



Female Chairs on the Boards of European National Sports Federations: A Comparative Study¹

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Please note that article is a preprint and has not been peer-reviewed

Doi: 10.5281/zenodo.6834672

¹ **Acknowledgements**

This work was supported with the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union under Grant number 590521-EPP-1-2017-1-ES-SPO-SCP.

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of board size, board gender diversity and organization age on the likelihood of having a female chair in National Sports Federations. We adopted a quantitative methodology to compare 297 federations in five countries (Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom), and collected the data from the official websites of the federations. The findings show that the board size, the proportion and the total number of women on the sports board, and the federation age have no significant impact on having a woman as a board chair when we include the countries' under study in the model. When the model does not differ by country, the odds of there being a female chair are higher as the total number of female members on the board increases, which could mean that national cultures have impacted women's representation as chairs in sports boards. The study also provides evidence on the impact of the board size and the total number of female directors on the gender of the chairperson, and the results show that chairwomen tend to preside on smaller boards. This study contributes to cumulative knowledge by presenting an international comparison of women's access to the top positions of sports governing boards of federations in Europe. Also,

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the study evidences the likelihood that the chairperson is a woman according to the size of the board.

Keywords: Chairwoman; national sports federations; corporate boards; gender

1. Introduction

Sport remains a symbolic and cultural phenomenon that celebrates a virile and strong embodied masculinity and where women struggle to gain the same recognition as men in the same roles, namely in positions of power and decision-making (Kihl and others., 2013; Thornton & Etxebarria, 2021). Men have persistently occupied the highest sports leadership positions (Burton, 2015; Evans & Pfister, 2021; Moore and others, 2001), and women that intend to reach these privileged positions deal with a lack of competence recognition, public invisibility, gender stereotypes (Sidhu and others, 2021), family-work conflict, lack of career opportunities (Burton, 2015; Fink, 2016; Shaw & Hoeber, 2003), and sexual harassment (Klavenes and others, 2020). The masculine sports especially report these barriers to women and gender discrimination (Megheirkouni and others, 2020; Moore and others, 2010; Thornton & Etxebarria, 2021).

The International Olympic Committee has outlined its aim: ‘to increase the pipeline of female candidates for governance roles in general as well as for executive positions’ (International Olympic Committee, 2018, p. 22). However, in 2016, considering data from 45 countries, Adriaanse (2016a) showed that women remained underrepresented in the positions of board chair and chief executive. Being the chairwoman of a sports organization is the exception rather than the norm.

Following this line of research (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007; Sotiriadou & Haan, 2019), this study illustrates women's leadership representation in sports organizations by focusing on the position of board chair in all federations of the five European countries under study that are very different regarding their national cultures, namely gender equity (Globe, 2004). The data of the Globe project shows that the United Kingdom (3.67) and Portugal (3.66) present medium values and Italy (3.24), Spain (3.01) and Turkey (2.89) relatively low values regarding this culture dimension (Globe, 2004). Moreover, Spain, Portugal, and Italy are south and catholic European countries, the UK is north, and protestant European country, and Turkey is a Muslim and oriental European country. Such differences may impact the level of female representation in sport boards.

Federations are responsible for governing all aspects of the national sports and are funded by their national states. On the whole, their tasks consist of 'representing one or more sports, acting on behalf of their interests concerning society and to (inter)national sports organizations, promoting competitive sports and organizing competitions, championships and sports events, as well as articulating rules and regulations which govern them' (Nagel and others, 2015). This definition implies that the board of directors is the fundamental governance mechanism of a federation, being responsible for approving major strategic and financial decisions and promoting policies on gender equality and against discrimination towards women in sport. Moreover, as confirmed by research, as leaders of sport organizations they must be able to promote a mature working relation with their team members, once such ability will contribute to the board performance (Hoye, 2006).

Given the international pressures for more significant female leadership representation in sport mentioned above and the inherent assignments of the federations, we explore the representation

of women as board chairs and the organization-level factors that may influence the likelihood of having a female chair in a federation, namely the board size, board gender diversity, and age of the federation.

This study contributes to the literature about women's leadership in sport in two ways. First, it adds knowledge to the factors that constrained women's access to the top positions of sports organizations. Research suggests that achieving gender diversity on corporate boards leads to more effective corporate governance and financial and nonfinancial organizational outcomes (Adriaanse, 2016b, 2016a; Adusei, 2019; Perez-Rivases and others, 2017; Terjesen and others, 2009). However, 'organisational outcomes [...] are viewed as reflections of the values and cognitive bases of powerful actors in the organisation' (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Therefore, it is not merely the presence of women on the board but also the position they hold on the board that influences organizational performance, making it crucial to explore the factors potentially promoting women's access to the board chair, the highest position in the board. The second key contribution of the work is that it compares countries with different religions and national cultures, which allow us to analyse how such differences can impact gender equality in the leading roles of sports organizations. Furthermore, this study complements others carried out for a single country or a qualitative methodology.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section two focuses on the literature related to women's leadership in sports organizations. In section three, we describe the hypotheses development and the definition of the variables. In the fourth section, we provide the methodology. Finally, in the fifth section, we discuss the results and present the conclusions.

