and 90% (hunting and gymnastics respectively). The average of female federation holders for all NSF is 23% (Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte 2020, 114-15–2019 data).[3]

In Spain, the gender quota for sport management is inserted into state funding policy for sports. The highest institution of the central state responsible for sport is the National Sports Council (*Consejo Superior de Deportes*), part of the Ministry of Culture and Sport. Each year since 2014, the National Sports Council issues a public call for NSF to apply for state subsidies with the exclusive aim of financing the so-called ‘women and sport’ activities. Applicant NSF have to have at least three women (or 33% of female members) in one of their governing bodies, the so-called *junta directiva* (from now on, ‘board’). The board is the NSF president’s team and board members are appointed (and dismissed) by the president. By law, board members (but not the president) are non-paid volunteers. Since 2015, this requirement of at least three women (or 33% of female members) on the board has to be fulfilled by NSF applying for state subsidies financing many sport activities other than women and sport activities (Valiente 2019). In 2018, all NSF but one (hunting) received state funding and subsequently were mandated to comply with the gender quota (Consejo Superior de Deportes 2006-2019). The quota does not apply to the remaining NSF governing bodies.

Data and Methods

This article on the impact of gender quotas is part of a larger research project on sport management in Spain. The main data for this article and the larger project are composed of the extant literature, legislation and statistics on organizational structure and finances of NSFs published yearly by the National Sports Council in its annual reports. In addition, in December 2017, I consulted the web pages of all NSFs to collect supplementary information and statistics on women and men occupying decision-making positions. It should be stressed that the quota applies to NSF boards, and subsequently the units of analysis here are NSF boards regardless of how different or similar NSFs are.

Additionally, I interviewed eighty-six NSF board members. They constitute a purposive sample (Weiss 1994, 24-26). Let me describe at length the procedure to construct the sample of interviewees, the interview schedule, other characteristics of the interviews, and the method of analysis. With regard to the procedure used to construct the sample, in January and February 2018, I sent a letter to presidents of the 65 NSFs informing them that I was undertaking research on sport management in Spain. I asked them permission to conduct face-to-face interviews separately with a man and a woman from their boards in the city of Madrid and its surroundings. This location was chosen because 51 of the 65 NSFs have their headquarters in Madrid. This city also hosts the headquarters of both the National Sports Council and the Spanish Olympic Committee. These two institutions regularly call meetings and activities where NSF managers participate. I also sent NSF presidents the outline of the interview. To facilitate interviews, I offered NSF presidents and the potential interviewees flexibility on my part for them to choose the working day, exact time and specific setting of the interviews that suited them best. It was up to the presidents to decide which men and women (including themselves) I would interview. I guaranteed anonymity of interviews.

Between January and June 2018, I personally conducted eighty-six interviews corresponding to forty-three NSFs, that is, two thirds (66%) of NSFs. I always interviewed separately a female and a male board member in each NSF covered by this study. I tried very hard to ensure that all NSFs participated in my study. Two NSFs declined to do so. Nearly a third of NSFs (32% or 21 out of 65) neither declined to be part of my study nor set up

interviews. I decided that these NSF's would not permit me to study them only after intensive efforts by me to arrange the interviews. These efforts included at least four emails and four telephone calls on different days, which means at least eight requests of interviews per NSF (but very often many more requests). Thus, I affirm with confidence that my study covers all NSF's that were willing to take part in a study such as mine about sport management.

In relation to the interview outline, in addition to the request of biographical information, I asked board members to identify main challenges of sport management in their NSF's, describe their initiatives as board members, and raise any other issue on sport management they wanted to discuss with me. The analysis presented here refers only to the first question, with which I investigated research question 4. The exact wording of this first question was: 'In your view, what are the main challenges of sport management in your NSF?'[4] To avoid socially-desirable answers, I did not ask explicitly about gender inequality as a main problem for sport management.

The overwhelming majority of interviews (79 out of 86) were face-to-face. A minority of interviews (7 out of 86) were telephone interviews because interviewees lived in cities far away from Madrid, they could not travel to Madrid and I did not have enough time and resources to travel to their cities. Interviews lasted between 11 and 60 minutes. The average length was 31 minutes (28 minutes for women and 33 minutes for men). Interviews were conducted in Spanish, which is my mother tongue. Interviews were digitally recorded and I took notes while interviewing.

