

SIGNALING CHANGE:

EXPLORING GENDER DIVERSITY,
EQUITY, AND INCLUSION AND
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
PRACTICES

Authors:

Dr. Shannon Kerwin,
Dr. Pamela Wicker,
Ms. Lara Lesch, and
Dr. Erik L. Lachance



MARCH 2023

Table Of Content

03	<i>Executive Summary</i>
05	<i>Calls for DEI</i>
06	<i>Research Sample and Methods</i>
07	<i>Results: Demographics</i>
08	<i>Results: Human Resource Management</i>
13	<i>Results: Organizational Culture</i>
14	<i>Results: Decision Quality</i>
15	<i>Results: Organizational Performance</i>
16	<i>Relationships: DEI and a Predictor</i>
17	<i>Relationships: DEI and Decision Quality</i>
19	<i>Relationships: DEI and Organizational Performance</i>
21	<i>Conclusion</i>
22	<i>Research Team and Contact Information</i>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Calls for DEI

There has been a call from government agencies, arms-length organizations, and key stakeholders to evolve sport organizations into entities that are more diverse, equitably and inclusive (DEI). Many sport organizations are willing to answer this call; however, many sport managers are left wondering where to start. Further, there is little research on the adoption and effectiveness of HRM policy related to DEI. Thus, this study explored the HRM gender DEI practices of national and provincial/territorial sport organizations in Canada.

Data

Data were gathered via an online self-administered questionnaire completed by 109 national and provincial/territorial sport organizations. The questionnaire included five sections pertaining to demographics, human resource management, organizational culture, decision quality, and organizational performance. Data were analyzed in SPSS.



Sample

Most of the sample included organizations representing an Olympic sport (78%) at the provincial or territorial level (67%) of the Canadian sport system. Overall, demographic data indicated respondents were 50 years old (range from 25 to 69) and identified as a woman (57% compared to 43% as men) with Canadian nationality (94%) and Caucasian race (99%). On average, respondents – paid staff (65%) and volunteers (35%) – worked in their current sport organizations for over nine years, though only six years within their present assigned position.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONT'

Results

Board size was reported as having 10 members, which featured six men and four woman. In turn, men were identified more as holding the Board Chair role (69%) compared to woman (31%).

Results suggest most sport organizations struggle in the area of gender DEI. This is especially the case when examining human resource management data pertaining to: (1) policies and procedures; (2) education; (3) recruitment, selection, promotion; and (4) monitoring/evaluation. In comparison, respondents reported high levels of culture within their organizations, which can be described as focused on people, values, and limiting bureaucracy. Finally, respondents perceived the decision quality of their Boards as well as the overall performance of their sport organization as positive.



Implications

Broadly speaking, despite challenges in gender DEI, statistical analyses suggest various dimensions positively predict organizational performance. This result provides support for the importance and need of gender DEI in national and provincial/territorial sport organizations.

Calls for DEI

There has been a call from government agencies, arms-length organizations, and key stakeholders to evolve sport organizations into entities that are more diverse, equitably and inclusive (DEI). Many sport organizations are willing to answer this call; however, many sport managers are left wondering where to start. Current initiatives and ongoing efforts by sport organizations related to DEI address equality for general participation in sport (e.g., women and girls) or within leadership positions (e.g., Chief Executive Officer, member of the board of directors; Board). However, there is a gap in understanding how to create equitable and inclusive systems within sport.

One way to address this gap is to explore the implementation and use of human resource management (HRM) policy related to DEI. Policy that specifically addresses ways in which gender equity can be built into the fabric of operations at the board level has the potential to create positive change. Unfortunately, there is little research on the adoption and effectiveness of HRM policy related to DEI.

Therefore, this study explored the HRM gender DEI practices of national and provincial/territorial sport organizations in Canada.



To address this purpose, quantitative survey data was collected and is presented here. This report is structured as follows. First, the sample and methods are briefly described. Second, an overview of the results is provided from the questionnaire data. Finally, a conclusion is offered from the presented data to better inform DEI practices in sport organizations.

Research Sample and Methods



Sample

Over 465 national and provincial/territorial sport organizations from Canada were invited to participate in an online self-administered questionnaire via email.

- The questionnaire was launched on October 31st, 2022 and remained open until January 31st, 2023.
- Reminder emails were sent to participants on November 7th, 2022, November 10th, 2022 (i.e., with support from Canadian Women and Sport) as well as on November 30th, 2022 (i.e., with support from Spark Solutions).
- Despite a potential large sample size of national and provincial/territorial sport organizations, the overall response rate was 23% (n=109).
- To this effect, though a response rate of over 100 participants is found, a large portion only completed select portions of the questionnaire, thereby leaving questions unanswered. Recognizing the potential issues with participant drop off, this issue points to a potential result whereby respondents did not complete certain questions simply for the fact that those items did not apply to their organizations (e.g., rather than selecting “not at all”).

