

Crossing Boundaries with Title IX: An Investigation of the Effects of Gender Equity Laws Applied to Nigerian Interuniversity Athletics

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The year 2012 marked the 40th anniversary of Title IX. This law has provided opportunities for women and girls to participate in sport and for the continued growth of women's athletics. No other federal education statute has had a greater impact on athletics as Title IX. Within the first four years of its implementation, the number of female athletes increased by 600% and the number of girls involved with school sport increased by 500%.

Unlike the United States' Title IX statute, most West African countries do not have sex equity laws. For instance, in Nigeria there are hardly any federal laws in force prohibiting sex discrimination in any education program or activity receiving federal funding. Studies conducted in Nigeria have shown that women and girls are more disadvantaged than men and boys; and therefore, females are denied the same sport opportunities provided to their male counterpart. The cultural norms suggest that women are expected to be at home, away from school, and participate in restricted occupation. In certain regions in Nigeria, participation in sport, education, or occupation is seen as a privilege or a right given to men and to be admired by women.

In 1998, the Republic of Namibia hosted the Second World Conference on women in sport and there were over four hundred delegates from 14 different countries, including delegates from Nigeria. The main goal of the conference was to determine strategies to empower African women through participation in sport. A major outcome of the conference highlighted strategies on ways to empower African women through sport. However, in spite of numerous calls by global associations, national and international conferences, implementations of countless programs and policies, positive media portrayal and significant coverage of the benefits of girls and women's involvement in sport, there is still sex inequity in Africa, particularly Nigeria. In order to level the playing field and empower Nigerian women, it is critical to develop an appropriate legislation that ensures sex equity.

Consequently, the objective of this study is to explore the possibility of Nigeria developing appropriate gender equity legislation similar to Title IX that ensures that no person on the basis of sex, be subject to access or treatment discrimination under any sport program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. This study will utilize Trubek's (1972) towards a social theory of law and Oliver's pressure for deinstitutionalization theory to (a) identify and explore existing comprehensive legislations (if any) aimed at eliminating sex discrimination, (b) understand the acceptance and need for a Nigerian sex equity law, and (c) explore socio-cultural and political barriers or constraints that affect the implementation of gender equity laws in Nigeria.

To accomplish these objectives, this study employed a parallel mixed methodological research design, and merged together data from interviews with survey questionnaire data. Some of the questions asked addressed the need and acceptance of gender equity laws, awareness of participant's knowledge of existing laws, and constraints that hinder the implementation of gender equity laws in Nigeria. Research participants for this project included faculty members and students from the University of Lagos, Nigeria.

Following techniques and procedures for naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the transcription of the interviews were coded at three levels: open coding, pattern coding, and second-order theme coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). NVivo 8, qualitative data analysis software was used to analyze the data. Data was coded based on the themes of the proposed theoretical framework. Trustworthiness of new themes that emerged was enhanced through inter-coder reliability checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Also, several statistical procedures were used to analyze data collected via surveys. First, an exploratory factor analysis was employed to describe variability among observed and correlated variables, and descriptive analyses were used to report the mean scores of all variable. Second, regression analyses were run to examine the effect of

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constraints on the implementation of gender equity laws. Lastly, an analysis of variance was conducted to investigate participants' perception of the utility of existing constitutional laws in Nigeria.

Establishing a gender equity law in Nigeria will be beneficial to women and girls because sport involvement not only serves as a liberating motion but a fulfilling obligation for the realization of the UN's MDGS. Sport has the ability to empower participants with skills needed to initiate effective changes within their communities and promote positive socialization that enhance self-esteem, and indorse self-determined principles that help buffer against life's challenges.

This project adds value to the field of sport because it refines a concept that is applicable to practice. For instance, Title IX and its policies affect how sport organizations are managed and operated. By exploring the implementation, acceptance, and need for gender equity laws in Nigeria, the study fills a gap in the literature and continues the discourse. Not very many studies in sport management have examined the applicability of Title IX to other countries for the purpose of enhancing gender equity. The main implication of this study is, it provides new material to minimal information on the acceptance and implementation of globalized sport policies