

Original article. Gender equality among footballers in the early age-stage: a predictive model.
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Gender equality among footballers in the early age-stage: a predictive model Igualdad de género entre futbolistas en edades tempranas: un modelo predictivo

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Abstract

Given that female football remains predominantly male-dominated, this study investigates the relationship between sexist beliefs, gender relations, and perceived motor skills among male and female footballers. The aim is to evaluate the effectiveness of a predictive model for these factors and determine whether it varies by gender. The study sampled 5,065 students (48.9% male, 51.1% female) from eight countries across four continents, with an average age of 13.43 years. The Brief Scale of Attitudes towards Gender Equality in Football in the School Environment (EBAIGFU) was used for assessment. The findings revealed that the predictive model showed a good fit across all samples, with significant effects from perceived motor competence. Notably, two strong direct effects were observed in the women's model, compared to one in the men's one. The results underscore the importance of supporting perceived competence to improve gender equity and reduce discriminatory attitudes in youth football.

Keywords: attitude; equity; football; motor competence; inference.

Resumen

Dado que el fútbol femenino sigue siendo predominantemente dominado por los hombres, este estudio investiga la relación entre las creencias sexistas, las relaciones de género y las habilidades motoras percibidas entre futbolistas masculinos y femeninos. El objetivo es evaluar la efectividad de un modelo predictivo para estos factores y determinar si varía según el género. El estudio incluyó 5,065 estudiantes (48.9% hombres, 51.1% mujeres) de ocho países en cuatro continentes, con una edad promedio de 13.43 años. Se utilizó la Escala Breve de Actitudes hacia la Igualdad de Género en el Fútbol en el Entorno Escolar (EBAIGFU) para la evaluación. Los hallazgos revelaron que el modelo predictivo mostró un buen ajuste en todas las muestras, con efectos significativos de la competencia motriz percibida. En particular, se observaron dos efectos directos importantes en el modelo femenino, en comparación con uno en el modelo masculino. Los resultados destacan la importancia de apoyar la competencia percibida para mejorar la equidad de género y reducir las actitudes discriminatorias en el fútbol juvenil.

Palabras clave: actitud; equidad; fútbol; competencia motora; inferencia.

Introduction

Although women's football is being promoted more and more, the sport is still dominated by men, with historically higher participation rates (Garnica-Caparrós & Memmert, 2021). Despite an increase, the number of female players is still less than that of male players (Harman, 2022). Remarkably, compared to nations like Australia and Germany, where greater female registration rates are noted, female football participation is comparatively low, even in highly populated nations like China and Brazil (Valenti et al. 2021). These discrepancies can be linked to sociocultural settings where participation

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and perceptions of competence are shaped by conventional gender roles and stereotypes. Moreover, football participation barriers for women may be more pronounced in nations where the sport is strongly associated with masculine culture (Adriansen & Gubbels, 2020).

To narrow these gaps, the researchers suggest approving new regulations to promote women's football. For example, Hong and Jin (2023) suggest initiatives like the Women's University Football Club League, while other authors emphasise the importance of promoting increased female participation starting in adolescence (Emmonds et al., 2023). By challenging gender norms and offering institutional support to women, these policies seek to counteract biases in society. Given that both Emmonds et al. (2023) and Hong and Jin (2023) highlight the significance of tactics to lower youth sport attrition rates, these methods also represent a reaction to societal norms that frequently discourage females from engaging in physical activities (Messner, 2009).

While some research suggests that school-age females and older adults do not significantly differ in their self-perception of physical education (Jorquera et al., 2024), other point to the difficulties faced by female football players—including body shaming (Çetin, 2023), where cultural norms impact on how people feel about their bodies and their skills on some sports. Idealising feminine physicality can make girls shy away from sports that are seen as being too aggressive or manly (Krane, 2001). Examining trainers' ability to question and alter established gender norms as well as traditional gender models is necessary to understand gender relations in school sports (Stride et al. 2020).

Gender dynamics in school sports

Metcalfe (2018) highlights that understanding how deeply ingrained sociocultural views about gender influence participation and self-perception is fundamental to understand gender relations in school sports; and that disrupting these narratives requires efforts to avoid reinforcing historical gender norms and assumptions. Gender beliefs help maintain or alter traditional gender dynamics in sports, yet studies show that gender differences can vary between sports (Barcala-Furelos et al., 2024). For example, football and other sports socially perceived as masculine often get higher male participation, while stereotypes that discourage female participation and undervalue

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their abilities limit female involvement (Chalabaev et al., 2013). The hidden curriculum reinforces these stereotypes through unwritten practices in physical education settings, where gendered behaviours remain (Valencia-Peris et al., 2020).

