ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Gender Effects on Organizational Problems—Evidence from Non-Profit Sports Clubs in Germany

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Abstract In sports organizations, women are still under-represented, especially compared with their share of the general population. This holds true for management and leadership positions in particular, which could be explained by the lack of congruence between the female gender role and leader role. Therefore, the theoretical framework underpinning this study is based on role congruity theory. The research question is whether the share of women on the board and among members influences the perceived severity of organizational problems faced by sports organizations. This postulation is examined for a representative sample of sports clubs in Germany ($n=13,068$). Analyses of variance are conducted with the severity of organizational problems and the share of women on the board and among club members. The results show that the share of women on the board and among members has a significant negative impact on the severity of organizational problems. Sports clubs with a high share of women on the board and among members perceive the severity of organizational problems as smaller on average. This finding is related to female leadership style, which might serve as one possible explanation. Based on these results, it is recommended that

sports clubs appoint more women to management positions. This study provides empirical evidence that the often postulated increase in the share of women can be beneficial to sports organizations.

Keywords Sport management · Social role theory · Sport policy · Voluntary organization · Volunteers

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Introduction

Sport is commonly considered the domain of men e.g., in the European Union (Hovemann and Wicker 2009) and the United States (Knoppers et al. 1991; Messner and Sabo 1990). This counts both for sport in general as well as for sports organizations e.g., in the Netherlands (Claringbould and Knoppers 2007) and Germany (Breuer and Wicker 2009). Previous studies have shown that female members are still under-represented in sports organizations, e.g., in Scotland (Allison 2001), Flanders, Belgium (Taks et al. 1999), and Germany (Breuer and Wicker 2009). This under-representation was also evident in management and leadership positions in sports organizations e.g., in the United States (Acosta and Carpenter 2006; Cunningham 2007), Flanders, Belgium (Taks et al. 1999), and Germany (Breuer and Wicker 2009; Hartmann-Tews and Combrink 2005). Previous studies have focused on the detection and description of this female under-representation in German sports organizations (e.g., Pfister and Radtke 2006). As a result of this under-representation, postulations in national sports organizations e.g., in Norway (Skirstad 2009) have been made to increase the proportion of women as a matter of principle. A gender quota has been implemented in international sports organizations such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC 2009). However, there is a lack

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of evidence about the effects of an increased proportion of women on organizational issues and problems. Moreover, with regard to a gender quota in many organizations, the question arises whether an increased share of women among members and on the board of the organization might be beneficial to the functioning of these organizations.

Therefore, the purpose of this empirical study in Germany is to analyze gender effects on the severity of organizational problems. These gender effects are operationalized by different proportions of women on the boards of German sports clubs and among members. The concept *severity of organizational problems* includes organizational problems that relate to internal elements (human resources, financial resources) and external elements (demographic development, level of bureaucracy). At present, German sports clubs face organizational problems that relate to the recruitment and retention of members, coaches, and volunteers as well as the demographic changes in Germany, the financial situation of the club, and the number of laws, orders, and directives (Breuer and Haase 2007). These organizational problems are under investigation in this study because of their current relevance and importance to sports clubs. The elements human resources, financial resources, demographic development, and level of bureaucracy are reflected in the above-mentioned six organizational problems.

With regard to internal elements, the issue of human resources is reflected by three organizational problems, namely the *recruitment and retention of i) members, ii) coaches, and iii) volunteers*. One of the main problems for sports clubs is the recruitment and retention of members (Breuer and Haase 2007). Nowadays, sports clubs are no longer the sole suppliers of sport to the public. Growth in private sector sports organizations (e.g., fitness chains) and self-organized sports participation are challenging sports clubs to retain their members (Breuer 2005). For similar reasons, sports clubs face problems relating to the recruitment and retention of volunteers and people willing to take up volunteer coaching positions. Furthermore, qualified and capable coaches are likely to be drawn into the paid private sector. The element of financial resources is covered by the organizational problem *financial situation of the club*. With reference to the financial situation of clubs, the primary challenge is the loss of revenues from public subsidies, which are a crucial financial resource for sports organizations (Berrett and Slack 2001). Concurrently, the challenging financial situations in households across the country has affected the communities' and federal states' capabilities to subsidize every sports club. As a result, the financial situation of the sports clubs presents a problem (Breuer and Haase 2007).