Questionnaire

The questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to complete via Qualtrics and was comprised of five sections pertaining to demographics (e.g., type of organization, Olympic or non-Olympic sport, etc.), human resource management, organizational culture, decision quality, and organizational performance.

All questions, beyond those demographic related (e.g., years of experience in current position), were measured on a five-point Likert scale (see Tables 1 to 4 for details on specific measures).

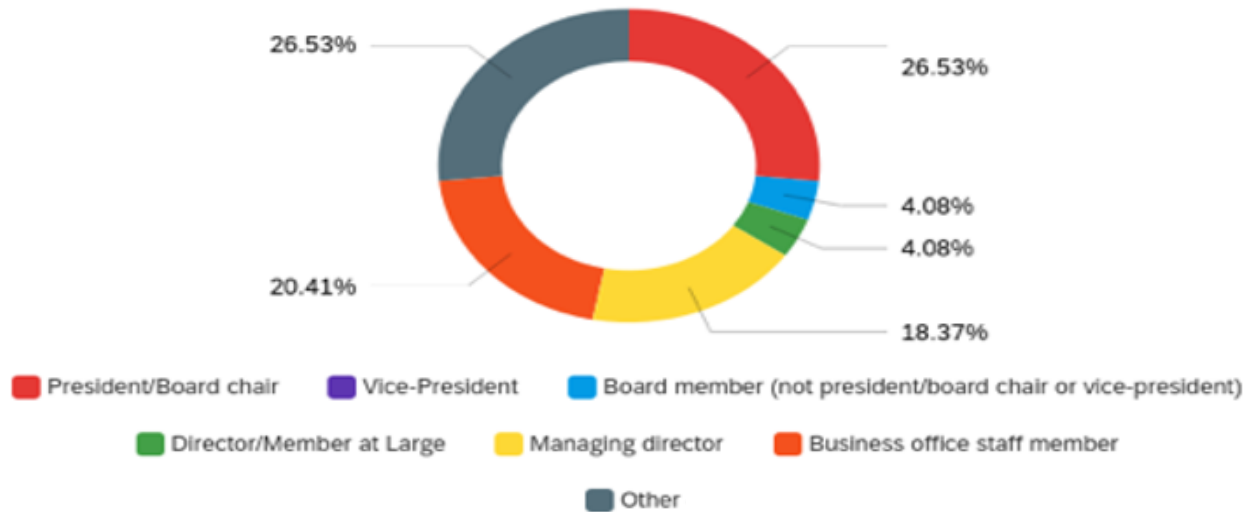


Analysis

Data were analyzed descriptively as well as via some multiple linear regressions using SPSS (e.g., gender DEI items as a predictor of decision quality, gender DEI items as a predictor of organizational performance).

Results: Demographics

Most of the sample included organizations representing an Olympic sport (78%) than a non-Olympic sport (22%) and operated at the provincial or territorial level (76%) of the Canadian sport system rather than the national level (24%). The following distribution of roles was found among respondents:



Age

50 years old (range: 25 to 69)



Tenure

Nine years in current organization.



Gender

Women: 57%
Men: 43%



Role

Six years experience in current role.



Nationality

Canadian: 96%



Paid Staff vs. Volunteers

Staff: 65%
Volunteers: 35%



Race

Caucasian: 99%
Black: 1%



Board Size

Average: 10 members
Gender: Men ($M=5.85$); Women ($M=4.29$)



Board Chair

Men: 69%
Women: 31%

RESULTS: HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Data indicates most sport organizations do not have HRM policy or practices related to DEI (see Tables 1 to 11).

Table 1 <i>DEI Policies and Systems Measures and Descriptive Results</i>		
Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. A gender DEI policy statement exists in my organization.	3.37	1.409
2. Women who are potential candidates for management are targeted for promotion.	3.17	1.402
3. There is a written statement of the consequences for violating the gender DE&I policy.	2.72	1.375
4. Turnover rates are calculated for women employees/volunteers.	1.89	1.187

Note. Mean scores measured on five point Likert scale (ranging from 1=not at all to 5=to a large extent).

Table 2 <i>Gender DEI Office/Roles Measures and Descriptive Results</i>		
Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. A gender DE&I expert has been consulted from outside the organization to develop or modify the organization's employment practices.	2.95	1.515
2. There is a person with gender DE&I expertise on staff.	2.54	1.359
3. There is a specific position designated to handle gender DE&I issues.	2.14	1.413

Note. Mean scores measured on five point Likert scale (ranging from 1=not at all to 5=to a large extent).

