

The Gendered Nature of the 2010 FIFA World Cup and Its Impact on the Girl Child's Self-efficacy and Educational Aspirations

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ABSTRACT The granting of the opportunity to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup to South Africa marked a significant milestone in the development and promotion of sports in South Africa as well as the African continent at large. Among other things, the global tournament would act as a catalyst for economic growth and the achievement of development goals. The critical issue though, was that the 2010 FIFA World Cup was grossly gendered in terms of its structures and media coverage. The imbalance in gender representation and media coverage raised the controversy of whether the tournament would really promote total social development among all the people. This article examined the gendered nature of the 2010 FIFA World Cup and the negative impact this had on the girl child's self-efficacy and educational aspirations. The study was based on secondary data collected through review of studies, policy documents and reports. The study concludes that gender stereotypes reinforced and sustained through non-school social institutions have latent effects on the girl child's self-efficacy and learning opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

In May 2004, FIFA awarded the opportunity to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup to South Africa, the first ever African country to host the tournament in the 101 years of FIFA's existence (Fink 2008). The 2010 FIFA World Cup was a historic opportunity for South Africa and the entire African continent. The opportunity to host the World Cup was critical as among other things it would act as a catalyst for economic growth and the achievement of development goals in South Africa and the broader African continent (SADC 2005). Specifically, the successful hosting of the games was widely believed to impact positively towards the country's realisation of the Millennium Development Goals for 2014 as set by the United Nations in 2000. As Richardson (2009) commented, "part of the way the government would ensure that the World Cup contributes to the country's growth and development goals is by making sure that hosting the tournament brings opportunities that

can be accessed by all South Africans of different persuasions".

The critical issue was that for the FIFA World Cup to succeed in its role as an engine for social and economic development, it had to be organised and managed in such a way that both men and women would benefit. Put slightly different, this implies that both sexes were supposed to be equally and equitably engaged in the planning and general administration of the tournament. Contrary to expectation, it turned out that the organisation and management of the game was left entirely in the hands of men with very few women playing a marginal and subordinate role. Instead of providing the space where masculinity and femininity are re-negotiated, the 2010 World Cup reaffirmed gender differences among participants.

This paper sets to do two things. Firstly, it seeks to contend that the 2010 FIFA World Cup was highly masculine. Secondly, it sets to argue that this unbalanced portrayal of the game has a latent and far reaching impact on the girl child's self-efficacy and educational aspirations. The presentation will first examine the structure of the FIFA executive, the structure of the 2010 FIFA World Cup organising committee South Africa, outline theoretical explanations and lastly

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discuss the impact on the girl child's self-efficacy and educational aspirations.

THE STRUCTURE OF FIFA EXECUTIVE

The FIFA executive committee is the governing body of the world football association that is elected by FIFA congress. The role of the executive committee includes among other things, determining dates, locations and the format of tournaments and appointing FIFA delegates. The committee consists of a president, eight vice-presidents and fifteen members who are appointed by confederations and associations (Masengale 2009). This brings the total membership of the FIFA executive to twenty-four. The sad thing about the composition of this executive is that all the twenty-four members are males. This scenario does not promote equity and equality in sports participation between the sexes as it sends the ideological impression that women do not possess the competences to manage sports. This hegemonic culture was further manifested at the level of FIFA World Cup 2010 (South Africa) Local Organising committee.

The Structure of the 2010 FIFA World Cup Local Organising Committee, South Africa

The Local Organising Committee (LOC) is the body that was responsible for all matters pertaining to the 2010 World Cup Championship. It was structured in such a way that various participants in football and operational activities associated with football were represented. At the helm of this local committee was a male chief executive officer who was assisted in his functions by eight chief officers, each being in charge of a specialist management area such as security, communications, marketing, transport and logistics, information technology (IT), finance, and competitions. Each participant was chosen on the basis of specific skills and expertise that would contribute to the combined undertaking needed for the successful hosting of the championship (Norris 2010). What was glaringly conspicuous about this committee was that all of its membership was male save for the chief operations officer who was the only woman.