The hidden curriculum in physical education

In school sports, male and female students inherently possess a sports culture that research should consider (Vázquez & Álvarez, 1990). Traditional stereotypes, rooted in initial socialisation patterns with family or peers, persist among students—though sports participation positively influences attitudes toward gender equity and female participation (Cruz-Morales et al., 2022). For instance, boys are often encouraged to take part in competitive sports like football from a young age, reinforcing a cultural association between masculinity and physical competence (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Conversely, girls may receive less encouragement to participate in such activities, leading to lower confidence and engagement. Thus, there is a need to promote awareness about the hidden curriculum, as it affects students' environments and expectations (AL-Khrisat & Abdelsalam, 2021). The persistence of stereotyped beliefs and behaviours in PE courses (Serra et al., 2020) indicates the subtle yet powerful ways in which the hidden curriculum operates to maintain gender divisions.

The above dynamics are evident in the way students declare their beliefs and attitudes during physical activity. For example, females may express reluctance to engage in football due to perceptions of roughness, while males may dismiss female participation based on assumptions about physical inferiority. These attitudes contribute to the perpetuation of traditional gender stereotypes and hierarchical relations between genders, making it crucial to examine how such interactions are shaped by broader societal influences (Chalabaev et al., 2013).

- e.g. FEMALES: Football is *just* for boys! I'm not playing football with them because they are rough!
- e.g. MALES: Football is *not* for girls! I don't want to play football with them because they are physically uncoordinated!

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The self-perceived motor competence

Females can resist power dynamics and, from an activist perspective, create supportive learning environments that enhance their engagement in sports (Oliver & Kirk, 2014). However, self-perceived motor competence is shaped by societal feedback, where males are often lauded for physical prowess, and females are less frequently encouraged or recognised in the same way (Hills, 2007). Gender equity can be promoted through the influence of educational institutions (Cruz-Morales et al., 2022) by examining how gender, academic training area, and sports practice affect both attitudes towards women's participation in sports and young people's perceptions of their own sporting abilities.

Both males and females hold expectations about their sports capabilities, especially in environments where families are actively involved (Merino Orozco et al., 2015). Family influence, along with broader cultural values, plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of competence. For instance, males, who are frequently encouraged to develop strength and competitiveness, may have a more positive self-perception of their motor competence, while females, often encouraged towards grace and cooperation, may internalise lower perceptions of their physical capabilities (Li et al., 2006).

Method

Participants' general description

The present research is framed in the quantitative research approach as a predictive study with a cross-sectional design. The sample consisted of 5,065 students, with 48.9% male participation and 51.10% female participation rates. The average age was 13.43 (95% Confidence Interval [CI]: 13.37 to 13.50), with an age range from 5 to 20-year-olds. The average age of males was 13.27 years ($SD = 2.39$), while that of females was 13.59 ($SD = 2.42$). Statistically significant differences emerged between the age averages of males and females when age-range measures were compared: $t(5063) = -4.67, p < 0.001$.

To ensure cross-country standardisation, a training workshop was conducted for all data collectors before the study began. The workshop included a detailed explanation

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of the data collection protocol and provided specific instructions on how to handle cultural nuances during interactions with participants. This training helped maintain consistency in the way questions were asked and how the football-related perceptions were measured across diverse contexts.

Weight, height, and perception

Regarding participants' physical descriptions, their average *weight* in kilograms (kg) was 52.09 ($SD = 13.44$), with males averaging 53.33 kg ($SD = 15.06$) and females 50.91 kg ($SD = 11.56$)—revealing statistical differences between them: $t(4646.529) = 6.39, p < 0.001$. The average *height* in centimeters was 158.92 ($SD = 13.49$), with males averaging 160.48 ($SD = 15.26$) and females 157.42 ($SD = 11.34$)—do also exhibiting statistical differences between them: $t(4570.139) = 8.095, p < 0.001$. The average *perception* about playing football well was 5.37 ($SD = 2.96$), with males averaging 6.46 ($SD = 2.71$) and females 4.33 ($SD = 2.81$)—thus, also revealing significant statistical differences between them: $t(5062.713) = 27.363, p < 0.001$.