Face-to-face interviews were the preferred option to gather data for this article. Of course, generally speaking but with exceptions, both telephone and face-to-face interviews could be informative and productive (Weiss 1994, 59). Nevertheless, the object of this study constitutes an exception to the general rule about the similar (not identical) efficacy of telephone and face-to-face interviews. My decades-long previous experience with face-to-face interviews and my identity often permitted me to create a climate of trust between my interviewees for this article and me. This climate was indispensable for my interviewees to talk about main challenges of their NSF's. Thorny issues could be discussed (and were indeed

discussed) including doping, serious mismanagement of NSF finances, and corruption of electoral processes within NSFs. Such a climate would not have been created had I interviewed board members by telephone.

With respect to the method of analysis, I transcribed verbatim the parts of the interviews that refer to gender inequality. I summarized the rest of the interviews with the help of my notes and my memory when listening the complete recording of the interviews.[5] Once the interviews were completed, a careful reading of these transcripts and summaries permitted me to deduct the categories of analysis, that is, the types of gender inequality issues identified by interviewees as main challenges within their NSFs. My interviewees referred to four concerns: (i) the weak presence of women among sport practitioners and elite athletes; (ii) the low proportion of women among sport professionals other than elite athletes such as coaches, referees or board members; (iii) the worse conditions of women's sport (in comparison with men's sport), for instance, women training and competing in disadvantaged circumstances; and (iv) the application for funding women and sport activities. The analysis of the interviews did not require the use of a qualitative research software program.

Results

As shown next, the 2014 Spanish gender quota in sport management has had an important impact: the increase in the proportion of women in management positions. Thus, research question 1 of this study (Do gender quotas increase women's presence in sport management?) is answered in the affirmative. However, the quota did not have any impact on the proportion of women among NSF presidents. Consequently, research question 2 (Do gender quotas increase women's presence in the highest positions of sport management?) is answered in the negative. Economic sanctions in case of non-compliance were associated with the quota. Subsequently, research question 3 (Which sanctions for non-compliance make quotas effective?) is answered in the Spanish case by mentioning economic sanctions. Lastly, the Spanish quota had the effect of rendering gender inequality more noticeable. Thereby, research question 4 (Do gender quotas make gender inequality more visible?) is answered in

the affirmative.

Increase of Women's Presence in Sport Management

Undoubtedly, the gender quota has fostered women's access to top decision making in sport management. In 2013, the year prior to the establishment of the quota, women accounted for only 12% of members of NSF boards. This proportion rose to 19% in 2014, to 21% in 2015, to 24% in 2016 (and 2017), and to 25% in 2018. Thanks to the gender quota, in Spain in 2018, on average, women's presence in NSF boards (25%) was slightly above women's presence among holders of federation licences (22%). Conversely, in 2013, the year prior to quota adoption, on average women's presence in NSF boards (12%) was clearly below women's proportion of holders of federation licences (21%) (author's calculation based on data contained in Consejo Superior de Deportes 2006-2019).

Granted, some progress had already taken place before the imposition of the quota in 2014 (Vega et al. 2019). But the progress before the quota took place at a considerably slower pace than after the quota. In the nine years prior to the quota, that is, between 2005 and 2013, the proportion of women in NSF boards rose slightly (only 3 percentage points): from 9% in 2005 to 12% in 2013. In contrast, in the three years after the quota was implemented, the parallel percentage rose sharply (12 percentage points): from 12% in 2013 to 24% in 2016 (author's calculation based on data contained in Consejo Superior de Deportes 2006-2019).

Additional evidence helps confirm the proposition that the 2014 gender quota (and not other causal factors) increased the proportion of women among board members (from 12% in 2013 to 24% in 2016). Let me use the cases of two other NSF governing organs without quotas, the assembly and the delegated commission, to illustrate this point.[6] In contrast with the boards, the presence of women among members of both NSF assemblies and delegated commissions did not increase suddenly after 2014. In 2013, women constituted 11% of members of NSF assemblies (and 13% in 2016). Women accounted for 11% of members of NSF delegated commissions in both 2013 and 2017. In fact, the progress of women in these two NSF governing bodies without quotas was very slow, since between 2005 and 2018 the

proportion of women among assembly members rose only 4 percentage points: from 10% in 2005 to 14% in 2018 (the equivalent percentages for women members of NSF delegated commissions were 8% and 13% respectively) (author's calculation based on data in Consejo Superior de Deportes 2006-2019).

Absence of Increase in Women's Presence in the Highest Positions in Sport Management

After the 2014 gender quota, women are hardly present in the highest positions in sport management. In Summer 2019, three NSF presidents were women (lifeguard, rowing, and sailing), that is, 5% of NSF presidents. These numbers were very similar before and after the quota, since in 2013, two NSF presidents were women (lifeguard and petanque), that is, 3% of NSF presidents. Thus, women NSF presidents are still today outstanding exceptions.