The gender composition of the two committees was a clear manifestation of men's propensity to exercise hegemony over women in society (Wadesango and Machingambi 2010). It

is this masculine and hegemonic culture that is perpetuated and reproduced by the mass media with the cumulative effect that women's chances of participation in sports leadership continue to diminish beyond acceptable levels. Women occupied less than 5% of the administrative positions (Desai 2010). Furthermore, nearly all the coaches, commentators, judges, administrators and referees who participated in the 2010 FIFA World Cup were males. Such is the backdrop under which this study is undertaken, a situation that is not conducive to the development of a positive self-efficacy for the girl children with the concomitant effect that their educational aspirations are latently affected.

The Portrayal of Women during the 2010 FIFA World Cup

A look at the recently held FIFA 2010 World Cup suggests that it was a predominantly male event, prepared by men, mainly for male spectators with women only playing complementary and insignificant roles. As Wadesango and Machingambi (2010) put it, there was a near absence of women in critical decision-making structures of the sport. Women's participation, involvement and subsequent coverage by the media in the 2010 FIFA World Cup was minimal despite their expertise as soccer players (Desai 2010). To quote Wadesango and Machingambi (2010), "The eve of the 2010 FIFA World Cup kick-off was characterised by an overwhelming maleness in which women were predominantly presented and depicted as cheerleaders, wives, girl friends and general supporters of the big tournament." The same authors go on to observe that the 2010 FIFA World Cup saw the portrayal of women as mere "glamour babes", advertising national soccer outfits and pawns on the chessboard of economic warfare, a by-product of the international financial recession.

Contributing to this issue, Huggins and Randell (2007) add that women worldwide tend to receive lower levels of media coverage and the media subjects them to sexist and derogatory language while the United Nations (2007) argue that the way sport is presented reflects and reinforces gender stereotypes. EurActiv (2010) observes that the media often portrays women as inferior and frivolous and they are sexualised next to the dominant, heroic, heterosexual and masculine footballers.

This arrangement will become ideological in

the sense that it will come to be accepted by both men and women as the natural order of things. The sporting culture itself is predominantly masculine which helps to support the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. For instance, nowhere in the media were female coaches, administrators, referees and judges presented. The 2010 FIFA World Cup, just like previous tournaments, under-reported on female views through predominantly male commentators, camera operators, photographers and media coverage saturated with “colourful spreads of scantily-clothed female world cup spectators” (Wadesango and Machingambi 2010). Such a low portrayal of girls and women in a world tournament of this magnitude seems to be a great triumph for the supporters of a traditional patriarchal society. This scenario tends to cultivate the stereotypical belief that women do not possess the attributes and leadership abilities necessary for holding important positions in sports. This can have unintended but far reaching effects on the girl child in terms of how they develop their self-efficacy, which in turn may affect their educational aspirations.

THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS

In order to explain the causal nature of the gender imbalance in the management and portrayal of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the study will draw upon two closely interrelated theoretical frameworks namely, the hegemonic masculinity and the critical feminist theory.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Coakley (2001) describes hegemony as the condition in which certain social groups within a society obtain and keep authority through imposition, manipulation, and consent over other groups. In a society of hegemonic masculinity, women are restricted from entering or participating in certain areas, sports being one of the most obvious. It remains evident in institutions where men hold power over women and strive to maintain that power (Connell 1995; Dixon and Beningfield 2007). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that, hegemonic masculinity is central to the dominant position of men and subordination of women. Masculinity, therefore, becomes the standard by which everything is measured, since masculine traits are those most desired in society (Hargreaves 1997).

Applying the hegemonic masculinity theory in the context of the current discussion means that the 2010 FIFA World Cup served as a hegemonic institution to preserve the power of men over women (Wadesango and Machingambi 2010). With regards to the 2010 FIFA World Cup, this was clearly evident not only in the playing field, but also in the coaching and administrative arenas of the game, the media’s depiction of the game, and the overall portrayal of women throughout the tournament.

Critical Feminist Theory

The underlying tenet of this theory is that gender stereotypes and sex role beliefs are widespread within society, particularly in developing countries of Africa (Heilman 2001; Pringle 2005). These stereotypes may have negative consequences, as they may be used to undermine perceptions of competence and power in respect of women (Deal 1998). Men are commonly stereotyped as agentic (achievement-oriented) in nature, confident, strong, assertive, and independent as compared to women (Connell 1995; Coakley 2001). Gender stereotypes then permeate all social institutions and organisational settings and are maintained and recreated within organizational settings through everyday interactions (Birrell 1994).

Critical feminists believe that sports is an institution created by and for men to reinforce the ideology of male superiority. By subordinating the role of females and their participation, sports has helped to prevent the society from being feminized.