With regard to external elements, the issue of demographic development is reflected in the organizational problem labeled *demographic change in the region*. In Germany, the declining membership of sports clubs may relate considerably to demographic changes in the country. There are four main demographic trends in Germany: the population is both declining and growing older, there is an increasing female-to-male ratio, and the population is becoming more ethnically diverse (Federal Institute for Population Research 2008). These demographic trends are all alarming for sports clubs in the sense that the population groups traditionally under-represented in sports clubs (women, seniors, and immigrants) are growing in importance. In general, the average member of a sports club in Germany is a young, German male (Heinemann 1999; Nagel 2003). The level of bureaucracy is covered by the organizational problem *number of laws, orders, and directives*. Applying for public subsidies is a bureaucratic procedure in Germany that increases the problems sports clubs have adhering to the number of laws, orders, and directives.

The severity of organizational problems can influence the structures and behavior of sports clubs, which have to meet the challenges to survive. As sports clubs function best when organizational problems are small or non-existent, the minimization of the severity of organizational problems should be desirable for sports clubs. The construct severity of organizational problems is related to the percentage of women on the board and among club members because it is suggested that a high share of women can contribute to reduce the severity of organizational problems. For example, a high percentage of women on the board and among members can ensure that the sports club does not only offer sport programs for men, but also a range of programs that are suitable for women. The suitability of programs can relate to the type of sports as women prefer health and fitness sports over competitive team sports (Humphreys and Ruseski 2007) and the time when the sport programs are offered (e.g., in the morning while the children are at school or in the kindergarten). Providing sports programs for women can lead to a higher level of satisfaction among the women in the club who may in turn be more willing to recruit new female members or coaches to voluntarily work in the club. These examples illustrate that females can positively contribute to the overall functioning of the club and can therefore be relevant to reduce the severity of organizational problems.

The research question is whether the share of women on the board and among members influences the perceived severity of organizational problems faced by sports clubs. This paper aims to contribute to the state of research using quantitative data from a national survey of non-profit sports clubs in Germany ($n=13,068$). Based on the results of this study, implications can be drawn with regard to gender equality in sports organizations. The paper adds to the existing knowledge on women in leadership roles by

showing that prejudices against women in such roles are unjust and that women in leadership positions have a measurable influence on organizational performance (i.e., dealing with the severity of organizational problems). This work builds on general studies on the situation of women in sports organizations (e.g., Cunningham and Sagas 2008; Fink 2008) and can provide further insights into more specialized analyses such as the selection processes of women for board membership (e.g., Claringbould and Knoppers 2007). The severity of organizational problems that is under investigation in the current study is not only relevant to sports clubs in Germany because previous research has shown that sports clubs in other countries face similar problems (e.g., Allison 2001; Lasby and Sperling 2007; Taylor et al. 2009). Therefore, the results of this study have implications for sports clubs and non-profit sports organizations in other countries.

The paper is structured as follows. The subsequent research context describes sports clubs in Germany as the domain of the research. The literature review provides an overview of the previous studies that have analyzed female under-representation in sports organizations and the policies aimed at the promotion of women in sport. Afterwards, a theoretical framework is built on social role theory (Eagly 1987) and role congruity theory (Eagly and Karau 2002). On the basis of this theoretical framework, hypotheses are constructed and tested with regard to possible gender effects on the severity of organizational problems. In the methods section, information about the sports clubs sample and the sampling procedures as well as the questionnaire and the variables is provided. Afterwards, the findings are interpreted and discussed with reference to previous research in the discussion section. Moreover, it is mentioned that female leadership style might serve as one possible explanation for the gender effects that become evident. The paper concludes with a summary of the main findings and recommendations about future research directions.

Research Context

This section provides relevant information about sports clubs in Germany because they represent the focal point of this investigation. Sports clubs are non-profit, non-governmental organizations that form the basis of the pyramid of the German sports system. At the top of the German sports hierarchy sits the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB), whose member organizations include over 60 national sports federations and the 16 federal state sports confederations. Sports clubs are members of the federal state sports confederations and the national sports federations. There are more than 90,000 sports clubs comprising around 27.5 million memberships (DOSB

2010a). It must be noted that the focus of this study is on non-profit sports clubs at the community level that are run by their members and not on the national governing bodies of sport. Nevertheless, studies about the national governing bodies of sport are considered in the literature review because they provide important information on the research question of this study.