Table 3
Gender DEI Plan Measures and Descriptive Results

Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Employees are informed about the specific details of a gender DE&I Strategic Plan.	2.52	1.161
2. A gender DE&I Strategic Plan exists.	2.46	1.200
3. There are areas for which gender DE&I goals have been set, but historically have not been achieved.	2.45	1.225

Note. Mean scores measured on five point Likert scale (ranging from 1=not at all to 5=to a large extent).

Table 4
DEI Staff and Volunteers Measures and Descriptive Results

Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. A committee comprised of senior managers and/or board of directors oversees gender DE&I issues.	2.31	1.327
2. Staff/volunteers are informed of the gender DE&I goals for their departments/roles.	2.29	1.092
3. Staff/volunteer job descriptions include responsibility for gender DE&I.	2.14	0.999
4. Staff/volunteer performance appraisals include attitude/posture toward equal employment.	2.10	1.195
5. Staff/volunteers receive regular reports related to gender DE&I goals.	1.84	0.988
6. Staff/volunteer performance appraisals include departments' gender DE&I performance in relation to statistics and goals.	1.64	0.852
7. Gender DE&I statistics affect salary increases or bonus payments.	1.41	0.750

Note. Mean scores measured on five point Likert scale (ranging from 1=not at all to 5=to a large extent).

Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Women are specially targeted to receive management development training.	2.52	1.260
2. Workshops or seminars on managing a gender diverse work force are made available.	2.48	1.301
3. Staff/volunteers are trained in their gender DE&I responsibilities.	2.02	1.051
4. A special mentoring program for women managers exists.	2.00	1.124

Note. Mean scores measured on five point Likert scale (ranging from 1=not at all to 5=to a large extent).

Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. My organization has a maternity leave policy in addition to existing legal regulations.	2.94	1.680
2. My organization has a parental leave policy in addition to existing legal regulations.	2.85	1.657

Note. Mean scores measured on five point Likert scale (ranging from 1=not at all to 5=to a large extent).

Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Promotional salary increases for managers are examined for impact on equal gender pay.	2.45	1.435
2. Staff salary increases for performance are examined for impact on equal gender pay.	2.36	1.346
3. Staff bonuses are examined for impact on equal pay.	2.08	1.253
4. Performance rating distributions are examined for women employees to determine whether ratings are different from the average.	1.94	1.183

Note. Mean scores measured on five point Likert scale (ranging from 1=not at all to 5=to a large extent).

Table 8 <i>DEI Group and Professional Associations Measures and Descriptive Results</i>		
Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Women's programs or associations are regularly supported either financially or through nonfinancial means (e.g., provide meeting space, give a reception, online newsletter).	3.09	1.535
2. My organization sponsors membership in women's professional associations for staff/volunteers.	2.51	1.395

Note. Mean scores measured on five point Likert scale (ranging from 1=not at all to 5=to a large extent).

Table 9 <i>DEI Recruiting Measures and Descriptive Results</i>		
Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Gender equal employment concerns influence the hiring decision.	2.48	1.389
2. Women's or alumni associations are contacted to identify outside female candidates.	1.76	1.080
3. A formal policy for recruiting women for all staff positions exists.	1.66	1.081
4. Executive search firms and/or employment agencies which specialize in finding female candidates are used.	1.50	0.814
5. Job ads are placed in women's magazines/newspapers.	1.40	0.700
6. Women job fairs are used for recruiting.	1.28	0.640

Note. Mean scores measured on five point Likert scale (ranging from 1=not at all to 5=to a large extent).

Table 10 <i>DEI Workforce Reductions Measures and Descriptive Results</i>		
Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Gender is a criterion considered in the selection decisions.	2.32	1.301
2. In situations where the manager decides to terminate a woman, the decision can be overturned for equal employment considerations.	1.70	1.093
3. Decisions to terminate women are made at higher levels than would otherwise be the case.	1.50	0.974

Note. Mean scores measured on five point Likert scale (ranging from 1=not at all to 5=to a large extent).

Table 11 <i>DEI Terminations/Discharges for Poor Performance Measures and Descriptive Results</i>		
Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Our decisions to terminate women are always made at higher levels than the levels required for terminating other employees.	1.46	0.930
2. Policies which require additional approvals for terminating women employees exist.	1.36	0.802

Note. Mean scores measured on five point Likert scale (ranging from 1=not at all to 5=to a large extent).

Results: Human Resource Management

This struggle in DEI was especially pertinent when examining human resource management data about: (1) policies and procedures; (2) education; (3) recruitment, selection, and promotion; and (4) monitoring/evaluation.



Policies and Procedures

- Respondents reported a lack of formal documents regarding gender DEI as well as procedures (e.g., committees) and support (e.g., maternity leave).
- Interestingly, there was an indication that gender DEI policy statements may exist, but anything beyond the surface of a general policy seemed to be missing.