2. Women's leadership in sports organizations

Gender is a social and historical powerful dispositive in the organization of human life; a system of knowledge in the human societies that allows constructing an axis of difference and power between what it means to be a woman and a man, feminine and masculine (Acker, 1990; Connell, 1996; Kihl and others, 2013), and where men/masculinity represent the norm, (Acker, 1990; Connell, 1996). Such a regime of gender affects all public and private areas of life in society and is particularly evident in contexts related to positions of decision-making and authority (You and others, 2018). The association of such positions to masculinity and men (Acker, 1990) are normalized to construct an ideal gender-neutral version of what power means (Acker, 1990; Liff & Ward, 2002). Organizational practices that enhanced this ideal masculine profile, like recruitment and selection and career management, contribute to normalizing this gender regime and the relation of masculinity with competence and power. As such, women seem to have an inadequate profile to occupy positions of power and are less able to pursue them successfully (Powell, 2011). The glass ceiling metaphor illustrates the difficulties women face when seeking top management positions in organizations (Bertrand and others, 2019; Morrison and others, 1994). As Kanter (1977) argues, the low number of women in top management contexts affects their social experiences and interactions. Due to their low number, women who are successful in getting powerful organisational positions are likely to experience adverse effects such as not being recognized as competent and being devalued by their male peers (Kanter, 1977). Some people could perceive them as having superated the 'limitations' of their gender condition not being recognized as women anymore (Morrison and others, 1994).

Overall, the barriers women face in accessing and maintaining top management positions are well documented: difficulties in accessing social and informational male networks (Ibarra, 1995); exclusion from essential and visible work projects/experiences (Glass & Cook, 2016);

sexual harassment (Powell, 2011); gender stereotypes emphasizing female's family responsibility (Liff & Ward, 2002); competence unrecognition (Powell, 2011); ascribed to risky projects likely to fail (Glass & Cook, 2016); national conservative gendered cultures and religions (Koca and others, 2011; Thornton & Etxebarria, 2021); and lack of mentoring (Blake-Beard, 2001).

Sport management also reflects these barriers (Koca and others, 2011; Megheirkouni and others, 2020; Moore & Konrad, 2010; Thornton & Etxebarria, 2021). Although research has shown the emergence of complex and alternative gender sport identities (Henne & Pape, 2018), governing sports boards continue to be defined by a hegemonic heterosexual embodied and psychological masculinity that is rarely questioned (Elling and others, 2018; Koca & Öztürk, 2015; Walker & Bopp, 2011). The few women who occupy leadership sport positions do not conform to their gender norms (Burton & Parker, 2010; Claringbould & Knoppers, 2008).

As a result, women remain almost absent in the highest positions of sport governance (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014; Elling and others, 2018). This continues to be a reality, nonetheless the increased participation and interest of women in sport and the international agreements endorsed by governmental and non-governmental sport organizations (Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport, 1994; Helsinki Declaration on Women and Sport, 2014) to promote women presence as athletes, coaches, referees and board sport members.

In sum, women's discrimination in sport boards remains significant (Evans & Pfister, 2021), despite evidence demonstrating the benefits of having diversity in this context of power and decision making (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2008). Equally, studies of women's situations in sport boards remain limited. Therefore, this study focuses on objective structural factors, such

as board size, gender board diversity and organization age, to explore how they can predict women's presence as board chairs in federations.

3. Hypotheses

3.1 Board size

The scope and complexity of the organization's operations in private companies (Boone and others, 2007) and non-profit organizations (Cornforth & Simpson, 2002; de Andrés-Alonso and others, 2009) drive board size. This view, called the 'scope of operations hypothesis', argues that as the size of the organization increases, the size of its corporate board is also likely to grow due to the information needs deriving from more complex operations. According to some authors "boards are structures, whereas governance is a function designed to ensure accountability and staking out the strategic direction of an organization" (Svensson and others, 2018, p. 308). Literature also recognises the link between board size and board gender diversity in various organizational contexts. For example, Odendahl and Youmans (1994) argued that there is a greater representation of women on smaller, more community-based, lower-budget, less powerful and connected non-profit boards, while other studies found positive and statistically significant links between board size and composition and board diversity's gender and ethnic dimensions (Brammer and others, 2007), that larger boards contained more women directors (Burke, 2000), or argued that having a woman appointed to an all-male board is negatively associated with the board size and that all-male boards tend to be smaller (Dunn, 2012).

Despite this, research focusing on the links between board size and the gender of the board chair is lacking, especially when it is considered the positions occupied by women on the board. The role of the board chair expresses a much stronger symbolic meaning and formal power

than to be a board member and, therefore, involves much more gender social stereotyping. More than the board membership alone, the board chair role is usually perceived to require stereotypical masculine attributes and behaviours (Burton and others, 2009). As such, the greater complexity of the organization, reflected in the larger size of its board, exacerbates the gender stereotyping of the chair role. Based on these arguments, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): in the federations, the women board chairs tend to be related to smaller boards of directors.

3.2. Gender board diversity

Gender diversity is a recurring theme in literature focusing on the board of directors. Many studies on for-profit and non-profit boards find that it significantly impacts board and organizational performance (Carter and others, 2003; Erhard and others, 2003). The positive effects of board gender diversity usually result from gender quotas (when an organization must have a stipulated percentage of female members of the total board size) (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2013).