For the analysis of gender effects on organizational problems, the cultural context must be taken into account. This study explicitly looks at the functioning of German sports clubs. The role of women in German sport has changed over recent decades. For example, as late as 1996, Germany did not have a unified top division for women's football (German Football Association 2010). Before the turn of the century, women still participated far less in sport than men did (Weber et al. 1995). Lately, the promotion of women in sport has been emphasized and supported by various actors in sports, such as the DOSB. The year 2009 was declared the *year of women in sport* in order to further raise female participation in sport (DOSB 2010b). Nowadays, women represent about 40% of the memberships of sports clubs (DOSB 2010a). Therefore, it can be seen that the opportunities for women to participate in sport and attain leadership positions in sports clubs in Germany are growing.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Several researchers have reported female under-representation in sport at both a participation and administrative level e.g., in the United States (Hall 1987), the United Kingdom (Aitchison 2005), and Germany (Hartmann-Tews and Combrink 2005). Most sports organizations in the United States (Bruening and Dixon 2008; Lapchick 2008), in the Netherlands (Claringbould and Knoppers 2007), and Germany (Breuer and Wicker 2009) comprise predominantly male memberships and, in particular, a male majority at the executive level. Females are a clear minority and the select few often hold positions of little power and authority. The DOSB paints a more positive picture since its female membership stands at about 40% and seven of the 55 top federations in Germany have more female members than male (DOSB 2010a; Pfister and Radtke 2006). Even though participation and membership might show promise, females are struggling to rise to the higher levels of responsibility in sport (Cunningham et al. 2007). Evidently, there is a clear under-representation of women in sports organizations.

Female under-representation seems plausible since "sport was invented for men by men and is dominated by men" (Knoppers et al. 1991, p. 16). The environment of sports organizations is commonly based upon traditional male values, roles, and expectations (Cunningham 2008). According to Fink (2008, p. 146), "sport is still a powerful

mechanism by which male hegemony is constructed and reconstructed." Sport as an institution still serves to create, replicate, and perpetuate male domination. In sports organizations, men and masculinity are privileged and jobs are linked with traditional gender role stereotypes (Sartore and Cunningham 2007). The evidence from the literature suggests that those women currently involved on the boards of German sports clubs are typically employed in the positions of secretaries, treasurers, or as development officers for youth and female sport (Pfister and Radtke 2006). This could be explained by the different qualities associated with different positions. The under-representation of women has often been explained as an effect of women's lack of education or experience (Skirstad 2009). Other explanations revolve around net-working and discrimination by men or other institutional barriers for women (Knoppers 1992; Lovett and Lowry 1994; Pfister and Radtke 2006). Hewlett and Luce (2005) continue along the same train of thought by illustrating the number of highly qualified women dropping out of mainstream careers. The movement of women into the upper echelons of power has been hampered by an unwillingness to recognize and accept deep-rooted gender differences (Harvard Business School 1995). It is additionally known that women working in sports are often held to different standards. Women who adopt male toughness are often ostracized (Ryan et al. 2011) and women face greater social networking challenges than do men in the sports industry (Cunningham and Sagas 2008).

The existing evidence for female under-representation and the rational interpretation behind such barriers has resulted in a chorus of approval for a higher share of females in sports organizations. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) decided at its centenary congress in 1996 to increase the participation rates of women in decision-making positions in national and international sports organizations to 10% in 2000 and 20% by 2005 (Skirstad 2009). Likewise, the DOSB agreed to the introduction of gender mainstreaming in its organizational structure at one general assembly (Doll-Tepper and Pfister 2004). Such decisions by umbrella organizations set an example for their member organizations, as federations hope for a trickle-down effect of female representation. However, the IOC claims that only about 30% of national Olympic commit-tees and 29% of international federations have achieved the 2005 target. In 2001, when the female composition on the executive level should have been at least 10%, only 11 of the 126 IOC members were female (Skirstad 2009). Not even the IOC could live up to its own expectations (Doll-Tepper and Pfister 2004). A successful model example is Norway, where female representation in the General Assembly for Sport has increased from 8% to 39% in 37 years (Skirstad 2009). Up to now, these justifications for

more women in sports organizations seem to be a matter of principle; however, they should be based on theory and supported with research.