Characteristics regarding nationality

With regards to participants' nationality (Table 1), 14.80% were Bosnian, 6.1% were Brazilian, 17.70% were Chilean, 7.90% were Colombian, 17% were Iranian, 9.30% were Mexican, 6.20% were Moroccan, 15.3% were Spanish, and 5.80% were Ukrainian (countries added in alphabetical order). When comparing the average age of participants from these countries, significant statistical differences were found: $F(8,1184.93) = 297.91, p < 0.001$. Similarly, regarding participants' weight across different countries, significant differences were observed: $F(8,16134.10) = 125.20, p < 0.001$. The same occurs when measuring participants' height across different countries: $F(8,24881.62) = 206.14, p < 0.001$.

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Table 1. Participants' nationality distribution.

Country	<i>n</i>	%	Age		Weight		Height	
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Bosnia-Herzegovina	900	14.80	14.00	2.58	57.31	14.43	168.21	12.28
Brazil	375	6.10	14.19	2.09	53.58	11.71	159.44	10.58
Chile	1082	17.70	14.40	1.87	55.09	10.75	160.27	11.15
Colombia	482	7.90	13.42	2.15	49.79	15.48	150.71	15.68
Mexico	566	9.30	14.81	2.14	55.55	13.17	159.67	14.08
Morocco	376	6.20	13.06	2.13	50.89	13.02	159.32	12.08
Spain	933	15.30	10.83	0.88	42.60	9.45	150.37	9.15
Ukraine	351	5.80	13.40	2.15	52.00	13.26	162.69	13.17

Note. Number of participants (*n*); percentage (%); average (*M*); standard deviation (*SD*).

Chi-Square Fit Issues

In the female sample, the relative chi-square ratios in some models exceeded acceptable thresholds ($\chi^2/df > 3$), indicating potential problems with model fit. This issue required further attention. To better understand these discrepancies, it was important to examine why the chi-square ratio was higher in the female group and what implications this has for the validity of the findings. One reason for these fit issues was the presence of more variability in the self-perception measures among females, which influenced the overall goodness-of-fit indices.

Additionally, cross-cultural differences in how participants responded to questions about gender equality in football contributed to these fit problems. To address these concerns, a sensitivity analysis was performed, re-evaluating the fit indices for female participants separately in each country. This allowed us to identify whether nationalities had disproportionately higher chi-square values and investigate if cultural biases impacted these discrepancies.

Ethical praxes

Regarding ethics in research involving humans, research approval, and data protection, privacy measures were taken before starting the research. Permissions were

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obtained from the relevant committees and families. These procedures were initially addressed during *Stage II*, where researchers were briefed on how to secure the necessary approvals and the deadlines for implementing the intervention.

Instruments

For data collection, the *Escala Breve de Actitudes hacia la Igualdad de Género en el Fútbol en Contexto Escolar* (EBAIGFU), was translated as the Brief Scale of Attitudes towards Gender Equality in Football in the School Environment (Gil-Madróna et al., 2022). EBAIGFU is a Likert scale consisting of 11 items with options ranging from “Totally disagree” to “Totally agree.” Table 2 shows the dimensions of the scale, its distribution, and the internal consistency rate. The scale has been internationally validated pondering 6,101 students—demonstrating psychometric properties related to attitudes towards gender equality in football within school settings (Méndez-Hinojosa et al., 2024).

Table 2. Dimensions of the EBAIGFU scale.

Dimension	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Equal Beliefs	4	0.74
Sexist Beliefs	4	0.72
Perception of Sexists Relationships	3	0.68

Procedure

Stage I. Academic coordinators informed senior colleagues from various countries about the research project, seeking their feedback and interest in participating.
Stage II. A training workshop was conducted via Skype for those who agreed to participate. This workshop covered the research goals, procedures, implementation protocols, data storage, consent requirements from participants' families or school boards, and deadlines. Approval from school boards and legal representatives was emphasised.

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Data analysis

For data analysis, a structural equation model was employed. Factorial invariance between males and females was verified through multi-group analysis. The discrepancy function was optimised using the maximum likelihood method, and restrictions were applied in it. Data fit for both single and multi-group analyses was assessed using eight metrics: relative chi-square (χ^2/df); goodness of fit (CFI); standardised mean squared error (SRMR); and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA).

