Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 through Sport

Subjects: Development Studies

Contributor: Yong-Yee Chong , Emma Sherry , Sophia Harith , Selina Khoo , Louis Moustakas

Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) – achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is one of the 17 SDGs, which is "integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development". Sport has been hailed as a vehicle for humanitarian work and social change - this refers to the nascent concept of sport for development (SFD). Gender equality and/or women empowerment are one of the most common intended outcomes in SFD programs. In the research and evaluation of SFD programs targeting SDG 5, it is fundamental to understand the history of the SFD movement, the relationship with SDGs, and the existing literature on SFD and SDG 5.

sustainable development   SGD 5   gender equality   women empowerment   impact assessment

1. Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) – achieve gender equality and women's empowerment is one of the 17 SDGs, which is "integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development"[1]. Empowerment is achieved when one is able to make strategic life choices after being denied the ability to do so[2]. In the context of gender, inequality is the difference felt by two persons/groups of different genders; inequity refers to unfair, problematic treatment caused by injustice against a gender[3][4]. Sport has been hailed as a vehicle in humanitarian work and for social change; gender equality and women empowerment are one of the most common intended outcomes. Sport for Development (SFD) refers to sport-based interventions designed to contribute towards non-sport goals[5]. These non-sport goals are social development goals, related to education, health, gender, livelihoods, disability, peace, and social cohesion[6]. SFD practitioners aspire to disrupt the status quo of the existing social systems, where inequity is often found to contribute to social development challenges[7].

1.1 Historical Development of SDG 5 and SFD

De Soysa and Zipp[8] argued that the gender equality movement within sports converged with the emergence of SFD, at the juncture when the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were formalized by the United Nations in 2000. In the following years, the United Nations strategically launched the United Nations Office for Sport for Development in 2001 and declared 2005 as the International Year of Sport and Physical Education. Notably, promoting gender equality and empowering women was introduced as one of the eight MDGs[9], succeeded by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the post-2015 agenda. Nine targets and 14 indicators were developed to measure the progress towards SDG5—to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Initially, the associated targets and indicators made no explicit mention of sport[10][11]. Thereafter, the Commonwealth Secretariat's analysis on the contribution of SFD towards the sustainable development agenda identified four targets where sport can be utilized as a development tool[12]. The highlighted targets are eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and girls (Target 5.1), eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls (Target 5.2), women achieving full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leaderships at all levels of decision making (Target 5.5), and implementing policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (Target 5c). In 2017, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization adopted the Kazan Action Plan to stress the commitment to link sport policy development to the 2030 agenda of the United Nations. Among the key actions were to "conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of Global Observatory for Women, Sport, Physical Education, and Physical Activity" as well as to "develop common indicators for measuring the contribution of physical education, physical activity, and sport to prioritized SDGs and their targets"[13] (p. 5). The importance of gender equality and women empowerment were underlined:

"Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in and through sport are not only fundamental components of national and international sport policy but are also crucial factors for good governance, and for maximizing the contribution of sport to sustainable development and peace"[14] (p. 2).

1.2. From Praxis to Research

To elicit positive outcomes from SFD programs targeting SDG 5, practitioners ought to define what gender equality and women empowerment are prior to programing and measuring the program outcomes[15]. In the context of research, it is important to recognize and assess practical circumstances based on the program objectives. In SFD, leveling the playing field for women through sports has been well received but the progress towards gender equality has been deemed to be slow[8], especially for structural changes that are only attainable with macro-level intervention outcomes. To enact structural change, the complexities at the community and societal levels have to be considered and solutions have to be directed at all levels[16]. At the individual level, the "Girl Effect" is particularly apparent in many girls empowerment interventions[17][18][19], where girls are expected to play the sole and progressive role towards gender equality, neglecting the complex local context that could limit the sustainable changes in their community[20][21][22]. Apart from that, research can further empower women/girls when adopting a participatory, bottom-up approach; thereby empowerment of individuals is attainable beyond the intervention program. In the context of research design, the agency of women and girls can be further exercised through their inclusion in the design and evaluation of the program, being more than the participants of sport activities[23]. Research also discovered inconsistency in monitoring and evaluation. Coalter[24] argued that a 'displacement of scope' happens in the SFD research, by which evaluators equate micro-level impacts such as sport participation with macro-level or societal change. As such, SFD researchers are urged to increase the rigorousness and clarity of these studies, especially when reporting outcomes beyond the "sport" touchline[25][26][27]. As the field of SFD grows substantially, LeCrom and Martin[28] argued that scholars should focus on process-based research on the development and management of SFD instead of solely on program evaluations.