Eagly's role congruity theory (Eagly and Karau 2002) offers an explanation as to why women struggle to attain leadership positions in sports clubs. The evident under-representation of women in sport and leadership positions in sports organizations could be attributable to the different characteristics of women compared with men. More specifically, existing gender inequities can be traced back to different gender roles. In social role theory as proposed by Eagly, "the theoretical orientation that is proposed considers sex differences to be a product of the social roles that regulate behavior in adult life" (Eagly 1987, p. 7). Briefly, social role theory explains that the contrasting social positions of men and women produce differing gender roles (Eagly et al. 2000). Role congruity theory extends the social role theory of gender differences into new territory by considering that gender roles not only represent consensual beliefs about men and women, but that there is also congruity between gender roles and other roles, especially leadership roles. Eagly and Karau (2002) note that since leadership has been largely a male prerogative, there might be incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles: "The potential for prejudice against female leaders that is inherent in the female gender role follows from its dissimilarity to the expectations that people typically have about leaders" (Eagly and Karau 2002, p. 575). They identify two potential forms of prejudice: (a) less favorable evaluation of women's (compared with men's) potential for leader-ship because leadership ability is more stereotypical of men than of women and (b) less favorable evaluation of the actual leadership behavior of women than of men because such behavior is perceived as less desirable in women than men. These prejudices could significantly hinder the progression of women into leadership roles in organizations.

The existence of prejudice hinges upon the existence of several moderating factors of the congruency effect: The masculinity of the leader role, the gender of the perceiver, and other moderators such as cultural milieus, impact of time, and gender ratios (Eagly and Karau 2002). The masculinity of the leader role pertains to the extent that qualities for a particular leader role are *agentic* (more masculine) or *communal* (more feminine). Role congruency would vary according to the attributes perceived to be required by the leader role. The gender of the perceiver is important since "men have a more masculine construal of leadership than do women" (Eagly and Karau 2002, p. 577). Other moderators include cultural milieus, the impact of time, and gender ratios. For example, the association of women with communal characteristics and men with agentic

attributes might differ depending on the geographic region (Parker and Ogilvie 1996). Therefore, cultural variation must be considered (as noted earlier, the context of this study is sports clubs in Germany). Similarly, changes in role definitions over time are a possible moderator of congruency as well. In terms of gender ratios, it must be noted that women are in a minority position in the sports industry and as such their stereotypical qualities become more salient. These moderating factors help explain why role congruency theory can be used to explain the potential ability of sports clubs with a high share of women on their boards to deal with organizational problems better.

According to role congruency theory, the gender of the perceiver (or of potential club members) influences the incongruity between leader and gender roles (Eagly and Karau 2002). As a consequence of the more masculine perception of leadership, male perceivers should show a stronger tendency than do female perceivers to view women as less qualified than men for leadership. By contrast, women may have comparably more experience with female leaders (Eagly and Karau 2002). Therefore, female athletes (or female coaches and volunteers) might be more inclined to join a sports club with female leadership since they perceive more congruence between the female gender role and the leader role. Skirstad (2009) points out that "female leaders could more easily address the challenges and problems of female athletes and coaches because of their common background and experiences (…) more females on boards, committees, etc. would create more role models for women and could inspire and motivate others." (p. 209) Thus, problems relating to the recruitment and retention of members, coaches, and volunteers would be reduced for clubs with high shares of female leaders. Problems relating to the demographic changes in Germany could be reduced since women are increasingly becoming the target audience for sports participation and membership in clubs (Cunningham and Sagas 2008). It can be seen that a higher share of women in leadership roles could decrease organizational problems that sports clubs in Germany are experiencing. As a consequence, hypothesis 1 predicts that the share of women on the board has a significant negative effect on the severity of organizational problems.

However, the beneficial effects of a higher share of women might not be limited to the board level. The effect of the share of women among the clubs' general members must also be taken into account. It is suggested that the share of women among members could also decrease organizational problems that sports clubs in Germany are experiencing. Therefore, hypothesis 2 predicts that the share of women among members has a significant negative effect on the severity of organizational problems.

Method

Data Source

The analysis is based on data retrieved from the German Sport Development Report 2007/2008. The Sport Development Report is a nationwide online survey of non-profit sports clubs in Germany. This project is financed by the 16 federal state sports confederations, the DOSB, and the Federal Institute of Sports Science (reference number IIA1-080902/07-08). Within this project, sports clubs were questioned about their situations every 2 years. The first wave of this project was in 2005. The survey of the second wave was carried out from September 17th to December 10th 2007. The current study is based on the data of the second wave in 2007.