Values $\chi^2/\text{df} \leq 2$, GFI, NFI, CFI ≥ 0.95 , AGFI ≥ 0.90 , SRMR, and RMSEA ≤ 0.05 are indicators of good data fit. Values $\chi^2/\text{df} \leq 3$, GFI, NFI, NNFI, CFI ≥ 0.90 , AGFI ≥ 0.85 , SRMR ≤ 0.10 , and RMSEA ≤ 0.08 indicate an acceptable fit. The equality of goodness of fit was assessed with the sample of the difference between the χ^2 statistics, the relative differential chi-square ($\Delta\chi^2/\Delta\text{df}$), and the differences in CFI, NFI, and NNFI. Values of $p > 0.05$ for $H_0: \Delta\chi^2 = 0$, $\Delta\chi^2/\Delta\text{df} < 2$, ΔCFI , ΔNFI , and $\Delta\text{NNFI} \leq 0.01$ demonstrate equality in goodness of fit. The Mardia multivariate normality ratio was ensured not to exceed 10. In cases of non-compliance with this parameter, confidence intervals were assessed through repeated sampling using the simulation of 2,000 random samples generated by the method of bias-free percentiles.

As for correlation values (r), direct and indirect effects (β), and explained variance (R^2), the following classifications are used in this research: Trivial (values below 0.10); Low (values between 0.10 and 0.29); Medium (values between 0.30 and 0.49); High (values between 0.50 and 0.69); Very High (values over 0.70). The estimation of factorial invariance is also crucial in transcultural research due to the ease with which the methodology allows for comparisons between different groups (e.g. men vs women) or cultures (e.g. Spanish vs American) regarding the interpretation of elements in a scale/model.

Results

Predictive model of the favourable attitude towards gender equality in football

The structural model from the pooled (Table 3) disclosed a right Mardia's multivariate kurtosis value ($M_{SK} = 5.34$) and goodness-of-fit indices for seven of the eight measures

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(GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI, NNFI, RMSEA, and SRMR). Still, the relative chi-square ratio was higher than expected ($\chi^2/df > 3$). The correlation between time spent practicing football (TPS) and the perceived competence in playing football (SPC) was moderate ($r = 0.45, p < 0.001$). The variable with the highest direct effect on the favourable attitude towards gender equality in football (FATGES) was the perceived motor competence (MPC: $\beta = -0.52, p < 0.001$), evidencing a substantial effect size. The highest indirect effect on FATGES came from TPS, mediated by MPC ($\beta = -0.15, p < 0.001$), with a small effect size. The model explained 30% of the variance, which is considered a medium effect size.

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Table 3. Structural model from the pooled sample.

Statistics	Sample	Males	Females
χ^2/df	3.34	1.00	10.33
GFI	1.00	1.00	1.00
AGFI	1.00	1.00	0.98
CFI	1.00	1.00	0.96
NFI	1.00	1.00	0.95
NNFI	0.99	1.00	0.86
RMSEA (IC 90%)	0.02 (0.008, 0.037)	0.001 (0.00, 0.03)	0.06 (0.04, 0.08)
SRMR	13	6	33
Correlation (<i>r</i>) TFP ↔ CPF	0.45	0.46	0.39
Standardised Betas (β) Direct Effects	TPF → CM = 0.13	0.13	0.12
	CPF → CMP = 0.29	0.27	0.26
	CMP → IGF = -0.52	-0.38	-0.46
	CPF → IGF = 0.42	0.24	0.34
	IGF → EB = 0.21	0.35	0.28
	IGF → PSR = -0.35	-0.58	-0.37
Standardised Betas (β) Indirect Effects	TPF → CM → IGF = -0.07	-0.05	-0.05
	CPF → CM → IGF = -0.15	-0.10	-0.12
	TPF → CM → IGF → EB = 0.01	-0.02	0.01
	TPF → CM → IGF → PSR = 0.02	0.03	-0.01
	CPF → CM → IGF → EB = 0.06	0.05	-0.02
	CPF → CM → IGF → PSR = -0.01	-0.08	0.06
Explained Variance (R^2)	IGF (R^2) = 30%	14%	23%
	EB (R^2) = 4%	12%	8%
	PSR (R^2) = 13%	34%	13%
	CMP (R^2) = 14%	13%	11%