Over the last decade, the number of SFD organizations has continued to grow in tandem with the SFD movement. Kim[29] posited that the advancement of gender equality in certain countries is slow; some countries have experienced a widening gender gap despite long-term development efforts. More programs were initiated in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and were backed by international organizations, involving networks of stakeholders outside of LMIC communities. This raised questions about the positioning of international organizations as the "saviors" or "providers" to LMICs[30][31]. Feminist sport researchers argued that the association of transnational non-governmental organizations with major sport brands or 'entanglement of privatization'[32] (p. 522) may reproduce marginalization and inequalities through SFD programs, the initial societal problem that these programs intend to solve in LMICs[33]. Such power dynamics have concerned researchers about the process of translating the effort into the desired developmental outcomes[34][35][36]. Researchers are urged to consider the systems and environments encompassing these programs, as these external factors could influence the outcome due to gendered socialization in sport[37].

2. SFD Theories and Frameworks

SFD is defined as "a social movement that seeks to improve lives through the use of sport and physical activity, and to advance sport and broader social development in disadvantaged communities"[38] (p. 370). In this social movement, sport is used as an intervention in a conventionally complex social development setting, hence it is also perceived as "a social phenomenon observed in the intersection between many disciplines"[39] (p. 1). As a result of the increasing interest in these myriad of disciplines within or related to SFD, this is a burgeoning research area in the field of SFD[6]. The growth was witnessed in both the conceptual and empirical literature, especially in the past decade[40]. Welty Peachey and Hill[40] examined the theoretical advancement of SFD-specific literature through the identification of studies that apply, engage, or mention key SFD theories or frameworks. Five primary theoretical/conceptual approaches were originally derived from the SFD space. These approaches included (a) Sugden's[41] ripple-effect model, (b) Lyras and Welty Peachey's[42] sport-for-development theory (SFDT), (c) Schulenkorf's[43] sport-for-development framework (S4D), (d) Coalter's[26] program theory, and (e) Schulenkorf and Siefken's [44] sport-for-health model. The evident approaches have conceptualized the impact of SFD interventions[26][41], identified critical components of SFD programs[42], addressed process and project management of SFD[43], and assessed program outcomes[26][41]. The fundamentals of the ripple-effect model[41], the SFDT[42], and the

program theory[26] guided the discussions of findings in the review[45], delimited to degrees of program outcomes related to SDG 5. This review was important to investigate the existing gaps in program evaluation, laying the foundation for a more coherent model applicable to research and praxis.

2.1. Literature Review on SDG 5 and SFD

Since the launch of the SDGs during the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, research has been focusing on the purpose, conception, and politics of these developmental goals[46]. SDGs are designed to tackle developmental challenges in both developed and developing countries[47]. Further, SDGs are universal in terms of their intersectional characteristics and geographical targets, with each SDGs interchangeably influencing the agenda development of other goals[48]. However, despite sport being coined as an 'important enabler' of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development, SDGs and Sport have yet to be academically explored. Specifically, SDG 5 covers a wide scope of targets and indicators[49]; however, none of these targets and indicators are linked to sports or mention sports as a tool to achieve gender equality and women empowerment[10] [11].

For SFD, the earliest reviews on the literature of SFD shared the similarity of being a commissioned project for organizations and stakeholders which were keen to explore the efficacy of SFD in producing evidence-based outcomes. Schulenkorf et al.[6] published an extensive review of the SFD literature published from 2000 to 2014, presenting findings on the trends of authorship, geographical contexts, theoretical frameworks, types of sports, level of development, methodological approach, and research outcomes. Other reviews provide a country-specific lens. Langer[50] evaluated the African SFD landscape through a systematic mapping of evidence, and Whitley et al.[27] examined youth-based SFD interventions from six global cities, followed by a similar review focused on the US. There have been a series of reviews on youth-based sport interventions that deployed different methodological or theoretic approaches[51][52][53][54][55]. Each of these reviews helped address the knowledge gaps in SFD and provided potential research or review foci for researchers in different disciplines.