The federations boards investigated herein are not subject to the obligation of gender quotas except for the UK, where there is a minimum 30% gender representation target set for those receiving public funding (Sport England and UK Sport, 2016) or Spain where organizations have to comply with gender quotas to access public budgets. In particular, sports federations that request subsidies for the “Women and Sports” program of the Higher Sports Council from 2014 have to comply with a minimum of three women or 33% of women on the governing boards, since 2019 this requirement has extended the percentage or number of women to

receive all types of grants (Presidency of the Higher Sports Council, 2014, 2019). With the bill draft of the Sports, whose term of amendments ends on February 17, 2022, the minimum percentage of men and women could be between 40-60% of the sport board members (Ministry of Culture and Sports of Spain, 2022). The government of Italy introduced gender quotas in the Italian federations in 2018 (Author C). Still, they were not in force at the time of data collection.

Bradshaw and others (1996) explored the influences of the proportion of women on the board and the presence of a woman rather than a man in the position of CEO (Bradshaw and others, 1996). They found that women heading non-profits were more likely to have higher women on the boards. More recently, an study explores racial and gender diversity in non-profit boards and concluded that diversity on the boards impacts on the financial and nonfinancial organizational outputs of non-profit organizations (Harris, 2014).

Based on the data collected on the websites of the federations during the year of 2018, the role of CEO is present only in some of the federations under investigation, and only in some cases do their duties coincide with those of the board chair. Specifically, the statutes of the Italian and Turkish federations do not incorporate the CEO figure and have a General Secretary dealing with administrative affairs. Only 4 federations have a CEO appointed by the board chair in Portugal. In Spain, the board chair also sets the CEO (article 13 of Royal Decree 1835/1991 on Spanish Sports Federations and Registry of Sports Associations). Currently, 31 of the 66 Spanish federations do not have a CEO. The same individual cannot be the board chair and CEO in the UK. Considering that the board chair and the CEO, where existing, are not always designated by the same people, we can not assume that the findings of Bradshaw and others (1996) are extendable to the board chair position.

However, when the CEO and the board chair are different, it can be assumed that there is a relationship between gender board diversity and the gender of the board chair. Where the board of directors and the chair have the same active electorate (that is in Italy and Portugal where the members of the board and the board chair are elected together by the general assembly), the propensity of the active electorate to vote for a woman as a director could reflect the same tendency to vote for a woman as board chair. In the case of different active electorates, since diverse groups provide a broader range of information, knowledge, and perspectives (Ely & Thomas, 2001), a varied gender range in the board could express non-conventional views about the leadership of the federation and, as a consequence, the chance of a choosing a chairwoman is greater. Based on these arguments, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): in the federations, boards with greater gender diversity increase the probability of having a women board chair

3.3 Age of the National Sport Federation

The potential link between organizational age and female presidency could be related to the hypothesis of a life-cycle model in federations. NSFs are non-profit organization funding by the European national states. As research shows, the glaze ceiling continue to persist also on non-profit organizations. Men are disproportionately represented at the upper-level management (Gibelman, 2000). Moreover, research suggests that in non-profit organizations, corporate age affects the composition and behaviour of boards (Dart and others, 1996; Wood, 1992). In particular, older non-profit boards/organizations are larger and more diverse. Studies have argued that companies with longer histories are more complex and have a greater need for experience and skills (Guest, 2008). Other work suggests that board size increases with the

company age (Coles and others, 2008; Guest, 2008). Despite Dart and others (1996) invoking further testing of the validity of the life-cycle hypotheses for boards to distinguish between relatively predictable life-cycle dynamics and other important causal influences on non-profit organizations' boards such as leadership, the effects on female presidency remain unexplored.

A different view is proposed by Lynall and others 2003 (p. 416), who contend that corporate boards “carry with them vestiges of their history and traditions, and, as a result, board composition is relatively persistent, despite the changing needs of boards as they move through the life-cycle from adolescence to maturity”. This author develops the concept of path dependence within the context of boards where inertial pressures increase the ‘stickiness’ of board characteristics (Lynall and others, 2003). According to this view and considering the historical male domination in global sport governing bodies and how boards were informed through time by the masculine characteristics, we expect that the youngest federation would have more probability of having a woman as chair board.

Thus, we propose and test the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): the youngest federations predict more women board chairs.

4. Methodology

4.1 Context of the election of the Board chair and sample

In all five countries, the board chair represents the federation but is also responsible for overseeing the organization's success. Even if the management processes of the federations are becoming more ‘business-like’ (Madella and others, 2005) and ‘professional’ (Nagel and others, 2015), their governance is still typically structured like non-profit organizations (Lang and others, 2018) where democracy governs the organization of leadership. In all five countries

in the study, a collegial body involving the members of the federation or the heads of the local branches and/or their delegates elects the board chair. Table 1 shows the functions and the method of election of the board chair in the five countries investigated.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