Economic Sanctions for Non-Compliance Make Quotas Effective

Compliance with the gender quota has been a requirement for NSFs to receive state subsidies for women and sport activities since 2014 and many other sport activities since 2015. Thus, the potential sanction for non-compliance is lack of state funding.

The potential withdrawal of state subsidies for Spanish NSFs that do not fulfill the quota is a serious threat because the implementation of this sanction would jeopardize the finances of many NSFs. In 2018, only one NSF (hunting) did not receive state funding and thus relied entirely on its own resources. The rest of NSFs received state subsidies. In 2018, on average, 22% of NSFs' resources were state subsidies (Consejo Superior de Deportes 2019).

Data suggest that the threat of withdrawal of state subsidies has been sufficient to encourage NSFs to comply with the quota. In Summer 2019, only one NSF does not comply with the quota. Not surprisingly, this NSF functions exclusively with its own resources (Consejo Superior de Deportes 2019). Thus, economic sanctions for non-compliance caused the Spanish quota to be implemented.

Gender Quotas Make Gender Inequality Issues more Visible

Interviews conducted for this article asked female and male board members to identify the main challenges of sport management in their own federations. Numerical data can be obtained with qualitative interviews if the same question has been posed to all interviewees (Weiss 1994, 3-4, 50-51). More female interviewees than male interviewees (56% and 26% respectively) mentioned gender inequality issues among the key difficulties their NSFs face. Since the gender quota increased women's presence in NSF boards, the gender quota had the effect of increasing the proportion of people who conceptualize gender inequality as an important issue that sport management has to confront. Let me describe the gender issues identified as main challenges by female and male board members separately in this section, and draw insights from responses by women and men analyzed comparatively in the next section.

Gender Inequality Identified as Main challenge by Female Board Members

A slight majority of female interviewees (56% or 24 out of 43) mentioned gender issues among the principal challenges of their NSFs. As shown in Table 1 and explained next, the gender issue mentioned most commonly in the interviews was by far (i) the weak presence of women among sport practitioners and elite athletes (cited by fourteen women interviewed). The second most prevalent gender problem was twofold: (ii) the weak presence of women among sport professionals related to NSFs other than elite athletes such as coaches, referees or board members (referred to by seven female interviewees); and (iii) the worse conditions of women's sport (in comparison with men's sport) (also noted by seven female board members). (iv) Applications for funding women and sport activities was the least frequent gender challenge (discussed by three women interviewees).

(i) With respect to the weak presence of girls and women among sport practitioners and elite athletes, female interviewees who identified this issue as a main challenge also argued that their NSFs have to foster women's sport at mass- and elite-levels. For example, regarding mass-sport, a female board member stated: '[The challenge is] to facilitate

women's access to our sport. It has traditionally been a very masculine sport. Only X [X being equal or under 10] percent of our licences belong to women.' (Female board member, individual non-Olympic sport).

In the interviews, some female board members pinpointed several factors that cause women's under-representation among sport practitioners and elite athletes, for example, sexist ideas about certain sports. As explained by a female board member interviewed: 'Our sport is stereotyped as a sport for brutes...Therefore, women who practice our sport are perceived as tomboys, as if they were not feminine, right? As brutes...as lesbians! These stereotypes are still deeply entrenched in our society.' (Female board member, individual Olympic sport).

Another female interviewee mentioned that women abandon elite sport earlier than men to form families: 'Men are more perseverant. This is a tough sport...And women become fed up with suffering brushes or having to get by on their own...Women want to have children, have other priorities and abandon [elite sport] much earlier than men.' (Female board member, individual non-Olympic sport).

In Spain, as in other countries, a tiny minority of sports are practiced by more women than men. A female interviewee from a NSF managing one of these sports mentioned this gender imbalance as a challenge:

We have many more female holders of federation licences than male holders. This is fantastic and we are very proud of this...But our sport is not a female sport but a male and female sport. The association between women and our sport is detrimental for us regarding men's participation in our sport. Men's involvement in our sport is a challenge for us in order to grow, right? (Female board member, team Olympic sport)

(ii) As regards the weak presence of women among sport professionals other than elite athletes such as coaches, referees and board members, female interviewees who conceptualize this topic as a principal challenge also claimed that their NSFs had to attempt to combat the aforementioned weak presence. A female board member presented her ideas about the causes of the scarcity of women among elite coaches:

