

Balancing the Scales: Title IX and Gender Equity in Modern Athletics



Aryana Iyer
The Lawrenceville School '27
aryanaier@icloud.com

Abstract

Since its passage in 1972, Title IX prohibited sex-based discrimination in federally funded education and athletic programs. Its early implementation produced large gains in participation at high school and collegiate levels, but many discrepancies remain.

This paper examines why gender inequalities persist in athletics despite the opportunities created by Title IX.

It evaluates whether the law's current framework achieves its original goals. Using an interdisciplinary qualitative approach, the study analyzes: *disparities in funding allocation, leadership representation, pay gaps.*

It also analyzes *legal constraints, inconsistent enforcement of the policy, institutional compliance, broader social resistance* rooted in gender inequality perceptions.

The analysis finds that while Title IX successfully expanded access to athletic participation, it has been less effective in addressing structural inequalities shaped by decision-making, media, revenue, and professional athletic systems. Case studies involving Caitlin Clark, Sue Bird, and Brittney Griner demonstrate how increased participation does not necessarily translate into equal economic or social power.

The findings suggest that Title IX requires reforms to strengthen accountability and address the economic realities of modern athletics.



Introduction

Title IX, a landmark civil rights law passed in 1972, prohibits sex-based discrimination in federally funded sports and education programs. Although Title IX was considered groundbreaking and transformative when introduced, its *narrow scope, outdated implementation guidelines, and failure to address inequalities* have left major gaps in equity.

Why do gender inequalities persist despite Title IX's advancements?

This paper investigates how *structural limitations, institutional decision-making, and economic changes* have impacted the law's ability to deliver equity in women's sports.

Existing research separately analyzes legal studies, economics, public policy, and sociology. Conversely, this paper integrates these sectors to examine where inequality persists and identifies needed reforms for today's climate.

Methodology

This study uses an interdisciplinary design, synthesizing existing research with economic, media, and financial records to analyze Title IX's effectiveness in educational, collegiate, and professional athletics.

The study notably reviews 6 academic and scholarly sources, 8 secondary sources, and 3 primary sources (interviews, media, and legal statements). Prominent athlete case studies (3) were selected to analyze financial, social, and economic inequalities found in the research.



Findings are categorized by participation, funding, leadership, and legal structures. Institutional patterns were analyzed to identify persistent inequalities and potential policy reforms.

Results

Participation: Title IX significantly expanded women's participation in high school and collegiate athletics, but access to opportunities remains unequal.

- Schools serving majority students of color provide women with athletic opportunities equivalent to approximately 67% of men's opportunities, compared with 82% at majority-white schools [1].

Funding: Financial disparities persist despite increased investment in women's sports.

- Division I men's athletic spending is approximately 3x that of women's athletics, while unequal facilities and resources demonstrate persistent institutional inequities [1]-[2].

Leadership: Women remain underrepresented in athletic leadership.

- They currently hold only 41.1% of coaching positions for women's teams across colleges [1].
- Women also make up approximately 25% of NCAA head coaches and athletic directors, revealing a gap between increased participation and leadership representation [1].

Institutional Compliance: Inconsistent enforcement, legal loopholes, and institutional resistance limit Title IX's effectiveness.

- Legal precedents such as NCAA v. Smith (1999), alongside the law's limited reach into professional and private sports, demonstrate how existing legal frameworks leave significant gaps in gender equity [3].

Discussion

This study expands upon prior research by examining disparities across educational, collegiate, and professional athletics, demonstrating how institutional and economic structures reinforce inequality beyond the law itself.