Table 1. Process of Selection of the Board Chair

	Italy	Portugal	Spain	Turkey	UK
Regulatory source for the election of the board chair	Statutes of the federations in compliance with the legislative decree 23 July 1999, n. 242 *	Juridical Regime of Sports Federations**	Article 18 of Order ECD/2764/2015, of December 18. ***	Regulation of Board chair Election of the Sports General Directorate Federations published on 12 February 2009.	NGB's Articles of Association (AoA).
Election procedure	Democratic election (direct secret vote) by the members of the General Assembly that is formed directly by the members of the Federation, or by the heads of the local branches and/or by delegates elected during territorial assemblies.	Democratic election (direct secret vote) by the members of the General Assembly.	Democratic election (direct secret vote) by the members of the General Assembly.	Democratic election (direct secret vote) by the Federation's members (maximum 100 according to the number of clubs and athletes operating in the relevant sports branch) indicated by the General Directorate of Youth and Sports.	Democratic election usually by the board of directors and a nomination committee, chaired by an Independent Non-Executive Director.****
Eligibility requirements	Any member of the General Assembly who is an Italian citizen and of legal age may be a candidate for board chair	Any person, with Portuguese nationality and of legal age, who does not incur cause of	Any Spanish person and of legal age, who does not incur cause of disability or ineligibility may be a	Candidates have to be citizens of the Turkish Republic, be at least a high school or equivalent school graduate; not have been terminated as the board chair of the	Any person who is willing and is permitted by law to do so.

	provided he/she does not have criminal convictions, has been disqualified for more than one year by the NOC or any other nationally and internationally recognized sport body, has been penalized for doping, has conflicts of interests and legal disputes with the NOC or any other sport body recognized by the NOC.	disability or ineligibility, may be a candidate for board chair.	candidate for board chair. It is unnecessary to be a member of the General Assembly, but in this case, the candidacy must be accompanied by those known as ‘endorsements or presentations made by a minimum number of 15% of the members of the Assembly.	Federation as a result of an administrative investigation; not have been terminated because of the report to be prepared by the board; have not been prosecuted for tax and insurance debt; not been punished for over six months at a time or for one year of deprivation; not committed crimes against the constitutional order and functioning of this order.	
Tasks of the board chair	Executive body and legal representative of the Federation. Planning, management, and control concerning the competitive results at both national and international level. Appointing the national team	Executive body and legal representative of the Federation. Presenting the federation among the public administration, other national, international	Executive body and legal representative of the Federation. Calling, presiding, and implementing the agreements reached. Presiding over the General Assembly and the Delegate	Representing the Federation’s sports branch in Turkey and abroad, if necessary, handing over this power to the vice-board chair(s) or the Secretary-General; ensuring the regular and coordinated working of the committee; having the authority and responsibility of the accrual officer in	Leading the board and establishing an environment that enables the Federation to achieve its potential and long-term success.

	coaches and presiding over the national council of her/his Federation	and foreigner sport organizations, securing the management of all services, human resources, and negotiation issues related to the federation; taking part in the federation governing bodies meetings, with the casting vote if of a tie.	Commission, with the casting vote when there is a tie.	administrative and financial matters and to transfer this authority and responsibility to the Secretary-General only when necessary; providing solutions to problems encountered in practice (Regulation of Organization, Duty, Authority and Responsibility of General Directorate of Youth and Sports, Sports Federations published in the Official Gazette on 22 November 1993).	
Term of office	4 years	4 years	4 years	4 years	3-4 years*****

* Each Italian Federation in its statute provides the rules for the election of its chairs. These rules are the same for all the Italian Federations with the exception of some details concerning the possibility of a weighted vote (football) and limitations for the re-election. The statutes of the gymnastics, sailing, dance, rugby, winter sport, badminton, shooting sport, weightlifting, motoring, table tennis, motor boating, disabled sports federations do not have any stipulations or limitations for the re-election of the former board chair. In the Aviation Federation, the board chair cannot be re-elected for more than three consecutive terms and there are no exceptions to this rule. In all the other Federations, the general rule is

that the board chair cannot be re-elected for more than two consecutive terms except that one of the two previous offices had lasted less than two years and one day for any reason different from voluntary resignation).

** Each Portuguese Federation's statutes reinforce the election system regarding the regime of dedication and incompatibilities at the time of carrying out the position.

*** This juridical source articulates the electoral processes in each of the Spanish Sports Federations. The statutes of the Federations, define the re-election system.

**** The Companies Act (2013) does not stipulate a precise mechanism for appointing a board chair, but the recruitment process must be open, publicly advertised and can be drawn from the NGB's membership or outsiders to the federation.

*****Normally in UK a board chair serves a three-year term. Only exceptionally may a board chair hold office for a further year.

To carry out the study, we collected the data from the official websites of the sport national federations of the five countries in 2018 which produced a total dataset of 297 organizations. This equated to 55 federations in Italy (18.5% of the sample), 56 in Portugal (18.9%), 66 in Spain (22.2%), 62 in Turkey (20.9%), and 58 in the UK (19.5%).