Maybe we put [wrongly] the focus on female elite athletes and former elite athletes. What happens in this sport? That when you stop being an elite athlete that is the very moment when your attachment to the federation is the closest. At that moment, your greatest wish is to form a family and build a professional life un-related to sport...[Therefore] at that moment [if you want to coach]...you have to coach in the evenings...we have very few female elite coaches and recruiters. (Female board member, team Olympic sport)

The near absence of high-level referees is cited by another interviewee (herself a referee), who explained this absence partly due to the lack of role-models:

The problem is that we [women] lack role-models, I do not know, this happens even to girls. This is changing a little bit...For my daughters, it is normal to attend sport competitions to watch their mother work [as referee], but this is not the usual case. When I travel, [people say to my daughters] ‘Oh! Is your mother going away?’...I have...daughters and I hope that my example [inspires them]...We live in a very sexist society. I am fortunate because at home, I am ‘expelled’ from home after the exhortation: ‘Travel, travel, because you are opening the path to your daughters!’ (Female board member, individual Olympic sport)

Another female interviewee pointed out at the under-representation of women among board members in Spanish NSFs and developed her own views about the causes of this scarcity of female board members:

If you look at NSF boards, generally speaking, these are formed by elderly people, mainly men...Regarding decision-making, women are not involved.

The president of my NSF thinks this is so because we are mothers...But if you attend a meeting, and 90% of participants are elderly men, what a bind dedicating your spare time to such a meeting! Even if you love your sport so much. You have many new ideas, and confront a seventy-year-old man dedicated to sport during the last fifty years. This man tells you [referring to your ideas]: ‘No, because we have always done things another way’...I think it is a very masculine world. And if you are

not a seventy-year-old man, it is unlikely that they will take notice of you. (Female board member, individual Olympic sport)

To overcome the under-representation of women among sport professionals related to NSFs other than athletes, two female interviewees mentioned recent pilot initiatives undertaken by their NSFs. In the words of one of these women interviewed:

My NSF has created a commission...to foster women's presence in decision making, not only among board members. The aim is to place women everywhere. For example, if a national delegation is formed, it should comprise a representative of the aforementioned commission, a female referee, a female sport director, a female manager and so on. (Female board member, individual Olympic sport)

(iii) Regarding the inferior conditions for women's sport (in comparison to men's sport), this category comprises comments on girls, women and female athletes training and competing in disadvantaged circumstances. A female interviewee, herself a former elite athlete, directly made her own NSF partly responsible for the aforementioned worse conditions of women top athletes. She affirmed:

In the past, the federation...did not pay attention to female athletes' needs. The federation looked after male athletes...They were lucky, but we were not. We women were invisible. [For instance,] sport camps and competitions for women were not always organized...

From that moment on, [my NSF] has undertaken a lot of pending initiatives...equalize salaries for female and male elite athletes...I think we are now on the right track. (Female board member, team Olympic sport)

A concern raised by various female interviewees is the lower number of sport competitions for women than men organized by their NSFs, the smaller impact and visibility of women's competitions in the mass media and/or the lower quality of women's championships. For instance, a female board member explained that: '[i]n the past, in our federation...women's sport has always had less impact and visibility. The new directive team is trying to foster women's competitions...This summer, we are organizing a world women's

championships.’ (Female board member, team Olympic sport).

(iv) With regard to applications for funding for women and sport activities, it is the gender issue less often mentioned by female board members. However, some female interviewees cited this challenge. In the words of a female board member:

From that [line of funding], we have received money to pay for small activities. These consists of supporting female coaches, making sure female top athletes travel with more comfort, receive better training...[and] their competitions have more visibility in the mass media. All these are steps forward thanks to this funding. All these initiatives make us more optimistic because we are improving. (Female board member, team Olympic sport)

Gender inequality identified as main challenge by male board members

If a slight majority of female interviewees mentioned gender issues among the main challenges their NSFs face, only a quarter of male interviewees did so (26% or 11 out of 43). As shown in Table 1, gender issues considered most commonly main challenges by male board members referred to: (i) conditions surrounding female sport practitioners and elite athletes (cited by five male board members). The second and third most quoted main challenges were the weak presence of women among (ii) sport practitioners and elite athletes and (iii) sport professionals other than athletes, such as coaches, referees and board members (referred by four and three men interviewed respectively. (iv) Finally, the least cited gender topic was funding for women and sport activities (mentioned by two men board members).