Impact of the Gendered World Cup on Girls’ Self-efficacy and Educational Aspirations

Self-efficacy can be conceived as a person’s belief about his/her capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect his/her life (Bandura 1997). In this vein, self-efficacy can be viewed as a belief that one has the capability to execute the courses of actions required to manage prospective situations. The idea of self-efficacy is one of the centre points in positive psychology, a branch of psychology that focuses on factors that create meaning for individuals (Ormrod 1999). It is believed that our

personalized ideas of self-efficacy affect our social interactions in almost every way including our educational aspirations.

One's sense of self-efficacy can play a major role on how one approaches goals, tasks, and challenges (Bandura 2001). The concept of self-efficacy is central to Bandura's social cognitive theory which emphasizes the role of observational learning and social experience in the development of personality (Kwak and Bandura 1998). Schwarzer (1992) posits that self-efficacy develops mainly from external experiences and self-perception and is influential in determining the outcome of many events in an individual's life.

The under-representation, negative and insignificant portrayal of women in the 2010 FIFA World Cup has far reaching implications for the girl child, implications that extend beyond the realm of sport into other important areas of their lives including education. The depiction of women and girls as wives and girl friends, for instance, brings deep and life-long challenges that impact on their lives in a multitude of ways, including socially, emotionally, behaviourally, recreationally, vocationally and educationally (Wadesango and Machingambi 2010). First and foremost such a portrayal and poor coverage has a latent effect on the development of the girl child's self-efficacy, beliefs, self-esteem and internal locus control (Lovett and Lowry 1994). The girl child tends to develop a low self-concept of herself and thus consequently develops a negative self-efficacy about her abilities. The work of Bandura (1997) offers valuable insight into the development of self-efficacy and how a negative self-efficacy can dampen and diminish the individual's educational aspirations.

Kwak and Bandura (1998) demonstrated in a study that people with a negative self-efficacy are unlikely to grow and expand their skills (Pajares and Urdan 2006). They went on to show that negative self-efficacy can lead people to believe tasks are harder than they actually are (Schwarzer 1992). This often results in poor task planning, as well as increased stress, conditions that are not conducive for success in school. Furthermore, Steinberg (1998) has concluded on the basis of findings from a study in Indian schools that students with a positive sense of efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves with difficult tasks and be intrinsically motivated.

The authors of this paper argue that the negative portrayal of girls and women in the 2010 FIFA World Cup was not neutral as consciously or unconsciously, girls were forced to pick certain messages and nuances about their perceived abilities and competencies, which in turn had a strong bearing on their educational aspirations. Furthermore, the near absence of female sports figures in the World Cup, an event that was televised to millions of people all over the world, in our view, served to internationalise women inferiority to men. This had the direct effect that all the girls who watched the game had less exposure to female role models as compared to boys.

Without female role models to look up to, girls may miss out on the encouragement, inspiration and exhilaration that go along with positive role modelling. Numerous studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between an individual's attitude towards learning and the role models that he/she is exposed to (Smith and Betz 2000).

In terms of Bandura's social cognitive theory which emphasizes the role of observational learning and social experience in the development of personality (Kwak and Bandura 1998), an individual's actions and reaction in almost every situation is influenced by the actions that the individual has observed in others. This implies that among other things, children learn through positive role models whom they see in real life, in the media and read about in literature. In the light of the foregoing argument, it is therefore critical not to take for granted the nature and impact of the observations and experiences that school children of all ages in general and girls in particular acquired from the 2010 World Cup experiences. Given the fact that women and girls played a complementary role and that no positive female role models were depicted by the media, one can argue with reasonable justification that the 2010 World Cup failed to provide meaningful experiences for girls and many young adolescent women. Such conditions were not conducive to the development of a positive self-efficacy for the girls, which is critical in their learning.

Although it was largely an out of school activity, this research argues that the experiences that the girl child acquired from the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the world's most widely viewed sporting event, negatively impacted on their

processes of learning and interactions within the school environment. In a way it can be argued that the near absence of women in leadership positions and their negative portrayal in the world tournament has effects that are very close to those served by the hidden curriculum. The latter simply refers to the unstated rules and messages that are found in social institutions and have a circumscribing and constraining effect on student attitudes and aspirations (Smith and Betz 2000).