Table 2. Gender of the board chair

Country			Italy	Portugal	Spain	Turkey	UK	Total
Gender of the chair	Man	Count	54	54	63	59	45	275
		% within gender of the chair	19.6%	19.6%	22.9%	21.5%	16.4%	100.0%
		% within 5 countries	98.2%	96.4%	95.5%	95.2%	77.6%	92.6%
		% of Total	18.2%	18.2%	21.2%	19.9%	15.2%	92.6%
	Woman	Count	1	2	3	3	13	22
		% within gender of the chair	4.5%	9.1%	13.6%	13.6%	59.1%	100.0%
		% within 5 countries	1.8%	3.6%	4.5%	4.8%	22.4%	7.4%
		% of Total	.3%	.7%	1.0%	1.0%	4.4%	7.4%
	Total	Count	55	56	66	62	58	297
		% within gender of the chair	18.5%	18.9%	22.2%	20.9%	19.5%	100.0%

	% within 5	100.0	100.0%	100.0	100.0%	100.0	100.0%
	countries	%		%		%	
	% of Total	18.5%	18.9%	22.2%	20.9%	19.5%	100.0%

- a. 5 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.07.

Analysis confirms that federations with a chairwoman are few and represent on average 0.07% of the sample. Only 22 federations had a chairwoman, representing 7.40% of the total sample, or 92.6% of the board chairs are men, a total of 275 of the 297. The country with the most women board chairs is the UK, with 13, representing 59.1% of the total. Then Spain and Turkey follow, with three women board chairs (13.6%). Finally, Portugal has two women board chairs (9.1%) and Italy just one woman board chair (4.5%).

4.2 Description of variables

The dependent variable is the presence of a woman board chair. It has been measured by a dummy variable equal to one if a federation, has a chairwoman and takes the value of zero otherwise. The independent variable 'Board size' has been measured as the total number of directors on the board, including the board chair (BOARD SIZE).

We measure gender board diversity through two independent variables: the total number of women and the percentage of women on the board. Consistently with Kanter (1977), the proportion of women on the board is calculated as the percentage of female directors. However, to avoid the effect that chairwomen could have, we have calculated the total number of women directors excluding the board chair, and we have divided that figure by the board size excluding the board chair (PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN) using the following formula:

$$\text{PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN} = ((\text{Total number of female directors} - N) / (\text{Board Size} - 1)) \times 100$$

Where N = 1 if the chair is a woman, and 0 if the chair is a man.

On the other hand, we measured the number of female directors as:

TOTAL NUMBER OF FEMALE DIRECTORS=Total number of women on the sport board
– N

We recalculated the independent variable ‘Age of the federation’ because it caused multicollinearity problems. We used a dummy variable (AGE) to avoid this difficulty and be consistent with H3, taking the 0 value if the federation existed before the Brighton Declaration and 1 otherwise.

We solved the multicollinearity problem using this approach, as shown in Appendix 1 and 2. As a control variable, we included the five countries (COUNTRY), taking the UK as a reference as it has the highest percentage of women. To avoid correlation problems, we did not include the variables PERCENTAGE and TOTAL NUMBER OF FEMALE DIRECTORS in the same model.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of the sample.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics. Gender of the chair

1=Chairwoman 0=Chairman		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Min.	Max.
Foundation date	0	268	1957	39.11	2.39	1823	2017
	1	22	1973	36.47	7.77	1892	2014
	Total	290	1958	39.07	2.30	1823	2017

Country	0	275	2.95	1.36	0.08	1	5
	1	22	4.14	1.25	0.27	1	5
	Total	297	3.04	1.39	0.08	1	5
Board size	0	275	11.76	4.83	0.29	1	38
	1	22	10.00	3.15	0.67	5	17
	Total	297	11.63	4.74	0.28	1	38
Total number of female directors without the chair	0	275	1.92	1.67	0.10	0	8
	1	22	2.59	1.65	0.35	0	6
	Total	297	1.97	1.68	0.10	0	8
% of female directors without the chairwoman	0	275	19.95	19.00	1.15	0	116.67
	1	22	30.10	20.39	4.35	0	83.33
	Total	297	20.71	19.26	1.12	0	116.67
Total number of female directors	0	275	1.92	1.66	0.10	0	8
	1	22	3.59	1.65	0.35	1	7
	Total	297	2.04	1.72	0.10	0	8
% of female directors	0	275	17.69	16.11	0.97	0	77.78
	1	22	37.75	18.26	3.89	8.33	85.71
	Total	297	19.18	17.08	0.99	0	85.71

Table 4. ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Foundation date	Between Groups	4960.94	1	4960.94	3.3	0.071
	Within Groups	436286.58	288	1514.88		

	Total	441247.52	289			
Country	Between Groups	28.54	1	28.54	16	0
	Within Groups	540.98	295	1.83		
	Total	569.52	296			
Board size	Between Groups	62.84	1	62.84	2.8	0.095
	Within Groups	6594.68	295	22.36		
	Total	6657.52	296			
Total number of female directors without the chair	Between Groups	9.07	1	9.07	3.3	0.072
	Within Groups	822.72	295	2.79		
	Total	831.79	296			
% of female directors without the chairwoman	Between Groups	2098.11	1	2098.11	5.7	0.017
	Within Groups	107678.00	295	365.01		
	Total	109776.11	296			
Total number of female directors	Between Groups	56.87	1	56.87	21	0
	Within Groups	813.56	295	2.76		
	Total	870.43	296			
% of female directors	Between Groups	8194.34	1	8194.34	31	0
	Within Groups	78124.20	295	264.83		
	Total	86318.54	296			

We conducted a one-way between-groups analysis of variance to explore the impact of gender of the board chair on the board size, age of the federations, and female participation on board, including and excluding the board chair.