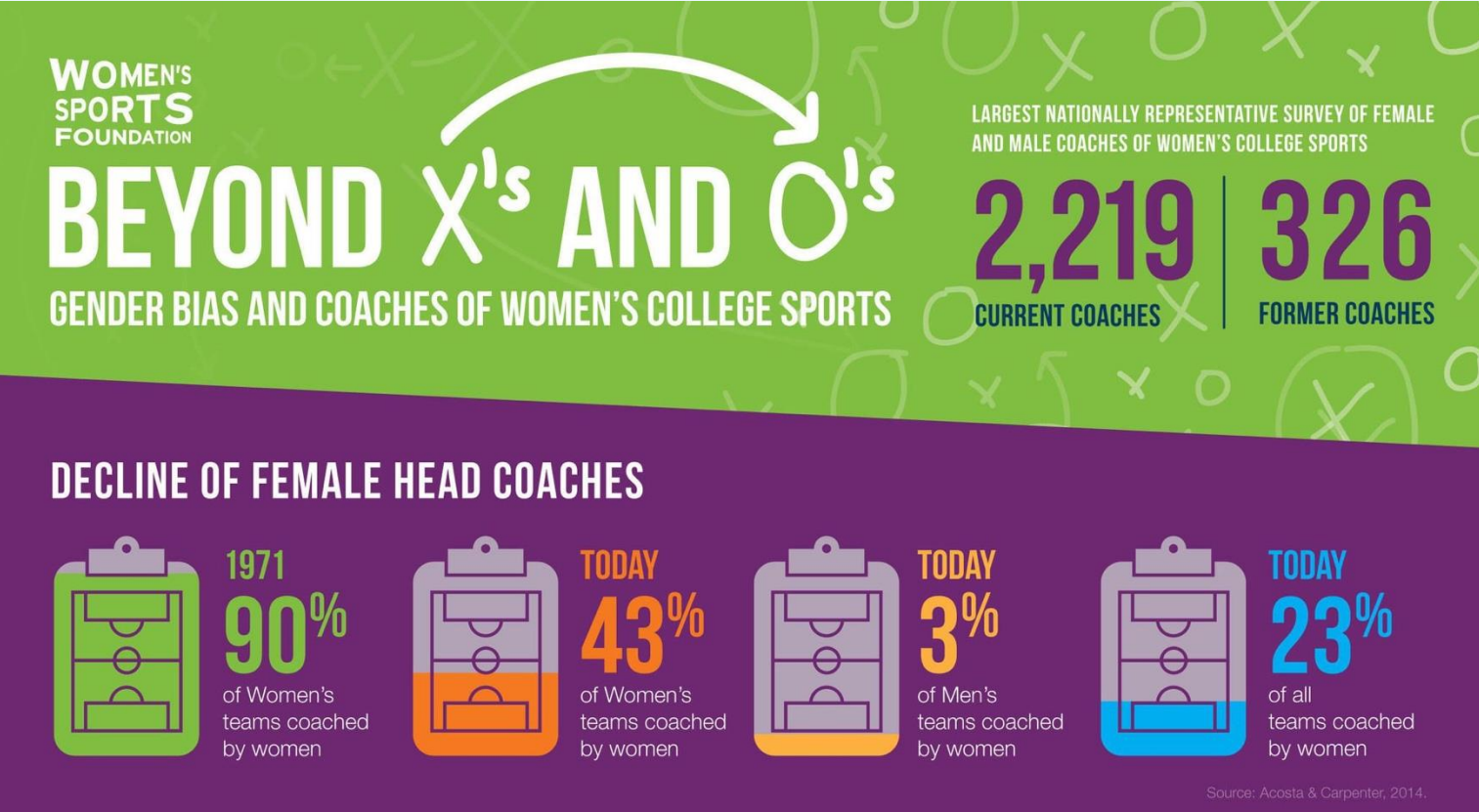
Title IX requires specific reforms to address the financial, institutional, and societal realities of contemporary athletics and achieve lasting gender equity.

Conclusion

While the law dramatically expanded participation opportunities for women and reshaped cultural perceptions of female athletic achievement, its *limited scope, outdated regulations resulting in loopholes for compliance, and inconsistent implementation* have created challenges in *addressing gaps in financial support, balanced media coverage, and leadership representation* across roles in collegiate and professional levels.

Therefore, the Title IX policy needs significant reform by lawmakers to meet the growing needs of today's female athletes. Continued progress toward equity will help ensure that pay, leadership, representation, and protection evolve with the athletes it was designed to support.

Further research should compare Title IX with international gender rights laws, the role of race in gender inequality, and the evolving impact of NIL policies.



References

[1] Sportanddev – “How Title IX Changed the Landscape of Sports”
[2]Meggie Mertens – “Title IX”
[3] Friestedt – “Title IX vs. NCAA”
[4] National Archives – Title IX 50th Anniversary Celebration
[5] Women's Sports Foundation – “Chasing Equity”