The sample was based on the e-mail addresses of sports clubs, which were provided by the federal state sports confederations. Out of the 90,467 existent sports clubs in Germany, 44,367 e-mail addresses of sports clubs were made available by the federal state sports confederations. All sports clubs for which the federal state sports confederation has an e-mail address were invited to the survey via e-mail. The sports clubs received a personalized link to an online questionnaire, which meant that every sports club had its *own* online questionnaire. This personalized link has two main advantages over a *normal* link. The first advantage is that the survey need not be completed at once. Second, the link can be sent to other people who can also fill in data in the online questionnaire. In this second wave, no information is available about who filled in the data about the club. However, in the first wave of this project this issue was assessed in a question at the end of the questionnaire (multiple answers were possible). The analysis of this question showed that almost two-thirds (66.1%) of the questionnaires were answered by the president of the club, 16.9% by the vice president, 14.6% by the voluntary administrator, 30.2% by another board member, and 6.7% by a coach. These results indicate that most of the questionnaires were answered by one or more board members. It is suggested that this was similar in the second wave of the project. Sports clubs that could not participate for whatever reason were taken out of the sample. The biggest share of these failures (about 7,000) was because of false e-mail addresses (e.g., typing mistake in the address, contact person is no longer a member of the club, etc.). Because of these dropouts, the adjusted sample amounted to 37,206 sports clubs. Altogether, $n=13,068$ sports clubs participated in the survey, which equals a response rate of 35.1%.

To provide information about the structure of the sample, the average size of the clubs in the sample amounted to 420 members. Most clubs (84.7%) had up to 800 members and

15.3% had over 800 members. The proportion of women among members was 35.8% on average. About half of the clubs were multi-sports clubs offering more than one sport. The average club of the sample offered four different sports. The average year of foundation of the clubs was 1952 with 34.2% of the clubs being founded before or in 1945, 34.8% between 1946 and 1980, and 31.0% after 1980. This sports club sample is representative of Germany with regard to the size of the club, year of foundation, and federal state.

Questionnaire and Variables

The survey consisted of 30 questions. The questions on the number of members by age and gender, the number of volunteers by gender, and the severity of organizational problems are relevant to this study. With regard to the number of members, the wording of the question was as follows: How many members of the following gender and age classes did your club have on the 31.12.2006 (in German: Wie viele Mitglieder in den folgenden Alters- und Geschlechtsgruppen hatte Ihr Verein zum 31.12.2006)? The respondents had to state the number of male and female members in the following age groups: up to 6 years, 7 to 14 years, 15 to 18 years, 19 to 26 years, 27 to 40 years, 41 to 60 years, and over 60 years. Based on these statements the total number of female members, overall members, and respective share of female members was calculated.

The total number of volunteers was asked for with the following question: Please fill in below how many persons work in the mentioned positions, also divided by gender and migrant background (in German: Geben Sie im Folgenden bitte an, wie viele Personen, auch nach Geschlecht und Migrationshintergrund, in den genannten Funktionen jeweils tätig sind). The respondents had to state the number of male and female volunteers in the following positions: president, vice president, voluntary administrator, treasurer, youth director, athletics director, spokesperson, secretary, additional board member, department board, judge/referee, and coach (the latter two positions are not part of the club's board and are therefore not part of the analysis). Based on these statements the total number of female board members and the overall number of board members was calculated as well as the share of women on the board.

The organizational problems were assessed with the following question: How serious are certain problems in your club at the moment (in German: Wie groß sind zurzeit folgende, mögliche Probleme Ihres Vereins)? The six relevant organizational problems to this study are (1) the recruitment/retention of members, (2) the recruitment/retention of coaches, (3) the recruitment/retention of volunteers, (4) the demographic change in the region, (5) the financial situation of the club, and (6) the number of

laws, orders, and directives (for German wording in the questionnaire and English translation see appendix). The severity of each organizational problem was judged on five-point Likert scales (1 = no problem to 5 = a very big problem; in German: 1 = kein Problem bis 5 = ein sehr großes Problem). The same problem items and scales had already been used in the first wave of the Sport Development Report (Breuer and Haase 2007) and in previous research on non-profit sports clubs in Germany (e.g., Emrich et al. 2001; Heinemann and Schubert 1994). This long-term application allows the analysis of development over time and can be an indicator of the reliability of the items. This study has chosen to utilize the subjective perception of the problem size rather than an objective measurement. Objective evaluation can cause certain problems in light of presumptions that a decline in members can be a problem since typically organizations want to grow (Slack and Parent 2006). By contrast, if a club classifies the problems of the recruitment/retention of members as less important, then this more accurately reflects organizational objectives. Therefore, the subjective perception of organizational problems fits better with the purpose of this study than does the objective evaluation.