Table 3 shows that men lead older federations across the data set, while women lead younger federations; the oldest exists since 1823 and the youngest since 2017. Regarding the age of the federation, there is a statistical significance difference at the $p < 0.1$ for the group of chairmen and chairwomen $F(1, 288) = 3.3$ (Table 4).

In the UK, there is a chairwoman in a federation created in 1892, whilst the rest of the chairwomen preside over younger federations created after the nineteen sixties until 2014. Spain stands out for having chairwomen in the oldest federations created between 1906 and 1961. Two Portuguese chairwomen led federations created in 1962 and 1996, while in Turkey, women preside over federations created between 1957 and 2006. On the other hand, there is only one chairwoman in a young federation in Italy.

The average size of the boards chaired by a man is about 12 (11.76) people, being the standard deviation of 4.83, while when women are the board chair, it amounts to 10 members, with a standard deviation around three directors (3.15). There is a statistical significance difference at the $p < 0.1$ level in board size for the two groups $F(1, 295) = 2.8$. In sports boards chaired by men, the number of members ranges from one to thirty-eight people, while in those chaired by women, this figure ranges from five to 17 people. In Italy, the only NFS with a chairwoman has 7 members. In Portugal, the average size of the boards chaired by a woman is 8 members, with a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 11 members. In Spain, the average number of people on a board with a chairwoman is 13, with the smallest being 9 people and the maximum being 18 members. In Turkey, the boards chaired by women have an average of 14 members, with a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 15. In the UK, the average size of boards chaired by a woman is 9 people, with a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 12 members.

The average number of women in a board chaired by a man, excluding the chair, is 1.92 people, while in boards led by a woman, the average number of women is 2.59. Consequently, women preside over sport boards where there are more female members. The percentage of women on boards chaired by men is 19.95%, while on boards chaired by women, there are approximately 32% more women. For gender equality, taking the variable number of women directors without the chairwomen, $F(1, 295)=3$, $p<0.1$, and including the chairwomen $F(1, 295)=21$, $p=0$. For the percentage of female directors without the chairwoman, $F(1, 295)=3.3$ $p<0.1$, and including the chairwomen $F(1, 295)=31$ $p=0$. We will use the corrected variable as indicated previously to avoid the chairwoman effect.

4.4 Logistic Regression Analysis

We obtained a linear combination of the predictor variables capable of estimating the characteristics influencing the probability that a chair belongs to a sport governing board with the board chair being women. Thus, we built two models where the dichotomous dependent variable equals 0 when the board chair is a man and 1 if the board chair is a woman:

$$Y_i = 1 \quad \text{Prob}(Y_i = 1) = p_i$$

$$Y_i = 0 \quad \text{Prob}(Y_i = 0) = 1 - p_i$$

A logistic function represents the models whose values range from 0 to 1, where p is the probability of success—belonging to a board chaired by a woman—and q the likelihood of failure—belonging to a board chaired by a man—and $p + q = 1$.

$$p = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-Z}}$$

Z is a combination of independent variables

$$Z = B_0 + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + \dots + B_kX_k$$

where B_0, B_1, \dots, B_k are the coefficients to estimate from the data, X_1, X_2, \dots, X_k are the independent variables, and e is the base of the natural logarithm.

We present four models. In the first model, the variables predicting the gender of the chair are: the board size, the organization age, the percentage of female directors on board excluding the chair, and the countries under study. In the second model, we substitute the variable percentage of women for the total number of female directors.

In the third model, we excluded the dichotomous variables corresponding to the countries, measuring the female presence with the percentage of women, while in the fourth model, we substitute the percentage for the total number of women.

Model 1:

$$Z = B_0 + B_1 \text{Board size} + B_2 \text{Percentage of Female Directors} + B_3 \text{ Federation Age} + B_4 \text{Italy} + B_5 \text{Portugal} + B_6 \text{Spain} + B_7 \text{Turkey}$$

Model 2:

$$Z = B_0 + B_1 \text{Board size} + B_2 \text{Total Number of Female Directors} + B_3 \text{ Federation Age} + B_4 \text{Italy} + B_5 \text{Portugal} + B_6 \text{Spain} + B_7 \text{Turkey}$$

Model 3:

$$Z = B_0 + B_1 \text{Board size} + B_2 \text{Percentage of Female Directors} + B_3 \text{ Federation Age}$$

Model 4:

$$Z = B_0 + B_1 \text{Board size} + B_2 \text{Total Number of Female Directors} + B_3 \text{ Federation Age}$$

We performed binary logistic regression to assess the impact of several factors in the likelihood that a sport board would report that the chair is a woman.

4.5 Results

Table 5 reports the four logistic regression models. The first logistic regression model reports the results between the dichotomous dependent variable, the gender of the board chair, and the predictor variables: board size, age of the federation, percentage of female directors without the chair, and countries. The whole first and second models containing all predictors was statistically significant, $\chi^2(7, 295)=22.894$ $p<0.01$, and $\chi^2(7, 295)=22.883$ $p<0.01$, showing that the models capably distinguishes between boards presided by a man and headed by a woman. Both models explain between 7.4% (Cox and Snell *R* Square) and 18.1% (Nagelkerke *R* Square) of the variation in the gender of the chair according to this criterion.