Beyond academic literature reviews, Svensson and Woods[56] provided a comprehensive overview of the SFD organizations, identifying 955 SFD organizations. The least represented thematic areas were organizations focusing on gender and disability. Hancock et al.[57] provided a global assessment of SFD programs for girls and women based on data collected from four internet databases with 49 out of a total of 376 identified programs focusing on gender equity. This lack of targeted activity can partially be due to the fact that many programmes assume that gender issues are adequately addressed through more general inclusion or education activities and, therefore, do not perceive a need to develop specific, gender-oriented activities[58]

(Adapted from Chong et al.[45] - a review, which serves as a systemized effort to organize the (1) indicators of outcomes and (2) success factors specifically on SDG 5 in SFD programs.)

References

1. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls . UN Women. Retrieved 2022-6-17

2. Naila Kabeer; Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. *Development and Change* **1999**, *30*, 435-464, 10.1111/1467-7660.00125.

3. Yukiko Asada; Jeremiah Hurley; Ole Frithjof Norheim; Mira Johri; A three-stage approach to measuring health inequalities and inequities.. *International Journal for Equity in Health* **2014**, *13*, 98, 10.1186/s12939-014-0098-y.

4. I Kawachi; S V Subramanian; N Almeida-Filho; A glossary for health inequalities. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* **2002**, *56*, 647-652, 10.1136/jech.56.9.647.

5. Simon C. Darnell; Meredith A. Whitley; Martin Camiré; William V. Massey; Lindsey C. Blom; Megan Chawansky; Shawn Forde; Laura Hayden; Systematic Reviews of Sport for Development Literature:

Managerial and Policy Implications. *Journal of Global Sport Management* **2019**, *7*, 249-266, 10.1080/24704 067.2019.1671776.

6. Nico Schulenkorf; Emma Sherry; Katie Rowe; Sport for Development: An Integrated Literature Review. *Journal of Sport Management* **2016**, *30*, 22-39, 10.1123/jsm.2014-0263.

7. Ramón Spaaij; Nico Schulenkorf; Ruth Jeanes; Sarah Oxford; Participatory research in sport-for-development: Complexities, experiences and (missed) opportunities. *Sport Management Review* **2018**, *21*, 25-37, 10.1016/j.smr.2017.05.003.

8. Lilamani De Soysa; Sarah Zipp; Gender equality, sport and the United Nation's system. A historical overview of the slow pace of progress. *Sport in Society* **2019**, *22*, 1783-1800, 10.1080/17430437.2019.165 1018.

9. Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Wowen . United Nations. Retrieved 2022-6-17

10. Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls . United Nations. Retrieved 2022-6-17

11. United Nations. Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators; E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1; June 2016 2016.

12. Dudfield, O.; Dingwall-Smith, M. Sport for Development and Peace and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; The Commonwealth: United Kingdom, 2015.

13. Müller-Wirth, P. Strengthening the Global Framework for Leveraging Sport for Development and Peace, UNDESA, Expert Group Meeting & Integragency Dialogue; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNDESA): New York, 13 & 14 June 2018.

14. Secretariat of United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation. Kazan Action Plan. In Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport, Kazan, Russian Federation, July 14-15, 2017.

15. Khoo, Selina; Jenkin, Claire. Measuring Sustainable Development Goal 5; McCullough, Brian P.; Kellison, Timothy; Melton, E. Nicole, Eds.; Routledge: London, 2022; pp. 131-140.

16. Emma Sherry; Nico Schulenkorf; Emma Seal; Matthew Nicholson; Russell Hoye; Sport-for-Development in the South Pacific Region: Macro-, Meso-, and Micro-Perspectives. *Sociology of Sport Journal* **2017**, *34*, 303-316, 10.1123/ssj.2017-0022.

17. Lyndsay M.C. Hayhurst; Girls as the 'New' Agents of Social Change? Exploring the 'Girl Effect' through Sport, Gender and Development Programs in Uganda. *Sociological Research Online* **2013**, *18*, 192-203, 1 0.5153/sro.2959.

18. Lyndsay Mc Hayhurst; Corporatising Sport, Gender and Development: postcolonial IR feminisms, transnational private governance and global corporate social engagement. *Third World Quarterly* **2011**, *32*, 531-549, 10.1080/01436597.2011.573944.

19. Megan Chawansky; Lyndsay M.C. Hayhurst; Girls, international development and the politics of sport: introduction. *Sport in Society* **2015**, *18*, 877-881, 10.1080/17430437.2014.997587.