Education

- Respondents further reported a lack of education-related initiatives or capacity within their sport organization specific to gender DEI.
- It is important that any initiative related to DEI is accompanied by education to ensure that folks in the organization understand why the policy and practice are needed.
- This also includes education about the historical underpinnings of what is needed within their organization.



Recruitment, Selection, and Promotion

- Sport organizations appear to struggle in their endeavours to, for instance, properly advertise or leverage positions for specific and targeted groups of individuals (e.g., woman) to enhance gender DEI.
- These are important areas to consider as they may be cost effective for an organization and provide an opportunity to engage in a more inclusive and welcoming environment for those who identify as women.



Monitoring/Evaluation

- Respondents expressed concerns regarding the monitoring and evaluation of gender DEI in their sport organizations.
- In particular, such concerns were specific to the lack of collected data for positions as well as turnover among women and performance appraisals.

Results: Organizational Culture

Following an exploration of the HRM DEI policies and practice in these sport organizations, we asked participants to rate items related to organizational culture. Generally speaking, culture within these organizations can be described as being focused on people, values, and limiting bureaucracy (see Table 12).

Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Creativeness and capacity for innovation are valued in employees.	3.95	0.992
Human relations are principally based on cooperation, consensus, and group well-being (the contrary of competitiveness and individual well-being).	3.78	0.896
The organizational structure is flexible.	3.49	1.063
In my organization, it is often heard “it has always been done like that” or “this is the proper way of doing it”.	2.69	1.019
The rules and regulations favor unnecessary bureaucracy that must be rigorously respected.	2.38	1.082
The focus on problems takes into account mainly their effects on economic factors, with little consideration of the impact on people.	2.09	0.995
The most important bases for promotion are personal friendships and family ties.	1.96	1.152
The aims of systems of evaluation and control are to punish more than to reward.	1.73	1.024

Note. Mean scores measured on five point Likert scale (ranging from 1=not at all to 5=to a large extent).

Results: Decision Quality

Respondents reported high decision quality scores for the Board of their respective sport organization (see Table 13).

Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
The decisions of my board are generally made based on the best available information.	4.18	0.976
The decisions of my board generally make sense in light of the organization's current financial situation.	4.08	0.890
The decisions of my board are generally consistent with the organization's current strategy.	4.01	0.949
The decisions of my board contribute to the overall effectiveness of the organization.	3.97	1.042
The decisions of my board are generally made based on valid assumptions.	3.69	1.036

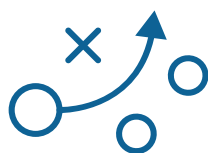
Note. Mean scores measured on five point Likert scale (ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).



Information



Finances



Strategy



Valid Assumptions

RESULTS: ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

To further understand the context that HRM DEI policies operate within, we asked participants to rate organizational performance items. Overall, respondents scored their organization's performance as more positive than negative (see Table 14).

Table 14		
<i>Organizational Performance Measures and Descriptive Results</i>		
Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Manages financial expenditures.	4.23	0.750
Spreads a positive image of their sport in the media to their audience.	4.05	0.745
Sustains sport values in society.	4.02	0.842
Obtains financial resources.	3.82	0.859
Manages self-financing capacity.	3.77	1.012
Has improved the spread of the internal communication to members and clubs.	3.73	1.006
Has increased sport activities for members.	3.70	0.818
Has improved sport services to athletes.	3.66	0.856
Has improved follow-up of internal communication to members.	3.63	0.908
Develops members' loyalty.	3.54	0.856
Has improved administrative and sport paid staff skills.	3.52	1.096
Has improved headquarter organizational atmosphere/culture.	3.51	1.061
Attracts members.	3.48	0.927
Has improved headquarter internal functioning.	3.39	1.103
Has improved volunteer skills.	3.35	0.752
Manages financial independence from public authorities.	3.34	1.142
Has improved non sport services provided to members.	3.14	1.156
Has increased athlete's participation in international competitions.	2.85	1.360
Obtains international podium results.	2.53	1.526

Note. Mean scores measured on five point Likert scale (ranging from 1=not at all to 5=to a large extent).

Relationships: DEI as a Predictor

Indicators of HRM DEI were rated as being absent from participating P/TSOs and NSOs. It is important to consider the impact of having HRM DEI in place on relevant outcomes. These connections are explored next.



Governance

First, from a governance perspective, DEI in the human resource management realm contributes positively to the Board's decision quality.

Performance

Second, and perhaps the most vital reason, DEI positively contributes to the performance of sport organizations included in this report's sample.



Relationships: DEI and Decision Quality

Gender DEI-related items had 11 statistically significant relationships with decision quality, which was predominantly attributed to seven items (see Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4, and Figure 5 for a summary).

Generally speaking, supporting women's programs or associations, having a specific staff position dedicated to DEI with expertise, providing reports on DEI goals, targeting women as candidates for promotions, and using women job fairs for recruiting contributes positively to the Board's decision quality.