The third and fourth models exclude countries from the analysis. The third and fourth entire models containing all predictors was statistically significant, $\chi^2(3, 295)=10.018$ $p<0.05$, and $\chi^2(3, 295)=10.036$ $p<0.01$, showing that the model capably distinguishes between boards presided by a man and headed by a woman. The third model explains between 3.4% and 8.2% and the fourth 3.3% and 8.1% of the variation in the gender of the chair. The four models correctly classify 92.6% of the cases.

Table 5 Results of the Logistic Regression Analysis

Model 1	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Exp(B)
Board size	-0.14*	0.09	2.63	1.00	0.87
% female directors without the chairwoman	0.00	0.02	0.08	1.00	1.00
Federation Age Brightom1993(1)	-0.24	0.50	0.24	1.00	0.78
Country			12.50	4.00	
Country (1)	-2.83***	1.14	6.22	1.00	0.06
Country (2)	-2.43***	0.97	6.25	1.00	0.09
Country (3)	-1.46**	0.69	4.44	1.00	0.23
Country (4)	-1.21	0.89	1.87	1.00	0.30
Constant	0.46	1.21	0.14	1.00	1.58

Cox & Snell R Square	0.074				
Nagelkerke R Square	0.181				
Chi-square	22.894***				
Classification % correct	92.6				
Model 2	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Exp(B)
Board size	-0.14*	0.09	2.517	1	0.868
Federation Age Brightom1993(1)	-0.26	0.5	0.264	1	0.773
Country			10.998	4	
Country (1)	-2.63**	1.13	5.396	1	0.072
Country (2)	-2.18**	0.95	5.312	1	0.113
Country (3)	-1.47**	0.69	4.589	1	0.23
Country (4)	-0.93	1.03	0.818	1	0.395
Total number of female directors without the chair	0.051	0.2	0.066	1	1.052
Constant	0.137	0.96	0.02	1	1.146
Cox & Snell R Square	0.074				
Nagelkerke R Square	0.181				
Chi-square	22.883***				
Classification % correct	92.6				
Model 3	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Exp(B)
Board size	-0.07	0.06	1.422	1	0.93
% female directors without the chairwoman	0.017*	0.01	2.863	1	1.017
Federation Age Brightom1993(1)	-0.66	0.46	2.031	1	0.517

Constant	-1.72**	0.86	4.013	1	0.18
Cox & Snell R Square	0.028				
Nagelkerke R Square	0.068				
Chi-square	8.369**				
Classification % correct	92.6				
Model 4	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Exp(B)
Board size	-0.12**	0.06	3.938	1	0.886
Federation Age Brightom1993(1)	-0.7	0.46	2.292	1	0.496
Total number of female directors without the chair	0.275**	0.13	4.568	1	1.316
Constant	-1.36**	0.73	3.455	1	0.257
Cox & Snell R Square	0.033				
Nagelkerke R Square	0.081				
Chi-square	10.036***				
Classification % correct	92.6				

Note: The levels of significance are *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01; ****p<0.001.

Looking at the values and signs of the coefficients in the equation, the results show that in models one and two, the variables that contribute significantly to predicting the gender of the chair are three countries, Italy, Portugal and Spain, taking as reference the UK. The negative b values of these variables indicate that these countries will cause a decreased probability of the case recording a score of the board chair is a woman. The variable board size shows a negative value. It indicates that the odds of there being a female chair declines with the increasing number of members of the board of directors but is statistically weak (p<0.1). In these models that include the countries in the equation, the percentage of women or the number of female

directors on the sport board does not influence having a chairwoman. Models 1 and 2 show that practically only the variable country predicts a lower presence of female chairs. The third model supports very weakly H2 (a positive relationship between the probability of having a women board chair and boards with greater gender diversity). However, model 4 supports H1 and H2 at a significance level of $p < 0.05$. This means that the women board chairs tend to be related to smaller sports boards and boards with more female directors in the federations when the model does not differentiate by country.

Some interesting insights stem from comparing the countries. Data shows that when we measure gender board diversity through the percentage of female directors for a federation located in Italy, Portugal, or Spain, the odds of having a woman as board chair is 94%, 91% and 77%, respectively, lower than if the federation is in the UK. In the three countries, these results are statistically significant at a level of $p > 0.01$ in the two first countries and at $p < 0.05$ in the third. However, when we measure gender board diversity through the total number of female directors, the odds of having a woman as board chair is 92.8%, 88.7% and 77%, in Italy, Portugal and Spain, respectively, lower than if it the federation is in the UK, at a level of significance $p > 0.05$. Regarding the Turkish federations, the variables concerning the board gender diversity, TOTAL NUMBER OR PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN do not contribute significantly to the model. The very low presence of women in the boards of the Turkish federations (only 34% of the Turkish federations, 22 out of 64, have women in their boards) could be an explanation.