With these six organizational problems a scale labeled *severity of organizational problems* was created. Cronbach's alpha for the six problem items was .67 and would not increase if one problem item was deleted. This value indicates that the construct is reliable because Cronbach's alpha is above .6 (Eckstein 2008). The scale *severity of organizational problems* was computed by adding up the six organizational problems and dividing the score by six. The scale represents the mean value of the six organizational problems. For missing values, the mean value of the scale (M=2.66) was imputed.

Categorization of Sports Clubs

To analyze gender effects on the severity of organizational problems, sports clubs are divided by their respective proportions of women. In this context, both the share of women among members and the share of women on the club's board are important. These two variables represent the independent variables (IVs). Since sports clubs significantly differ regarding their total numbers of members and numbers of female members, a relative measure is applied for these two variables. The sports clubs are divided into three groups according to their respective shares of women (Table 1). For both variables, the critical thresholds are the median and third quartile. The median value is 37.0% for the share of women among members and 25.0% for the share of women on the board. The values for the third quartile are 49.0% and 40.0%, respectively. The relatively small number of cases in each group indicates that there

was a high dropout rate in the survey. This high dropout rate is a common problem in online surveys (Couper and Coutts 2006). Nevertheless, the remaining number of cases is high enough for an appropriate analysis given the overall sample size. The three types of clubs differ regarding the overall number of members, the year of foundation, the number of offered sports, and the share of women on the board (Table 1). On average, clubs with a low share of women among members (group 1) are younger, smaller, and have fewer sports on offer than do clubs from the second and third group. With regard to the categorization of clubs according to the share of women on the board, clubs from the second group are on average older, bigger, and have more sports on offer.

Results

To analyze gender effects on organizational problems and to test the hypotheses one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) are carried out. In the ANOVAs, the severity of organizational problems serves as dependent variable (DV) and the two variables share of women among members and on the board as IVs. In addition to the ANOVA, a Tukey post hoc test is run to analyze which groups of clubs significantly differ from each other with regard to the severity of

organizational problems. An alpha-level of .05 is used for all statistical tests.

The results of the ANOVAs are presented in Table 2. Hypothesis 1 stated that the share of women on the board had a significant negative effect on the severity of organizational problems. The ANOVA shows a significant effect of the share of women on the board, $F(2, 4991)= 24.516$; $p=.000$. The post hoc comparison of means provides support for hypothesis 1: The sports clubs with a high share of women on the board (group 3) significantly differ from the clubs with a low (group 1) and medium share (group 2) of women on the board with regard to the severity of organizational problems (p's<.05). The severity of organizational problems is perceived as significantly smaller in clubs with a high share of women on the board (group 3; $M=2.53$) than in clubs with a low share (group 1; $M=2.71$) or medium share (group 2; $M=2.70$) of women on the board (p's<.05). The results of the post hoc test and the mean values of the severity organizational problems are summarized in Table 3.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that the share of women among members had a significant negative effect on the severity of organizational problems. The ANOVA yields a significant effect of the share of women among members, $F(2, 5645)= 37.038$; $p=.000$. Tukey post hoc comparisons of the three groups provide support for hypothesis 2: The sports clubs

Table 1 Categorization of sports clubs

Group		Share of women among members	Share of women on the board
1	Criterion	Less than 37.0%	Less than 25.0%
	Sub-sample	$n=3,315$	$n=2,830$
	Year of foundation (mean)	1956	1952
	Number of members (mean)	208	354
	Number of sports (mean)	2.5	3.4
	Share of unisports clubs (%)	56.2	47.9
	Share of women on the board (mean in%)	15.4	8.3
2	Criterion	37.0% to less than 49.0%	25.0% to less than 40.0%
	Sub-sample	$n=1,658$	$n=1,355$
	Year of foundation (mean)	1947	1948
	Number of members (mean)	547	503
	Number of sports (mean)	5.3	5.4
	Share of unisports clubs (%)	29.2	33.6
	Share of women on the board (mean in%)	28.5	31.0
3	Criterion	49.0% and higher	40.0% and higher
	Sub-sample	$n=1,654$	$n=1,495$
	Year of foundation (mean)	1950	1958
	Number of members (mean)	683	365
	Number of sports (mean)	6.4	4.6
	Share of unisports clubs (%)	28.0	38.5
	Share of women on the board (mean in%)	46.0	56.3

Table 2 Results of the ANOVA

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p
	Share of women among members				
Between groups	42.973	2	21.487	37.038	.000
Within groups	3274.776	5645	.580		
Total	3317.750	5647			
	Share of women on the board				
Between groups	28.363	2	14.81	24.516	.000
Within groups	2887.038	4991	.578		
Total	2915.401	4993			

with a high share of women among members (group 3) significantly differ from the clubs with a low (group 1) and medium share (group 2) of women among members with regard to the severity of organizational problems (p's<.05). The severity of organizational problems is perceived as significantly smaller in clubs with a high share of women among members (group 3; M=2.51) than in clubs with a low share (group 1; M=2.71) or medium share (group 2; M=2.71) of women among members (p's<.05).