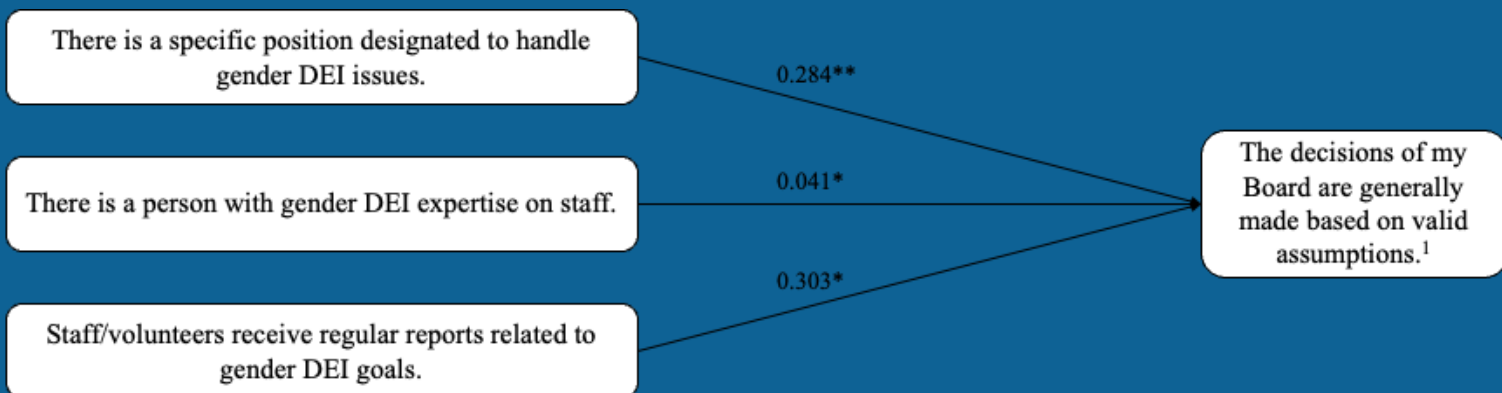
These results point to the importance of having dedicated staff positions to provide pertinent information for the Board to make decisions on valid assumptions (e.g., navigate risk and uncertainty), all the while remaining aware of the organization's current financial situation and contributing to its overall effectiveness as a group at the top of the structure with vested power and authority.

Figure 1



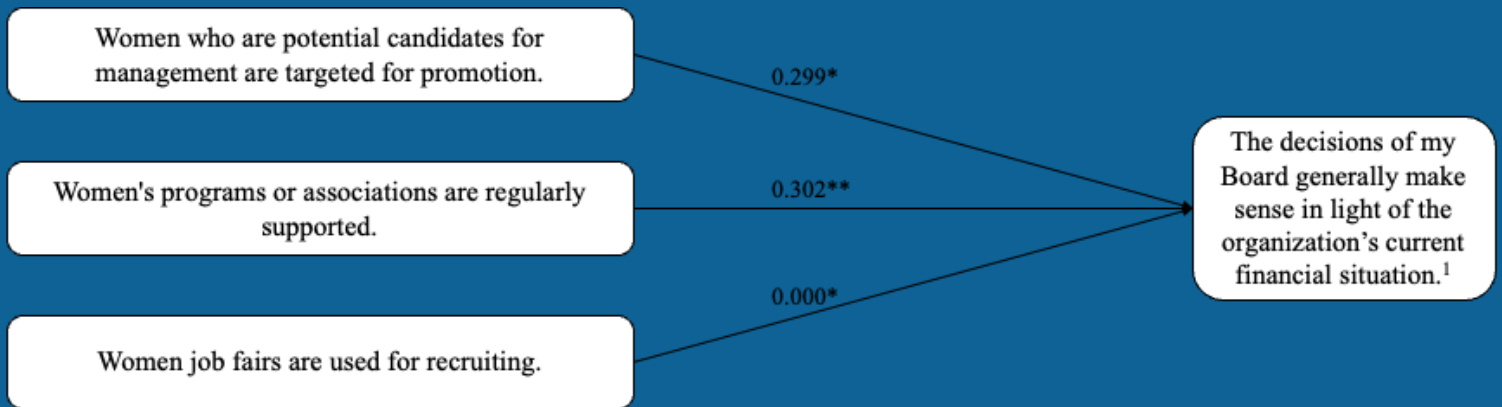
Notes. * denotes a significant p value less than .05; ¹ Mean index measured according to five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