Thus, by observing the processes of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, girls picked up implicit messages about their perceived incompetence and skills relative to boys and men. In the context of South Africa, the fact that students (including girls) were fully immersed in the games is attested by the decision taken by the Department of Education to close schools during the whole duration of the World Cup. Effectively this means that for more than one and half month, school children, particularly girls had to endure and naturalise the demeaning nature in which girls and women were portrayed during the games.

Commenting on media coverage of women during the World Cup, Wadesango and Machingambi (2010) observed that women were portrayed as inferior, frivolous and sexualised next to the dominant, heroic, masculine footballers. What is problematic in this case is that such coverage may serve to reinforce stereotypes of soccer as a heterosexual masculine activity in which women play subordinate, sexualised complementary roles. Such a portrayal may send subtle and elusive messages and nuances not only to girls but also to boys and teachers with the concomitant effect that social interactions, relations and perceptions within the school may be affected adversely. Thus, girls may unconsciously be influenced into believing that they cannot compete with boys in academic activities as boys are naturally there to lead them. Further, such assumptions may lead teachers to having different expectations of the abilities and behaviours of boys and girls. Such expectations, which have a strong hidden curriculum effect, are likely to influence and permeate discourses in teaching, learning and assessment, thereby giving rise to differential educational outcomes between the sexes. For instance, this may influence teacher expectations about girls' and boys'

performance and levels of achievement. Further, when assigning group tasks or projects, teachers may have the tendency to allocate leadership roles to boys as compared to girls, and in turn girls will come to accept such arrangements as natural. Such differential treatment will trigger the self-fulfilling prophecy concerning women inferiority, with the ultimate effect that the negative images assigned to girls will be accepted, normalised and legitimated (Bontis et al. 2008). Several studies have shown that among other factors, the self-fulfilling prophecy lies at the core of gender disparity in educational aspirations and attainment among students particularly in patriarchal societies (Ormrod 1999; Heilman 2001; Huggins and Randell 2007).

The practices and experiences of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, in which all school children in South Africa were immersed in for close to one and half months, might have contributed to the inculcation of particular negative values about women which frame thinking not only about soccer but also on other aspects of the school curriculum. For instance, the girl child's natural propensity for school sports and related outdoor educational activities and school visits may be adversely dampened and affected by their experiences of the World Cup. This way, it can be argued that the World Cup acted as a powerful vehicle for the transmission of powerful messages about what is acceptable behaviour for girls in a sexist culture.

The negative way in which girls and women were presented by the media during the big tournament may affect their general mindset and predispositions with regards to their general competencies and learning at school as compared to boys. This may bolster the view that girls are not as assertive and competent as their male counterparts. Such views may in turn affect girls' attitudes with regard to choice of subjects at school thereby perpetuating the sex-typing of school activities including academic subjects. For instance, where some subjects such as Mathematics, hard sciences, technical and medical domains are perceived as difficult, girls may find themselves predisposed into choosing those subjects that are considered easier and feminine in nature (Pajares and Urdan 2006). This may lead to the channelization of girls into subjects that are a prerequisite for entry into the caring professions. Of issue here is the fact that

such subjects tend to destine girls for low status occupations on leaving school. In this regard Ormrod (1999) argues succinctly that schools are not neutral sites that operate in social and political vacuums. Instead, they are imbued with dominant values and ideologies that prevail in the broader society.

CONCLUSION

The 2010 FIFA World Cup has come and gone but its legacy is set to continue in many of South Africa's communities and beyond. Although the successful hosting of the games is widely believed to have aided in the country's realisation of developmental goals, concerns could be raised about how the game reproduced and legitimated gendered hierarchies of power and privilege. This was largely manifested in the composition of the organisational structures as well as the negative manner in which women were portrayed during the world tournament. This article argues that the 2010 World Cup was characterised by male hegemony and female subordination. In this way the tournament thus failed to provide meaningful experiences for girls and many young adolescent women in South Africa and beyond. This article further suggests that the gender imbalance implicit in the 2010 FIFA World Cup perpetuates attitudes that inhibit development of a positive self-efficacy for girls, thereby diminishing their educational aspirations. It is, therefore, critical to point out that human development through sports will always remain problematic if gender issues are not taken into account.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Feminists should stake their claim to those spaces where patriarchy, race, class, sexual orientation and other bases of discrimination will have no home.
- Men and the media should also play a critical role in the mainstreaming of gender in sport.

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