20. Holly Thorpe; Lyndsay Hayhurst; Megan Chawansky; 'Once My Relatives See Me on Social Media… It Will be Something Very Bad for My Family': The Ethics and Risks of Organizational Representations of Sporting Girls From the Global South. *Sociology of Sport Journal* **2018**, *35*, 226-237, 10.1123/ssj.2017-0020.

21. Mary G. McDonald; Imagining neoliberal feminisms? Thinking critically about the US diplomacy campaign, 'Empowering Women and Girls Through Sports'. *Sport in Society* **2015**, *18*, 909-922, 10.1080/17430437.20 14.997580.

22. Jason Hickel; The 'girl effect': liberalism, empowerment and the contradictions of development. *Third World Quarterly* **2014**, *35*, 1355-1373, 10.1080/01436597.2014.946250.

23. Darnell, S.C., Hayhurst, L.M.C.. De-colonising the politics and practice of sport-for-development: Critical insights from post-colonial feminist theory and methods; Schulenkorf, N., Adair, D., Eds.; Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2013; pp. 33-61.

24. Coalter, F.. Sport for development: What game are we playing?; -, Eds.; Routledge: London, 2013; pp. -.

25. Fred Coalter; The politics of sport-for-development: Limited focus programmes and broad gauge problems?. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* **2010**, *45*, 295-314, 10.1177/101269021036679 1.

26. Fred Coalter; 'There is loads of relationships here': Developing a programme theory for sport-for-change programmes. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* **2012**, *48*, 594-612, 10.1177/10126902124461 43.

27. Meredith A. Whitley; William V. Massey; Martin Camiré; Lindsey C. Blom; Megan Chawansky; Shawn Forde; Mish Boutet; Amanda Borbee; Simon C. Darnell; A systematic review of sport for development interventions across six global cities. *Sport Management Review* **2019**, *22*, 181-193, 10.1016/j.smr.2018.0 6.013.

28. Carrie W. Lecrom; Tiesha Martin; Sport for Development's Impact on Cultural Adaptability: A Process and Outcome-Based Analysis. *Journal of Sport Management* **2019**, *33*, 12-24, 10.1123/jsm.2017-0302.

29. Eun Mee Kim; Gender and the Sustainable Development Goals. *Global Social Policy* **2017**, *17*, 239-244, 1 0.1177/1468018117703444.

30. Shawn D Forde; Fear and loathing in Lesotho: An autoethno*graphic*analysis of sport for development and peace. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* **2013**, *50*, 958-973, 10.1177/1012690213501916.

31. Douglas Hartmann; Christina Kwauk; Sport and Development. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* **2011**, *35*, 284-305, 10.1177/0193723511416986.

32. Lyndsay M. C. Hayhurst; Courtney Szto; Corporatizing Activism Through Sport-Focused Social Justice? Investigating Nike's Corporate Responsibility Initiatives in Sport for Development and Peace. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* **2016**, *40*, 522-544, 10.1177/0193723516655579.

33. Thorpe, H.; Chawansky, M.. The 'girl effect'in action sports for development: The case of the female practitioners of Skateistan; Thorpe, H.; Olive, R., Eds.; Palgrave Macmillan : London, 2016; pp. 133-152.

34. Tess Kay; Developing through sport: evidencing sport Impacts on young people. *Sport in society* **2019**, *12*, 69-83, 10.4324/9781315875057-6.

35. Megan Chawansky; You're juicy: autoethnography as evidence in sport for development and peace (SDP) research. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health* **2014**, *7*, 1-12, 10.1080/2159676x.2014.8939 00.

36. Simon C. Darnell; Power, Politics and "Sport for Development and Peace": Investigating the Utility of Sport for International Development. *Sociology of Sport Journal* **2010**, *27*, 54-75, 10.1123/ssj.27.1.54.

37. Michael S. Dao; Simon C. Darnell; Exploring Vietnamese sport for development through the capabilities approach: a descriptive analysis. *Sport in Society* **2021**, -, 1-22, 10.1080/17430437.2021.1900828.

38. Bruce Kidd; A new social movement: Sport for development and peace. *Sport in Society* **2008**, *11*, 370-380, 10.1080/17430430802019268.