Figure 2



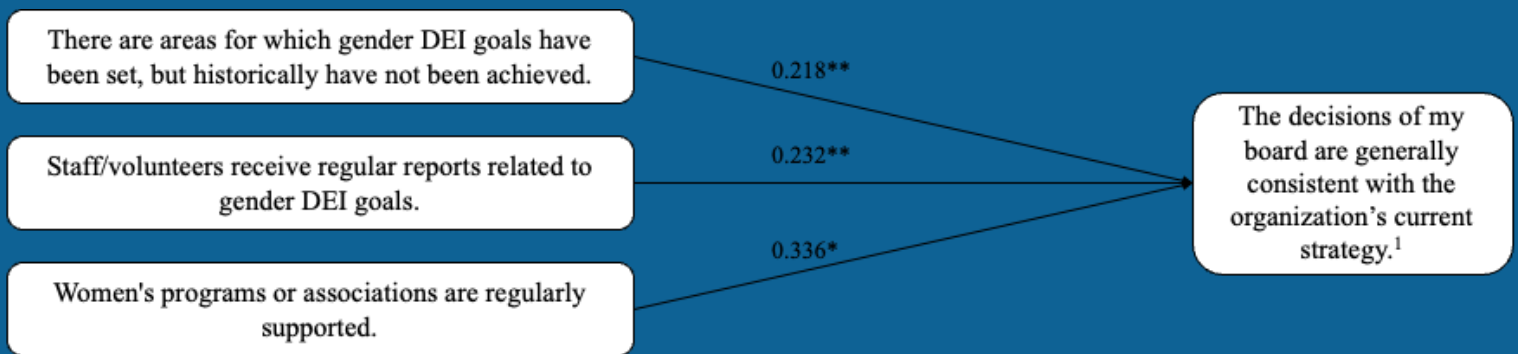
Notes. * denotes a significant p value less than .05; ** denotes a significant p value of .01; ¹ Mean index measured according to five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

Figure 3



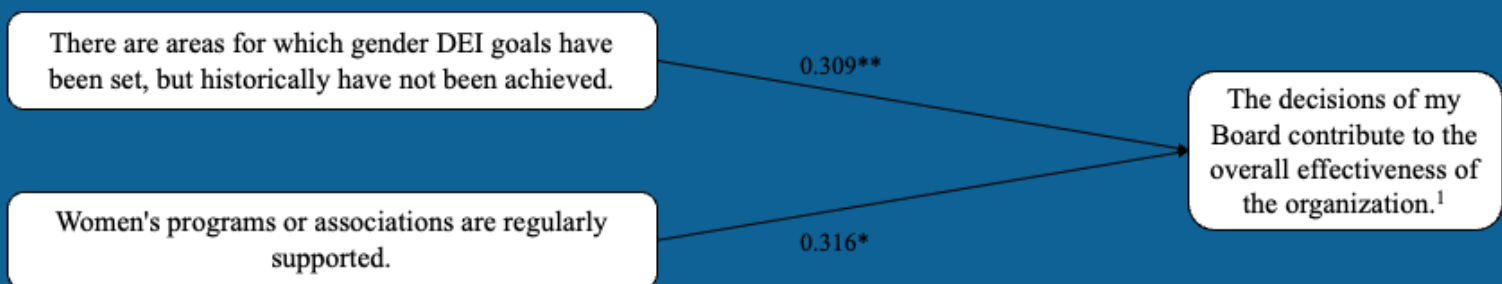
Notes. * denotes a significant p value less than .05; ** denotes a significant p value of .02; ¹ Mean index measured according to five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

Figure 4



Notes. * denotes a significant p value of .03; ** denotes a significant p value less than .03; ¹ Mean index measured according to five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

Figure 5



Notes. * denotes a significant p value less than .05; ** denotes a significant p value of .002; ¹ Mean index measured according to five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

