Standing on the Glass Cliff? A Case Study of FIFA’s Female Leadership Development Programme

Na Young Ahn, Texas A&M University,
George B. Cunningham (Advisor), Texas A&M University

Socio-Cultural
Student Research Competition Runner Up
Abstract 2018-330

Saturday, June 9, 2018
10:35 AM
Room: Sable C

The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) has taken gender equality initiatives by inaugurating a nine-month female leadership development programme (FLDP) as well as appointing women in leadership positions in their history. However, these gender-related actions simultaneously emerged in times of FIFA’s recent crisis, such that several questions on this linkage remained unanswered. In drawing from a new theoretical notion of glass cliff (Ryan & Haslam, 2005, 2007), the purpose of the research was therefore to explore why FIFA started FLDP and address how they would leverage gender-based initiatives through FLDP and placement of women in decision-making positions. In doing so, findings revealed that FIFA’s FLDP was initially unrelated to the glass cliff phenomenon. Rather, FIFA implemented FLDP largely due to the growing number of women in the games of football across the world and football governance in general. Most notably, however, in terms of FIFA’s assigning women in the upper-level management and promoting gender equality in football, the perceptions of participants implied that the glass cliff phenomenon actually exists in football. Other findings concerning gendered football and implications were discussed accordingly.