Discussion

This study analyzed gender effects on the severity of organizational problems of sports clubs in Germany. Gender effects were investigated on the board level and among members. Both the share of women on the board and among members was found to have a significant impact on the severity of organizational problems. The results of the post hoc test showed that the perceived severity of organizational problems was significantly smaller in the clubs with a high share of women among members and on the board (group 3) than in clubs with a low (group 1) or medium share (group 2) of women. Although the gender effects on the severity of organizational problems were significant, it can be suggested that further variables could be relevant to explain the severity of organizational problems such as sports club characteristics (number of members, number of sports, etc.). In this regard, previous studies showed mixed findings. Research on organizational effectiveness revealed

that the number of members had a positive influence on the organizational effectiveness of Finnish sports clubs, whereas the number of sports had a negative impact (Koski 1995). On the contrary, German sports clubs with many members perceived bigger organizational problems (Wicker and Breuer 2010). In this context, further research is needed to clarify the impact of club characteristics on the severity of organizational problems.

The negative effect of the share of women among members on the severity of organizational problems can be explained by the positive contributions that women can make to club life in general. Sports clubs in Germany do not only focus on the provision of sporting opportunities to their members, as non-sporting and social activities in the club are also important (Breuer and Haase 2007; Breuer and Wicker 2009). Social activities include club events, summer festivals, carnival and Christmas parties, and other convivial gatherings to name a few. It is suggested that women are more likely to assist in organizing social events than male club members. For example, female club members organize specific decoration for the club house, provide food and beverages (e.g., bake a cake, make a salad), and organize an entertainment program for the social event. These social events are important to the social cohesion within the club. Moreover, additional revenues can be generated through the sale of food and beverages and volunteers can be recruited at social events (Wicker and Breuer 2010). For this reason, the share of women among members is relevant to the overall functioning of the club and consequently also to the severity of organizational problems.

Table 3 Severity of organizational problems according to share of women among members and on the board (mean values and results of post hoc test)

Severity of organizational problems	Group			Total
	1	2	3	
Share of women among members	2.71[c]	2.71[c]	2.51[ab]	2.66
Share of women on the board	2.71[c]	2.70[c]	2.53[ab]	2.66

The scale goes from *1* = no problem to *5* = a very big problem. Post hoc test: [a] significantly different from group 1 (p<.05); [b] significantly different from group 2 (p<.05); [c] significantly different from group 3 (p<.05)

The finding on the share of women on the board can be explained by role congruency theory. The qualities of leadership roles in sports clubs clearly differ from roles in other industries (e.g., non-profit vs. for-profit environments). This assumption can explain why the perceived severity of organizational problems is smaller in sports clubs with a high share of women on the board, because clubs with a higher share of females can attract other target groups that are more inclined to work under a female stewardship. Women and immigrants could well have completely different associations of what constitutes a good leader or a gender role and about the perceived fit between the two than do German males (who are traditional sports club members). Therefore, the congruence perceived by women and immigrants between the female gender role and leader roles at a sports club could well be higher than that by traditional young German male sports clubs members. Moreover, this finding can be supported by a prior study in Norway (e.g., Skirstad 2009). Females in leadership roles may better understand the demands on female sports club members and thereby have fewer problems recruiting and retaining them.

Another explanation for the beneficial effect of an increased share of women on the board on the severity of organizational problems could lie in the aspect of female leadership style. Female leaders might implement a female leadership style. Research on male and female leadership styles has conventionally separated gender attributes, for instance labeling strength and independence predominantly *masculine* as opposed to more *feminine* characteristics such as passiveness and cooperation (Ryan et al. 2011). Traditional theory has suggested the presence of a male management style was considered the formula for the success of an organization (Bass et al. 1971; Schein 1973). Evolving perspectives on the concepts of gender and equality have led to the more contemporary consensus that female qualities are also important for management and organizational accomplishment (Eagly et al. 2003). In the United States, Oldham and Cummings (1996) found that employees produced their most creative outcomes when they work on complex, challenging jobs and were supervised in a supportive non-controlling way; characteristics typically associated with the female leadership style. Traditional feminine characteristics, such as listening, collaborating, and peacemaking, add value to the workplace (Cunningham and Sagas 2008). The changing connotations of female leadership style are in part attributable to the increasing existence of studies illustrating the consequences of female leadership on management and the effectiveness of organizations (Bass 1985).