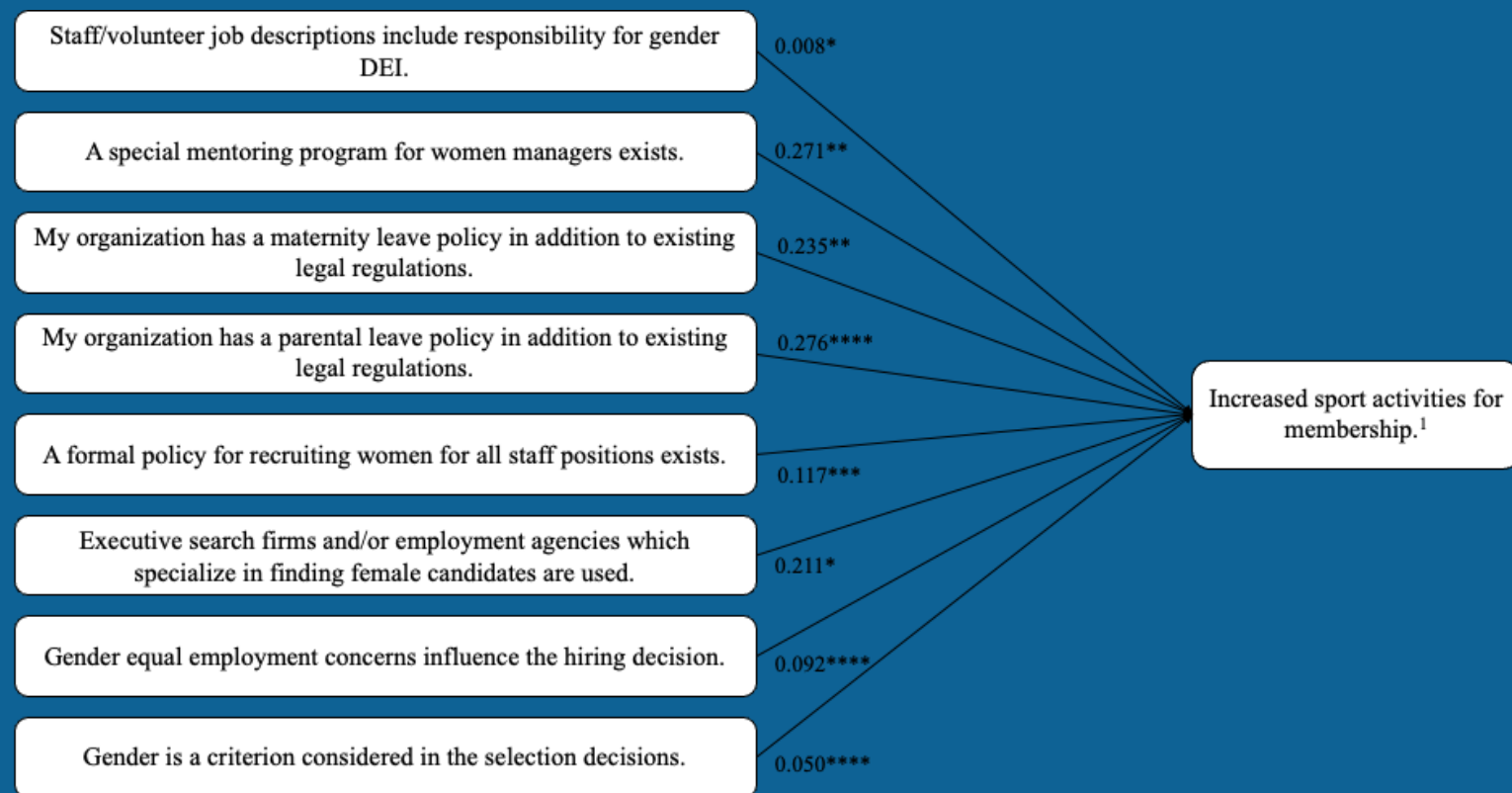
Relationships: DEI and Organizational Performance

Though 41 gender DEI-related items were statistically significant towards organizational performance (see Figure 6, Figure 7, and Figure 8 for a summary of those most prominent), the following dominated according to the conducted statistical analysis:

- having a formal a gender DEI policy in the organization;
- targeting women as candidates for internal job promotions;
- having staff job descriptions with DEI-related responsibilities;
- supporting women’s associations or programs (i.e., financially and non-financially);
- using executive search firms to find female candidates; and
- using women job fairs for recruiting.

Overall, these results suggest sport practitioners should value gender DEI-related policies, procedures, and monitoring in their organizations in an attempt to better perform.