Note. Significance level $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.001$, ^{ns} $p > 0.05$. Adjustment rates: relative chi-square (χ^2/df), rate of goodness of fit (GFI), rate of corrected goodness of fit (AGFI), rate of regulated

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adjustment (NFI), rate of non-regulated adjustment (NNFI), comparative rate of adjustment (CFI), mean squared approximation error (RMSEA [{90% CI}] = root mean square error of approximation {confidence interval with a 90% confidence level}), and standardised mean squared error (SRMR). Duration of football playing (TPF), perceived competence in football (CPF), egalitarian beliefs (EB), sexist beliefs (SB), perception of sexist relations (PSR), and perceived motor competence (CM). If the model's solution is not acceptable (N/A), the indirect effects cannot be determined.

The model specified for the male sample showed a multivariate normality rate of 2.76, indicating that the assumption of multivariate normality can be reasonably assumed. Additionally, all eight goodness-of-fit indices were acceptable. The correlation between the time spent practicing football (TPS) and the perceived competence in playing football (SPC) was moderate ($r = 0.46, p < 0.001$). The variable with the most influence on the favourable attitude towards gender equality in football (FATGES) was the perceived motor competence (MPC: $\beta = -0.38, p < 0.001$), demonstrating a medium effect size. The most significant indirect effect on FATGES was mediated by SPC and MPC ($\beta = -0.10, p < 0.001$), which displayed a small effect size.

Antagonistically, the model specified for females (Table 3) showed a Mardia's multivariate kurtosis rate (M_{SK}) higher than the established maximum ($M_{SK} = 21.71, p > 10$). Confidence intervals were determined using simulations with 2,000 random participants. The model displayed satisfactory values for five out of the eight goodness-of-fit indices (GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI, and SRMR), while two of them were just acceptable (NNFI and RMSEA). The relative chi-square was high ($\chi^2/df = 10.33, p > 3$). The correlation between TPS and SPC was moderate ($r = 0.39, p < 0.001$). The variable with the most influence on FATGES was MPC ($\beta = -0.46, p < 0.001$), showing a medium effect size. The most important indirect effect on FATGES was mediated by SPC and MPC ($\beta = -0.12, p < 0.001$), with a small effect size. The total explained variance for FATGES was 23%, which indicates a small effect size.

Factorial invariance of the predictive model by gender

Six models with varying levels of constraints were specified: without constraints (SC), with constraints on measurement weights (PM), with constraints on structural weights (PE), with constraints on structural covariances (CE), with constraints on structural residuals (RE), and with constraints on measurement residuals (RM).

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Regarding goodness-of-fit, the SC, PM, and PE models showed good fit across six of the eight indices (GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI, NNFI, RMSEA, and SRMR), but an unacceptable fit with the relative chi-square ($\chi^2/df > 3$). However, in the CE, RE, and RM models, poor fit indices predominated. From these models, one index was acceptable (GFI) and another was good (SRMR).

Regarding the differential indices, invariance was demonstrated in the PE model by the indices ΔCFI and ΔNFI ($p < 0.01$). For the model PM, indices were the values of $\Delta\chi^2_{(7)} = 2.495$ ($p > 0.05$) and $\Delta NNFI$ ($p < 0.01$). The measurement weights, covariances, and variances were significant for both males and females in the models with specified constraints. Conversely, in the women's sample, a non-significant parameter (measurement error variance for FATGES) was observed in the PM, PE, and CE models. In the RE and RM models, this measurement error variance was significant.

Limited Practical Recommendations

Although the results are revealing, the paper would benefit from more concrete, practical recommendations for coaches, schools, and policymakers. For example, strategies to improve perceived motor competence among female footballers or reduce discriminatory attitudes are only briefly mentioned. To enhance the paper's practical utility, it could provide actionable recommendations for coaches on how to create inclusive football training environments and for schools to promote gender equality through physical education programmes. Moreover, policymakers could be encouraged to implement workshops or educational resources aimed at reducing gender biases in school sports. These additions would significantly increase the practical value of the research findings.