5. Discussion and conclusion

This paper explored the influence of board size, board gender diversity, and organizational age on the gender of the board chair in the federations of five countries to shed light on which

factors contribute to a greater presence of chairwomen on the sport boards. In addition to confirming the scarce presence of women as board chairs, the key result is that Italy, Portugal and Spain, taking the UK as a reference, negatively affects the odds of having a woman as board chair, while the board size, board gender diversity and the organizational age have no significant effects on the gender of the chair. When we exclude the countries from the analysis, the total number of women on the sport board and the board size are decisive in predicting that the chair is a woman. Such implies that, in absolute term, the probability of having women in the smaller boards is greater than in the larger boards (Odendahl & Youmans, 1994).

This study demonstrates three important findings concerning the gender of board chairs in the federations of the five countries. First, the fact that we had found no significant relationship with the gender board diversity when we included the countries in the model suggests that the social representation of a female director is different from that of a woman board chair when it differs according to the countries analyzed. Consequently, when we select the UK as a reference, the reasons for having women on the board are significantly other than having a woman as a board chair. When gender quotas are compulsory (UK), it is concluded that women directors are mainly the result of gender equality policies. However, the role of the board chair is not affected by such policies. Even when gender quotas are not compulsory (Italy at the time of performing this study, Portugal and Turkey), there is some willingness to guarantee a minimum female presence on the board. For example, some federations' statutes state that two board members should represent athletes, one man and one woman in Italy. Thus, female directors and chairwomen refer to different and separate motivations. Although there is an overall positive effect of gender quotas in sport (Elling and others 2018), researchers have concluded that there are several difficulties in the adoption of gender equality policies and, as the findings show, the impact in practice is not so significant as expected (Claringbould &

Knoppers, 2008; Elling and others, 2018). The results herein demonstrate that the quota system established in the UK could impact a greater probability of having a woman chair. Nevertheless, these results must be taken with caution since the presidency of a sport board is not associated with quotas. Furthermore, these results would contradict the findings of Valiente (2020) since she argues that quotas do not impact the proportion of women in the presidency of the boards of the federations.

Second, there is no significant impact of the age of the federation on the gender of the board chair, thus showing that both the life-cycle of the federations and the IOC's provisions have no impact on the gender of the board chair. With the founding year not being relevant, it suggests that gender social stereotypes prevail over the history of the federation.

The international comparisons made in the study are consistent with Evans and Pfister (2020), who concluded that although the socio-cultural nature of the obstacles for women to have access to leadership positions in sports organizations can vary across countries, the numbers are globally low. This also confirms the view of Adriaanse and Schofield (2013), who state that the influence and power of the chairman of the board of directors in sports organizations and the subsequent shortage of women show that accomplishing gender balance remains a significant challenge. However, the international comparison made here also reveals that being in Italy, Portugal, or Spain significantly decreases, compared to the UK, the probability of a federation having a woman as a board chair. In contrast, we didn't find a significant association for Turkey. Whilst the UK is the only country of the sample where gender quotas were in force; we cannot explain its primacy in this study referring to the gender quotas because of the absence of association between such policies and board gender diversity, which deserves further investigation. In the case of Spain, the procedures required to obtain subsidies that force

compliance with gender quotas since 2014 do not seem to have influenced the gender of the chairwoman (Valiente, 2020).

Third, the results show that when the proposed models do not differentiate by country, the total number of female directors and the board size are decisive when having a woman board chair. Curiously, none of the federations has a chairwoman presiding on one of the most prominent sport boards, such as football. At the same time, we observe a more frequent presence of chairwomen in small sports boards such as archery, rescue and first aid, kickboxing and muaythai, or taekwondo.

This study has implications for policymakers and stakeholders in the world of sport, and institutions such as the IOC or the European Union to implement or review their equality policies. If the aim is to increase the female presence in the highest position of a sport board and to achieve gender equality, other policies would need to be implemented alongside the gender quotas to the sport boards, namely those directly related to the recruitment and selection of the sport board chair (Mikkonen and others, 2021). Furthermore, Knoppers and others (2021) concluded that resistance to gender balance by board members is often related to discriminatory discourses against women. The normalization of discourses of meritocracy, neoliberalism, silence/passivity about the responsibility of structures, and an artificial defence of diversity emphasise that equality should not be only for women (Knoppers and others, 2021).

There are limitations to this study. First, we have not considered the role of the gender typing of sports activities in explaining the extent that women participate in particular sports (Coakley & White, 2016; Sobal & Milgrim, 2019; Xu and others, 2019). The social representation of sports activities classified as masculine, feminine, or gender-neutral can hypothetically influence women's access to the leadership of a federation. We included only partially the

country as a control variable because the social representation of sports usually goes beyond national boundaries. Future research should explore whether these results remain valid in other temporal and geographical scenarios. Moreover, future international comparisons could focus on the relationships between having a woman as board chair in a federation and the gender typing of sport. Focusing more on the national culture differences to explore how different dimensions (Globe, 2004) can affect women's presence on the board chair role is also needed. On the other hand, future research could analyze whether national cultures or the personal or family connections that lead to a woman's access to the sport board impact on female representation as chairs. It is striking that the number of chairwomen in Turkey is proportionally greater than female board members. In subsequent studies, we have observed that these women could have acceded to the presidency due to family ties. Still, it will be necessary to continue researching in the rest of the countries to find out the reasons that could link these women to presiding over sport boards, since this was not the study's objective.

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