39. Ekholm, D. Problematizing the concept of transfer in sports-based interventions. In Proceedings of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) virtual event: The impact of sport and sport-based interventions in preventing youth violence, crime and drug use: from research to practice, 21 January 2021.

40. Jon Welty Peachey; Nico Schulenkorf; Patrick Hill; Sport-for-development: A comprehensive analysis of theoretical and conceptual advancements. *Sport Management Review* **2019**, *23*, 783-796, 10.1016/j.smr.20

19.11.002.

41. John Sugden; Critical left-realism and sport interventions in divided societies. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* **2010**, *45*, 258-272, 10.1177/1012690210374525.

42. Alexis Lyras; Jon Welty Peachey; Integrating sport-for-development theory and praxis. *Sport Management Review* **2011**, *14*, 311-326, 10.1016/j.smr.2011.05.006.

43. Nico Schulenkorf; Sustainable community development through sport and events: A conceptual framework for Sport-for-Development projects. *Sport Management Review* **2011**, *15*, 1-12, 10.1016/j.smr.2011.06.001.

44. Nico Schulenkorf; Katja Siefken; Managing sport-for-development and healthy lifestyles: The sport-for-health model. *Sport Management Review* **2019**, *22*, 96-107, 10.1016/j.smr.2018.09.003.

45. Yong-Yee Chong; Emma Sherry; Sophia Harith; Selina Khoo; Sport for Development Programs Contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 5: A Review. *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 6828, 10.3390/su1411 6828.

46. Sakiko Fukuda-Parr; From the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals: shifts in purpose, concept, and politics of global goal setting for development. *Gender & Development* **2016**, *24*, 43-52, 10.1080/13552074.2016.1145895.

47. United Nations. Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Available online: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%

48. Kay, T.; Dudfield, O. The Commonwealth Guide to Advancing Development through Sport; Commonwealth Secretariat: London, 2013.

49. Shahra Razavi; The 2030 Agenda: challenges of implementation to attain gender equality and women's rights. *Gender & Development* **2016**, *24*, 25-41, 10.1080/13552074.2016.1142229.

50. Laurenz Langer; Sport for development – a systematic map of evidence from Africa. *South African Review of Sociology* **2015**, *46*, 66-86, 10.1080/21528586.2014.989665.

51. Mark W. Bruner; Sean Hillier; Colin P. T. Baillie; Lynn F. Lavallee; Brenda G. Bruner; Katharine Hare; Robert Lovelace; Lucie Lévesque; Positive Youth Development in Aboriginal Physical Activity and Sport: A Systematic Review. *Adolescent Research Review* **2015**, *1*, 257-269, 10.1007/s40894-015-0021-9.

52. Niels Hermens; Sabina Super; Kirsten T. Verkooijen; Maria A. Koelen; A Systematic Review of Life Skill Development Through Sports Programs Serving Socially Vulnerable Youth. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* **2017**, *88*, 408-424, 10.1080/02701367.2017.1355527.

53. Nicholas L. Holt; Kacey C. Neely; Linda G. Slater; Martin Camiré; Jean Côté; Jessica Fraser-Thomas; Dany Macdonald; Leisha Strachan; Katherine Tamminen; A grounded theory of positive youth development through sport based on results from a qualitative meta-study. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology* **2016**, *10*, 1-49, 10.1080/1750984x.2016.1180704.

54. Gareth J. Jones; Michael B. Edwards; Jason N. Bocarro; Kyle S. Bunds; Jordan W. Smith; An integrative review of sport-based youth development literature. *Sport in Society* **2016**, *20*, 161-179, 10.1080/1743043 7.2015.1124569.

55. Gardam, K.; Giles, A.R.; Hayhurst, L.M.C; Sport for development for Aboriginal youth in Canada: A scoping review. *Journal of Sport for Development* **2017**, *5*, 30-40.

56. Svensson, P.G.; Woods, H.; A Systematic Overview of Sport for Development and Peace Organizations. *Journal of Sport for Development* **2017**, *5*, 36-48.

57. Hancock, M.; Lyras, A.; Ha, J.-P.; Sport for development programs for girls and women: A global assessment. *Journal of Sport for Development* **2013**, *1*, 15-24.

58. Chawanksy, M.. New Social Movements, Old Gender Games?: Locating Girls in the Sport for Development and Peace Movement; Snyder, Anna Christine; Stobbe. Stephanie Phetsamay , Eds.; Emerald: London, 2011; pp. 121-134.