(i) As for conditions surrounding female sport practitioners and elite athletes, a male board member denounced gender inequality in prizes that existed in the past. In his own words: ‘Women, who have always been, well, in this country, mmm, they have been paid less in prizes...Now, prizes are the same, but in the past, in some competitions, women received less money than men.’ (Male board member, individual Olympic sport).

Another male interviewee criticized, in very general terms, that women sport practitioners and elite athletes are still not treated equally as men. For him, the challenge is:

‘that neither men nor women feel discriminated against in sport in general and our sport in particular. This is one of the big challenges we face.’ (Male board member, individual Olympic sport).

Interestingly enough, when talking about conditions surrounding women athletes, two male interviewees mentioned that in their sport, it is easier for women to participate and gain victories in international competitions. Subsequently, their federations should foster female sport. As a male board member affirmed:

Nowadays, our female athletes can obtain more victories than our male athletes. Why? Because women started to practice our sport later than men...all over the world, so there is less difference [between Spain and other countries]. Then, I always argue that we have to support more women’s sport not because it is now, in quotation marks, in fashion, but because there are higher possibilities to achieve sport victories. As for male sport...Spain is clearly behind. (Male board member, individual Olympic sport)

(ii) In regard to the weak presence of women among sport practitioners and elite athletes, it was the second gender issue most cited by male interviewees. Subsequently, these interviewees think that efforts should be made to increase women’s presence at the mass- and elite-level. As a male board member argued:

[Our challenge is] to increase women’s participation. Probably our sport is very masculine. However, nowadays, our best performing athletes are women and we are working on this. We are reaching gender balance among the youngest practitioners. In the coming national competition of that age group, which is due tomorrow, 50% of participants are girls...

Moreover, the other day, I talked to some coaches and one said: ‘It seems as if only girls were now enrolled...I start worrying that only girls are now showing up in my gym!’ [laughs] (Male board member, individual Olympic sport)

(iii) As concerns women sport professionals other than athletes such as coaches, referees and board members, it is the third most commonly named gender issue. It should be noted that two of the three male board members who talked about women’s presence in their

NSF board firmly stated that women are not under-represented there. In the words of one of them:

Right now, we have reached parity in decision-making bodies...very responsible people, international champions. There is not much to say, we have made a group of men and women who are very good. This group functions normally. One should not think the man-woman issue over in one's mind, that's all...nothing else to say about the man-woman issue. No need to do so. (Male board member, individual non-Olympic sport).[7]

(iv) With respect to funding for women and sport activities, a male interviewee mentioned it and praised his NSF activities in this matter. In his own words: 'Our programs for women are very good, I believe, we are sort of pioneers. I realize that when I speak about it, I sound as if I am selling something! [laughs].' (Male board member, individual Olympic sport).

Another male interviewee showed his opposition to the special funding for women and sport activities: 'Right now, we [the NSF] only have two [types of]...state subsidies. One is for women and sport...personally, I believe that positive differences are as bad as negative differences. But, well, this matter is debatable.' (Male board member, team non-Olympic sport).

Discussion and Conclusion

In 2014, Spain adopted a gender quota for NSF boards (of at least three women or 33% of board members). The first research question of this study asked whether gender quotas increase women's presence in sport management. This question was answered in the affirmative. The Spanish gender quota in sport management had the effect of increasing the proportion of women among board members (from 12% in 2013 to 25% in 2018). As a result of the 2014 gender quota, women's descriptive representation increased in sport management.

However, the quota did not have the effect of raising women's presence at the top of sport organizations. Three percent of NSF presidents were women before the establishment of

the quota, and 5% of NSF presidents are women four years after. Thus, the second research question asked by this article (about whether quotas increase women's presence in the highest decision-making positions of sport management) was answered in the negative.

A sanction for non-compliance was associated with the Spanish quota: the potential threat of not receiving state funding. Thanks to this sanction, women's presence in NSF boards reached the threshold mandated by the quota. The third research question of this research asked which sanctions for non-compliance made quotas effective. At least in the Spanish case, economic sanctions proved effective. This finding suggests that economic sanctions may be useful also in other national sport contexts.

The fourth research question of this analysis asked whether quotas make gender inequality more visible. A higher proportion of female board members than male board members declared in the interviews that gender inequality constituted a major challenge their NSFs face. Since the gender quota increased women's presence in NSF boards, it increased the proportion of NSF board members who more likely conceived gender inequality as a main concern for their NSFs: women. Therefore, this study answered this research question in the affirmative. As a result of the quota, women's descriptive representation augmented in Spanish sport management. Admittedly, scholarship on quotas in sport management in Norway documents the aforementioned differences between female and male decision makers but considerably smaller than the differences found in this article (Hovden 2013). Moreover, the general sense derived from studies on quotas for politics and private companies is that these differences between male and female politicians either do not exist or exist but are minimal and not comparable at all to those revealed by this research (Hughes, Paxton, and Krook 2017, 343-44).

