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GENDER ASPECT OF NEGOTIATIONS IN THE SPORTS SECTOR AS A FACTOR IN ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract:

The article examines the impact of gender determinants on the negotiation process within the professional sports industry. The author analyzes how specific negotiation styles and prevailing gender stereotypes shape athletes' and sports officials' access to resources and career opportunities. The paper substantiates the thesis that the institutionalization of a gender-oriented approach in sports law is a necessary condition for overcoming structural inequality.

Keywords: gender equality in sport, sports management, negotiation strategies, inclusivity, negotiations.

Introduction

Article 58 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan enshrines the principle of equal rights for women and men, imposing on the State the obligation to ensure equal rights and opportunities in the governance of society and the State, as well as in other spheres of public and state life [1]. This constitutional provision forms the legal foundation for the implementation of the principle of gender equality, including in the field of sport.

Historically, sporting activity developed predominantly as a male-dominated sphere, while women for a long time were either effectively excluded from sports



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competitions or were not regarded as full-fledged subjects of sports relations. The absence of institutional conditions and prevailing social expectations did not encourage women to recognize the possibility of participating in sports on an equal footing with men.

As women's participation in sport expanded, stable gender stereotypes emerged, implying a division of sports into so-called "male" and "female" disciplines. In particular, public perception has закрепел the idea of rhythmic gymnastics as a predominantly female sport, whereas disciplines such as boxing, wrestling, karate, and other martial arts have traditionally been classified as "male" sports. In contemporary conditions, a gradual erosion of these stereotypes can be observed, manifested in the active participation of women in sports disciplines previously closed to them, including boxing and combat sports. This trend indicates the development of the principle of gender equality in the sports industry and the expansion of opportunities for women's self-realization in professional sport.

The increasing presence of women in the sports sector objectively entails their involvement not only in competitive activities but also in related legal and economic processes, including participation in negotiations concerning the conclusion of sports contracts, sponsorship agreements, and other contractual relations.

The gender aspect of sports negotiations is not merely a matter of business ethics; it also constitutes a strategic instrument for achieving equal rights and opportunities.

Theoretical Framework: Negotiation Styles and Social Expectations

The gender dimension of negotiations in sport is grounded in social role theory. In a sporting environment that has historically been coded as "masculine,"



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negotiation standards by default presume aggression, dominance, and the use of hard tactics.

The “Backlash” Phenomenon: Research by Linda Babcock demonstrates that women who initiate negotiations for increased compensation in “male-dominated” industries are perceived as “less likable” and “overly demanding” compared to men employing identical strategies [2]. In sport, this leads to female athletes initiating contract renegotiations less frequently due to fears of reputational risks.

Mediation Styles: Women more often demonstrate an integrative style (the pursuit of win–win solutions), which is more advantageous for sports organizations in the long term; however, in short-term commercial deals, this style is frequently misinterpreted as a weak negotiating position.

Structural Barriers in Sports Negotiations

One of the principal challenges to equality is the lack of transparent salary data. Male athletes have access to more developed informal networks (“Old Boys’ Club”), where information on bonuses and sponsorship conditions is exchanged. A 2021 study by the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality indicates that this information vacuum compels female athletes to accept terms that are 30–40% lower than market rates for comparable performance indicators in the male sector [3].

In sponsorship negotiations with brands, a cognitive bias is observed, manifested as follows:

Men’s sport: Contracts are often concluded “in advance,” based on expected potential (future earnings).



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Women’s sport: Negotiations are reactive in nature—compensation is discussed only after an outstanding achievement (for example, winning a World Championship). This creates a situation of permanent catch-up development.

Case Study: Collective Bargaining as a Tool for Equality

One of the most vivid examples of the transformation of the negotiation process is the case of the U.S. Women’s National Soccer Team (USWNT) versus the U.S. Soccer Federation (USSF).

Essence: The athletes shifted from individual claims to a collective labor dispute (collective bargaining).

Outcome: In 2022, a historic agreement was reached equalizing prize money for participation in the World Cups. This case demonstrated that changing the format of negotiations—from individual to institutional—neutralizes gender bias [4].

Institutional Mechanisms for Ensuring Equality

To ensure equal opportunities, the following negotiation standards should be implemented:

Standardization of Criteria (Objective Criteria): The use of objective metrics (social media reach, TV ratings, physical performance indicators) instead of subjective assessments of “star power.” This minimizes the influence of mediator bias.

Gender Audit of Negotiation Teams: Mandatory inclusion of women in boards of directors and transfer committees. According to the Global Sports Forum Report (2023), the presence of women in negotiation teams increases the likelihood of concluding deals with women’s teams by 25%.

Protection of Reproductive Rights in Contracts: Inclusion of provisions on pregnancy and maternity as standard contractual clauses (as required by FIFA



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since 2021), moving these issues from the realm of “special requests” to that of guaranteed rights.

Conclusion

The gender dimension of negotiations is a key factor shaping the economic architecture of sport. Equal opportunities are achieved not only through quota mechanisms but also through the deconstruction of the “masculine” negotiation model, the introduction of transparency, and collective representation. The transition to integrative negotiation models enables sports organizations to use human capital more efficiently and to enter new markets.

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