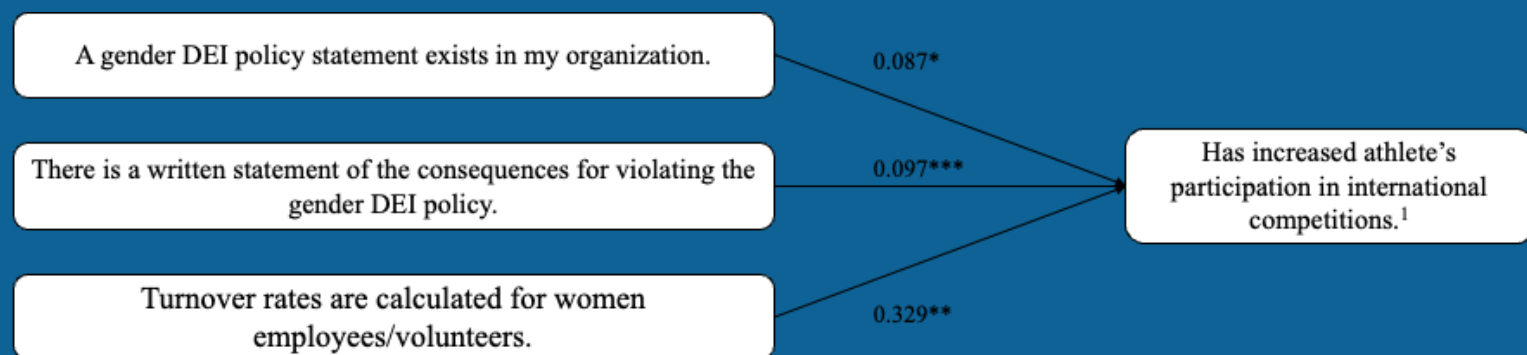
Figure 6



Notes. * denotes a significant value less than .05; ** denotes a significant value less than .04; *** denotes a significant value less than .03; **** denotes a significant value less than .02; ¹ Mean index measured according to five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1=not at all to 5=to a large extent).

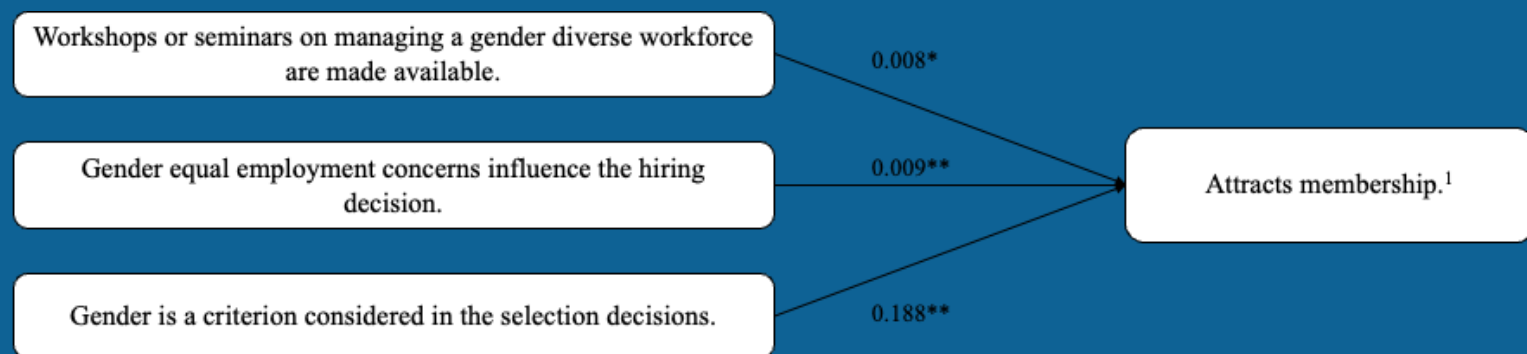
Relationships: DEI and Organizational Performance

Figure 7



Notes. * denotes a significant p value less than .05; ** denotes a significant p value less than .02; *** denotes a significant p value of .001; ¹ Mean index measured according to five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1=not at all to 5=to a large extent).

Figure 8



Notes. * denotes a significant p value less than .05; ** denotes a significant p value less than .02; ¹ Mean index measured according to five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1=not at all to 5=to a large extent).

Conclusion

This study explored the HRM gender DEI practices of national and provincial/territorial sport organizations in Canada. Overall, gender DEI practices are still problematic in Canadian national and provincial/territorial sport organizations. Though this situation paints a bleak picture, a caveat is regarding the potential for DEI to positively contribute to these organizations' decision quality as well as overall performance.

Notably, this points to the need for formal policies dedicated to gender DEI, such as a general statement and those specific to the responsibilities outlined in roles. In turn, procedures specific to gender DEI include, for instance, the need for organizations to support women's programs or associations, target women as candidates for internal promotions, foster gender equal employment (e.g., hiring, compensation, benefits like parental and maternal leave), hold workshops on diverse workforce management, and develop a mentoring program for women. Finally, monitoring activities to consider are related to reporting on gender DEI-related goals, such as those pertaining to hiring and promotion as well as turnover rates.

The hope is for this report as well as future studies on gender DEI to spark critical discussions, inquiries, and personal testimonials from the Canadian sport system and foster both bilateral communication and collaborations between academics and practitioners to develop an impactful research agenda meeting societal needs. We, as the collective authors of this report, welcome feedback and discussions with stakeholders of the Canadian sport system (see contact information on the following page).



Research Team and Contact Information



Dr. Shannon Kerwin
Associate Professor
Department of Sport Management
Brock University
skerwin@brocku.ca



Dr. Pamela Wicker
Professor and Chair
Department of Sports Science
Bielefeld University
pamela.wicker@uni-bielefeld.de



Ms. Lara Lesch
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Sports Science
Bielefeld University
lara.lesch@uni-bielefeld.de



Dr. Erik L. Lachance
Post-Doctoral Research Fellow
Department of Sport Management
Brock University
elachance@brocku.ca



**Thank You,
Merci,
Miigwetch.**