Not only are women board members more aware of gender inequality in sport than men board members. Differences between female and male interviewees go beyond this numerical gap, and refer to the dimensions of gender inequality that they identified as main problems. As seen in Table 1, a considerably higher proportion of female board members than male board members consider a principal obstacle for gender equality the weak presence

of women among sport practitioners and elite athletes. Let us remember that the average of female holders of federation licences is 23% (Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte 2020, 115–2019 data). In other words, for more female than male interviewees gender inequality is pervasive and affects in a very fundamental sense the rank-and-file of their NSFs, that is, the very people their NSFs are supposed to work for: sport practitioners and elite athletes. According to more female board members (in comparison to male board members), gender inequality is not only a serious problem characterizing this or that collective employed by NSFs (for instance, referees or coaches), or this or that aspect of sport practice (such as the number of competitions or the money to fund men's and women's sport), but a harm grafted on to the very heart of their NSFs' organizational basis.

Interview data collected for this article also revealed other differences between the women and the men who conceptualized gender inequality as a main challenge for their NSFs. Female board members talked about gender inequality at more length than male board members, and provided the interviewer with more concrete examples to illustrate what they meant when discussing different manifestations of gender inequality. In contrast, male board members referred to gender inequality more briefly and in more general terms. Some male board members mentioned gender inequality as something of the past (but no longer a problem), for example, when money prizes were lower for female athletes, or affirmed that female athletes were privileged by sport authorities through the funding scheme directed to women and sport activities.

What factors are causing the differences observed in Spanish NSFs between male and female board members? Tentatively, it may be suggested that part (but only a part) of these differences are indirectly induced by public policy. Because of the existence of specific subsidies for women and sport activities, in the overwhelming majority (if not the totality) of NSFs, boards usually comprise at least a member who specializes in writing the applications for this funding. This person is a woman in charge of female sport issues in general. Because of her specialization, it is highly likely that this woman perceives gender inequality to a greater extent than the average male board member. When I asked NSF presidents permission

to interview a man and a woman from their boards, perhaps some presidents decided that I should interview the woman in charge of women and sport. Presidents could not direct me to interview the man in charge of women and sport because such a man does not exist.

But there are strong reasons to defend that the aforementioned sharp differences between male and female board members reflect much more than public policy reverberation. In Spain, organized sport is an arena where gender imbalance is pervasive (Valiente 2019). For instance, slightly below one in four (23%) holders of federation licences are women (Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte 2020, 115–2019 data). In this regard, NSFs differ markedly from politics, where women are half of the population (and the electorate). The management of organized sport is also a very masculine arena. Possibly, many of the men interviewed for this article are accustomed to this masculine world to the point of not noticing at all that it is masculine. They have developed their careers in sport organizations relating to sport practitioners and athletes who are preponderantly boys and men, and dealing with sport professionals such as coaches and referees who are also often men. Those who were board members in previous terms used to sit at the board table almost exclusively in company of other men. When the quota was established for NSF boards in 2014, women nominated as board members were relatively (if not totally) newcomers. As new entrants, their background and previous experience in the sport world are different from those of men in charge of NSF management in the past. So are their ideas about what constitutes main challenges for their NSFs.

The conclusions drawn in this study have at least three implications for the study of the effects of gender quotas in sport management. First of all, more analysis is necessary on the different types of quotas. The Spanish quota applies to appointed positions while the Norwegian quota regulates appointed and elected positions. Perhaps the Spanish quota was implemented in nearly all NSFs rapidly because it was relatively easy for NSF presidents to appoint three women as members of their boards. Undoubtedly, a quota regulating elected positions would have been more difficult to implement because this quota affects electoral processes implicating the whole sport organization. For example, as stated above, the

assembly is the main governing body of a NSF. The assembly is composed of presidents of regional sport federations and representatives (elected every four years) of athletes, clubs and sport professionals other than athletes such as coaches and referees. A quota for elected positions in NSFs would necessarily imply the implementation of the quota in each group which elects representatives to the Assembly. This is definitely more challenging than the quota that exists now in NSFs consisting of the nomination by NSF presidents of three women (or 33%) of members of her/his team (the board).