In a sporting context, gender leadership styles have been compared in relation to their congruence with transactional and transformational leadership in North America (e.g., Burton and Peachey 2009; Doherty 1997; Doherty and Danylchuk 1996). The literature suggests that female leaders display transformational leadership more than their male counterparts (e.g., Eagly et al. 2003) and are also perceived as more effective when acting as transformational leaders (Eagly and Carli 2003). The principle difference between transformational and transactional leadership pertains to the relationship between followers and leaders. Transformational leaders "provide a purpose that transcends short-term goals and recognizes the higher order needs of followers" (Burton and Peachey 2009, p. 246). Higher-order needs such as achievement or self-actualization are encouraged by transformational leaders who hope for subordinates to maximize their potential (Doherty and Danylchuk 1996). In contrast, Doherty and Danylchuk (1996) describe transactional leaders as rewarding subordinates for their compliance with the leader's expectations. Thus, "transformational leadership results in followers identifying with the needs of the leader, while a transactional leader will give subordinates something they want in exchange for something the leader desires" (Burton and Peachey 2009, p. 246). Eagly et al. (2003) are among those to highlight the connection between transformational leadership and female leadership style. Female leaders view themselves at the center of a web of relationships, focus on building effective teams and groups, and more commonly use communication as a means to build relationships and develop a common ground. Within this function, women tend to be transformational leaders and are more likely to persuade subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of the group (Eagly et al. 2003). In contrast, male leaders have been identified as demonstrating more transactional leadership behaviors (Eagly and Carli 2003). In summary, researchers highlight that the female leadership style tends to be more transformational and thus more focused on those aspects of leadership that predict effectiveness (Eagly et al. 2003). This contemporary claim that women have superior leadership skills could benefit sports organizations and can therefore explain the beneficial effect female leaders have on the severity of organizational problems to some extent.

This study has some limitations. It does not provide a recipe for increasing the share of women in sports clubs since the aim was solely to provide empirical evidence for the impact of women on the board and among members on the severity of organizational problems. In other words, the study does not aim to present particular methods on how to increase the proportion of women in sports clubs; however, this paper has highlighted that such measures (e.g., the gender quotas imposed by the IOC or the Norwegian Olympic Committee) are indeed useful in light of the empirical evidence. The findings of this study provide evidence for the often postulated increase in the share of women in leading positions. Appointing women to management positions can be beneficial to sports organizations. Therefore, the findings of this study have some implications for sports clubs, sports

organizations, and policymakers alike. Mostly it seems like a high proportion of female members and board members presents a sort of protection element for the severity of organizational problems. The minimization of the problems faced by sports clubs implies good management practice. As the severity of organizational problems was found to be smaller for sports clubs with a high proportion of women on their boards and among members, it can be concluded that female leaders and female members lead to the reduction of organizational problems. Thus, it is recommended that sports clubs and other non-profit sports organizations appoint women to leading positions and specifically target potential female members.

Conclusion

This study provides evidence that the severity of organizational problems is smaller in sports clubs with a higher share of women on the board and among members. In line with role congruency theory, it can be seen that the congruence between the female gender role and leader roles in sport might be better than it is in other industries where women are finding it even more difficult to attain leadership positions. The study can provide the basis for future research in the field of women, leadership, and sport. Future research directions could include investigating the impact of female leadership styles on the organizational problems experienced by sports clubs. In this context, qualitative approaches would be particularly useful. Comparable studies in other cultural contexts and other sports organizations could also prove fruitful to draw international comparisons and to make broader recommendations for sports organizations in general.

Appendix

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Table 4 German wording and English translation of the six organizational problem items

German wording	English translation
Bindung/Gewinnung von Mitgliedern	Recruitment/retention of members
Bindung/Gewinnung von Übungsleitern/innen	Recruitment/retention of coaches
Bindung/Gewinnung von ehrenamtlichen Funktionsträgern	Recruitment/retention of volunteers
Demografische Entwicklung in der Region	Demographic change in the region
Finanzielle Situation des Vereins	Financial situation of the club
Anzahl an Gesetzen, Verordnungen, Vorschriften	Number of laws, orders, and directives

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