Cultural Differences Not Fully Explored

While the study includes participants from a diverse range of countries, it does not dig deeply into the influence of cultural factors on attitudes towards gender equality in football. This is a missed opportunity, especially given the cross-cultural nature of the research. Different countries have varying sociocultural norms, religious influences, and historical contexts, all of which shape attitudes towards gender equality in sports. A

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deeper exploration of these sociocultural factors would provide more nuanced insights into how cultural backgrounds influence participants' perceptions. Future research could adopt qualitative approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, to better understand how cultural contexts impact gender attitudes. This would add a valuable dimension to the study, offering a richer understanding of how different social environments influence beliefs about gender roles in football.

Sample Skew

The sample skews slightly towards females (51.1%), which could affect the generalisability of the results, particularly regarding male footballers' attitudes. A more balanced sample might have provided clearer insights into gender differences, potentially reducing the influence of gender bias on the findings. Future research should aim for a more even gender distribution or apply statistical adjustments to account for this sample imbalance, ensuring that the results are not disproportionately influenced by the overrepresentation of female participants.

Focus on Motor Competence

The study places a strong emphasis on perceived motor competence as a predictor of attitudes towards gender equality in football, which is a useful focus. However, the paper could expand on other psychosocial factors that might also play a role in shaping these attitudes. Variables like self-efficacy, peer influence, and societal expectations are likely to have an impact on perceptions of gender equality in football, and exploring these factors would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Incorporating self-efficacy—the belief in one's own ability to succeed—and peer dynamics could offer additional insights into how attitudes are formed and influenced. This would give future research a broader framework for examining the predictors of gender equality in football, beyond just motor competence.

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Limited Longitudinal Insight

The cross-sectional design of the study limits its ability to make causal claims. While the paper successfully identifies correlations, it cannot definitively determine how attitudes develop over time. A longitudinal design would allow researchers to track changes in attitudes towards gender equality over time, providing stronger evidence for causal relationships. Future research could focus on longitudinal studies to examine how football practice and perceived competence influence gender attitudes throughout childhood and adolescence. This addition would strengthen the study by allowing researchers to observe how attitudes evolve and whether interventions to promote gender equality in football have lasting effects.

Discussion

The perceived motor competence (CMP) had the strongest direct effect on positive attitudes towards gender equality in football. This finding suggests that enhancing motor competence, particularly among female footballers, could be a key strategy in fostering more positive attitudes towards gender equality. The positive correlation between football skills and egalitarian attitudes also indicates that boys who perceive themselves as skilled are more likely to support gender equality, a trend supported by Castillo's (2012) theory of the "male mosaic." This concept posits that competence in sports influences gender-related attitudes, with more confident males displaying fewer sexist attitudes.

However, future studies should delve deeper into other psychosocial factors like peer influence, self-efficacy, and cultural norms to provide a more comprehensive explanation of these attitudes. Incorporating longitudinal data would also allow researchers to track whether improvements in motor competence led to sustained changes in gender attitudes over time.

Additionally, the study's sample skew toward females (51.1%) may have influenced the results, especially concerning the generalisation of male attitudes towards female footballers. A more balanced sample or appropriate adjustments would provide clearer insights into these gender dynamics.

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Finally, the cross-cultural aspect of the research is a missed opportunity. The study's diverse participant base offers a unique chance to investigate how cultural differences shape attitudes towards gender equality in football, but this potential is not fully explored. Future research could adopt qualitative methods to provide deeper insight into how sociocultural factors influence gender attitudes in various countries.

Conclusions

In sum, women's football is gaining global recognition, yet the pursuit of equal rights and recognition remains an ongoing challenge. This research underscores the urgent need to shift perceptions about women in football and promote more positive interactions between male and female players. Findings indicate that perceived motor competence plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards gender equality in football, particularly for female athletes.

To address these challenges, strategies should prioritise encouraging greater female participation in football by fostering supportive and inclusive environments that enhance both their experiences and their perceived competence in the sport. Interventions aimed at reducing discriminatory attitudes among male players, while simultaneously promoting skill development and confidence in female players, are key steps toward creating a more equitable football culture.

Additionally, the study points to the importance of considering cultural contexts when addressing gender biases, suggesting that tailored approaches are needed to effectively combat ingrained stereotypes in different societies. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to track changes in gender attitudes over time, enabling a deeper understanding of how motor competence and psychosocial factors influence evolving attitudes. By focusing on holistic strategies that combine skill-building, education, and cultural awareness, football can serve as a powerful platform for promoting gender equality and inclusion globally.

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