Secondly, in the Spanish case, an economic sanction for non-compliance was established for implementation of quotas: the threat of withdrawal of state funding to NSFs. In fact, the Spanish sport quota even suggests that economic incentives (for example, subsidies) may be a good tool to foster gender equality within organizations. More research is needed on the matter (sanctions but also incentives), since the literature is clearly focused on the study of sanctions (and prescriptive of punitive sanctions such as forced dissolution of the offending party, which are ‘unrealistic’ in the case of sport management—Sisjord, Fasting, and Sand 2017, 516).

Finally, gender quotas are the same instrument applied to three different arenas: politics, private companies, and organizations in society such as sport organizations. The marked differences found in this article between female and male board members in Spanish NSFs suggest that quotas in politics, corporate boards and sport organizations may have different consequences. One can hypothesize that this is so because the three arenas are very different. For example, politicians are exposed to the scrutiny of mass media to a considerably higher extent than sport managers. Subsequently, politicians are subjected to more pressures to be accountable to their constituencies, half of which are formed by women. In a nutshell, it is time to study quotas in sport management, political decision making and corporate boards comparatively.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Acknowledgments

For invaluable comments on earlier versions, I owe thanks to Rosemary Barberet, Mara Bustelo, Xavier Coller, Marsela Dauti, Juan Fernández, Roberto Garvía, Carmen González, Rodolfo Gutiérrez, Esther Ruiz and anonymous reviewers. This article is dedicated to my son Daniel, the joy and inspiration of my life.

Notes

1. The Sydney Scoreboard is a web-based tool tracking women's presence in management of national sport organizations in 45 countries from the five continents (Adriaanse 2015, 149).

2. No research of which I am aware examines the effects of quotas on sport management in Costa Rica and France, which are the other two countries with this type of quotas (apart from Norway and Spain).

3. Additionally, Olympic sport is managed by the Spanish Olympic Committee.

4. In this article, all translations from Spanish to English are done by the author.

5. Because of my own errors, I failed to digitally-record four interviews. Since I soon realized that I had not recorded these interviews, I reconstructed them on paper with the help of my notes and my memory the same day of the interview or very soon afterwards.

6. The main governing organ of a NSF is the assembly. It is composed of presidents of regional sport federations and representatives (elected every four years) of athletes, clubs and sport professionals other than athletes such as coaches and referees. The assembly approves the annual budget and its implementation and the annual calendar of sport competitions. The assembly elects the president. Between meetings of the assembly, a 'delegated commission' (*comisión delegada*) is in operation.

7. According to publicly available data, this NSF has not reached parity in decision-making bodies. However, this should not invalidate the importance of this quotation. The purpose of the interviews was to know what were the main challenges identified by board members. Verifying whether these challenges correspond to real facts or not was not the purpose of the interviews.

Tables

Table 1

Gender inequality issues seen as main challenges by board members

	Female board members	Male board members
Weak presence of women among sport practitioners and elite athletes	14	4
Weak presence of women among sport professionals other than athletes (coaches, referees, board members)	7	3
Bad conditions of female sport practitioners and elite athletes	7	5
Applications for funding women and sport activities	3	2
Total	31	14

Note. Source: interviews conducted for this article. An interviewee could mention more than one gender inequality issue.

References

- Adriaanse, Johanna A. 2013. "The Role of Men in Advancing Gender Equality in Sport Governance." In *Gender and Sport: Changes and Challenges*, edited by Gertrud Pfister and Mari K. Sisjord, 50-70. Münster: Waxmann.
- Adriaanse, Johanna A. 2015. "Gender Diversity in the Governance of Sport Associations: The Sydney Scoreboard Global Index of Participation." *Journal of Business Ethics* 137 (1): 149-60. doi: 10.1007/s10551-015-2550-3.
- Adriaanse, Johanna A. 2017. "Quotas to Accelerate Gender Equity in Sport Leadership: Do They Work?" In *Women in Sport Leadership: Research and Practice for Change*, edited by Laura J. Burton and Sarah Leberman, 83-97. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Adriaanse, Johanna A., and Toni Schofield. 2014. "The Impact of Gender Quotas on Gender Equality in Sport Governance." *Journal of Sport Management* 28 (5): 485-97. doi: 10.1123/jsm.2013-0108.
- Burton, Laura J., and Sarah Leberman, eds. 2017. *Women in Sport Leadership: Research and Practice for Change*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Caprais, Annabelle, Fabien Sabatier, and Stéphanie Rubi. 2020. "Electoral Competition and Gender Quotas: Dearth of Female Applicants or Structural Resistance?" *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1080/19406940.2020.1782966
- Consejo Superior de Deportes. 2006-2019. Annual reports 2005-2018. <http://www.csd.gob.es>
- Evans, Adam E., and Gertrud U. Pfister. 2020. "Women in Sport Leadership: A Systematic Narrative Review." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1177/1012690220911842.
- Fasting, Kari, and Mari K. Sisjord. 2019. "Norway: Gender, Governance and the Impact of Quota Regulations." In *Gender Diversity in European Sport Governance*, edited by Agnes Elling, Jorid Hovden and Annelies Knoppers, 131-40. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Hovden, Jorid. 2000. "'Heavyweight' Men and Younger Women? The Gendering of Selection Processes in Norwegian Sport Organizations." *NORA: Nordic Journal of*

- Feminist and Gender Research* 8 (1): 17-32. doi: 10.1080/080387400408035.
- Hovden, Jorid. 2006. "The Gender Order as a Policy Issue in Sport: A Study of Norwegian Sport Organizations." *NORA: Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 14 (1): 41-53. doi: 10.1080/08038740600727127.
- Hovden, Jorid. 2010. "Female Top Leaders-Prisoners of Gender? The Gendering of Leadership Discourses in Norwegian Sports Organizations." *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 2 (2): 189-203. doi: 10.1080/19406940.2010.488065.
- Hovden, Jorid. 2012. "Discourses and Strategies for the Inclusion of Women in Sport—The Case of Norway." *Sport in Society* 15 (3): 287-301. doi: 10.1080/17430437.2012.653201.
- Hovden, Jorid. 2013. "Women as Agents of Change in Male Dominated Sports Cultures." In *Gender and Sport: Changes and Challenges*, edited by Gertrud Pfister and Mari K. Sisjord, 33-49. Münster: Waxmann.
- Hovden, Jorid. 2015. "The 'Fast Track' as a Future Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality and Democracy in Sport Organizations." In *Ethics and Governance in Sport: The Future of Sport Imagined*, edited by Yves Vanden Auweele, Elaine Cook and Jim Parry, 35-42. London: Routledge.
- Hovden, Jorid, Agnes Elling, and Annelies Knoppers. 2019. "Meta-Analyses: Policies and Strategies." In *Gender Diversity in European Sport Governance*, edited by Agnes Elling, Jorid Hovden and Annelies Knoppers, 192-204. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Hughes, Melanie M., Pamela Paxton, Amanda B. Clayton, and Pär Zetterberg. 2019. "Global Gender Quota Adoption, Implementation, and Reform." *Comparative Politics* 51 (2): 219-38. doi: 10.5129/001041519X15647434969795.
- Hughes, Melanie M., Pamela Paxton, and Mona L. Krook. 2017. "Gender Quotas for Legislatures and Corporate Boards." *Annual Review of Sociology* 43: 331-52. doi: 10.1146/annurev-soc-060116-053324.
- Lépinard, Eléonore. 2016. "From Breaking the Rule to Making the Rules: The Adoption, Entrenchment, and Diffusion of Gender Quotas in France." *Politics, Groups, and*

- Identities* 4 (2): 231-45. doi: 10.1080/21565503.2015.1080616.
- Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte. 2020. *Anuario de estadísticas deportivas 2019* [2019 Yearbook on Sport Statistics]. Madrid, Spain: Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte.
- Piscopo, Jennifer M. 2015. "States as Gender Equality Activists: The Evolution of Quota Laws in Latin America." *Latin American Politics and Society* 57 (3): 27-49. doi: 10.1111/j.1548-2456.2015.00278.x.
- Pitkin, Hanna H. 1967. *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sisjord, Mari K., Kari Fasting, and Trond S. Sand. 2017. "The Impact of Gender Quotas in Leadership in Norwegian Organized Sport." *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 9 (3), 505-19. doi: 10.1080/19406940.2017.1287761.
- Skirstad, Berit. 2009. "Gender Policy and Organizational Change: A Contextual Approach." *Sport Management Review* 12: 202-16. doi: 10.1016/j.smr.2009.03.003.
- Valiente, Celia. 2019. "Spain: Social, Political and Organizational Explanations." In *Gender Diversity in European Sport Governance*, edited by In Agnes Elling, Jorid Hovden and Annelies Knoppers, 36-45. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Vega, Pablo, Benito Pérez-González, Álvaro Fernández-Luna, and Pablo Burillo. 2019. "Gender Diversity on the Steering Committees of Spanish Sport Federations: Implications for Economic and Operational Performance." *Apunts: Educación Física y Deportes* 137 (3): 115-28.
- Weiss, Robert S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press.