

Factors Inhibiting Female Participation in Sports Activities in Selected Communities of Mufulira District

Namangala Mercy Nchimunya

Teacher
Expressive Arts
Tungup Secondary School

Abstract:

The purpose of the study was to investigate the factors inhibiting female participation in sporting activities in selected communities of Mufulira District. Female participation in sport has been widely recognized as essential for promoting health, social inclusion, confidence building, and overall well-being among young women and girls. However, in many communities, participation remains low due to various social, cultural, and economic constraints. The researcher adopted a descriptive research design in order to describe in context the factors that hinder females from actively engaging in sporting activities. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed to maximize strengths and minimize limitations of each approach. A total sample of one hundred (100) female respondents was drawn from a target population of three hundred (300) residents across Kantanshi, Kankoyo, and Mukambo communities using purposive and simple random sampling techniques.

Furthermore, structured questionnaires and interview guides were used as data collection instruments. The instruments were reviewed by experts for face and content validity, while reliability was established through a pilot study conducted prior to the main data collection. Out of the 100 questionnaires distributed, all were successfully completed and returned, representing a 100% return rate. Tables, pie charts, and bar graphs were employed during data analysis to enhance the presentation of results. The collected data was analyzed using both descriptive statistics and thematic analysis, following the order of the research questions.

The findings of the study revealed that cultural beliefs and gender stereotypes strongly discouraged females from participating in sports. Lack of sports facilities, inadequate equipment, and limited financial support were also identified as major barriers. Additionally, negative parental attitudes, safety concerns, and household responsibilities significantly restricted girls' availability for sports activities. The study concluded that unless communities and stakeholders address these socio-cultural and resource-based constraints, female participation in sport in Mufulira District will remain low. Recommendations include community sensitization, improved funding, provision of adequate sports infrastructure, and the introduction of targeted programs that encourage and support girls' engagement in sporting activities.

1. Introduction Overview

1.1 Introduction

Participation in athletic activities offers many health, social, psychological and developmental advantages that substantially enhance individual welfare and community progress (Eime et al., 2013). These activities provide opportunities for physical fitness, social integration, psychological well-being and personal development, which are essential for comprehensive human growth. Research indicates that women and girls participate in sports less frequently than their male counterparts worldwide, highlighting a considerable gender difference across various cultural and geographical contexts (Anitha et al., 2016). The diminished participation rates among females result in frequent exclusion from the numerous advantages of sports activities, leading to individual disadvantages and wider societal consequences for gender equality, public health, and social development.

1.2 Background of the study

Participating in sports and physical activities has substantial advantages concerning health, social integration, psychological well-being, as well as personal development, mostly enhancing the quality of life and community health (Eime et al., 2013). Regular participation in sports significantly enhances cardiovascular fitness, increases muscular strength, lowers the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, aids in weight management, and promotes general physical well-being (Reis et al., 2016). The physical health advantages are especially significant in contexts such as Zambia, where non-communicable illnesses are progressively emerging as public health issues, and accessible preventative health strategies are essential for the wellness of the people.

In addition to physical health, sports offer substantial social advantages by fostering integration, encouraging collaboration, cultivating supportive peer relationships, and strengthening community cohesiveness (Viljoen & Tonder, 2022). Sports facilitate the formation of social networks, enhance communication skills, and cultivate a sense of belonging that surpasses other societal divisions through shared experiences and collective accomplishments. These social relationships can be especially beneficial for women and girls, who may otherwise encounter restricted chances for community involvement beyond home realms in numerous traditional settings.

From a psychological standpoint, participation in sports has been repeatedly linked to elevated self-esteem, improved moods, diminished symptoms of anxiety and depression, and overall mental health outcomes (Lubans et al., 2016). The secretion of endorphins during exercise, along with experiences of mastery and accomplishment, fosters good psychological states that benefit individuals throughout their lives. With the global rise in mental health awareness, the significance of sports as an accessible intervention for psychological well-being is increasingly acknowledged, particularly in underdeveloped regions where formal mental health treatments may be few.

Moreover, athletic pursuits promote constructive growth by establishing discipline, perseverance, leadership, and goal-setting, which apply to various aspects of life (Hermens et al., 2017). Sports offer young individuals structured settings for character development, competition and cooperation management, and confidence building, which facilitate scholastic success and career advancement. The developmental advantages may be particularly significant for girls in environments where gender norms and expectations limit possibilities for leadership and accomplishment.

Despite their relevance, the specific barriers and their respective implications within the communities of Mufulira District remain empirically unexplored, exposing a large research vacuum about the fundamental determinants preventing girls' participation in sports activities. Comprehending these multi-tiered obstacles through meticulous empirical research which would facilitate the formulation of evidence-based, targeted suggestions for stakeholders, including families, educational institutions, sports organisations, health promotion entities, community leaders, and local governmental authorities. These guidelines can guide actions to alleviate barriers and enhance female participation in sports, while facilitating access to essential health, social, psychological, and developmental advantages for the district's female population.

This study will employ mixed techniques to evaluate the particular constraining factors within selected communities in the inadequately explored local context of Mufulira District. This project will considerably address the information gap about female sports participation in Zambian communities by creating empirical evidence on participation patterns and restricting variables. The insights produced can guide initiatives to enhance female participation in sports, fostering greater gender equality in access to the well-documented advantages of regular physical activity and potentially aiding broader developmental objectives concerning health, education, and social integration within these communities.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In Zambian communities, females exhibit significantly lower participation rates in sports compared to males, leading to lost opportunities to access and benefit from the numerous health, social, psychological, and developmental advantages associated with regular participation in sports activities (Chawawa, 2021). The participation gap is a substantial issue from the perspectives of gender equality, public health, social development, and individual well-being. The ongoing under-representation of females in sports may lead to inferior health outcomes, diminished social networking possibilities, lower psychological advantages, and restricted personal development in contrast to males who participate more actively in these advantageous activities.

Although general hurdles have been discovered through extensive worldwide research and modest local studies, there are unique limits affecting particular Zambian communities, such as those in Mufulira District which have remained insufficiently investigated and comprehended.

The absence of context-specific empirical knowledge about participation barriers severely hinders the formulation and execution of focused, effective interventions to mitigate obstacles and promote increased female participation in sports within Zambian communities. Without a thorough comprehension of the specific factors inhibiting participation in distinct local contexts, stakeholders such as families, schools, sports organisations, community leaders, and policy makers lack the necessary evidence base to formulate interventions that effectively tackle the most pressing barriers in their communities.

The lack of study on female sports participation within certain Zambian community contexts therefore constitutes a theoretical and methodological deficiency in the scholarly literature on gender and sports within the selected communities of mufulra district.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to thoroughly investigate the variables that hinder female participation in sports within selected communities in Mufulira District through systematic empirical research employing both

quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This primary objective includes assessing current female sports participation levels, identifying specific barriers to participation, analysing how these barriers inhibit participation and formulating evidence-based recommendations to address the identified challenges effectively. This comprehensive analysis aims to produce a profound, contextual understanding of the problems faced by women in sports participation within this under-studied Indigenous Zambian context.

The study furthermore, aims at enhancing broader initiatives that advocate for gender equality in sports access, improve health through physical exercise and foster social development by increasing female participation in sports. This research addresses a critical knowledge gap concerning inhibitors to women's sports participation in under-researched Zambian local contexts, thereby informing theoretical frameworks and practical interventions that promote gender equity in sports benefits and improve the well-being of women and girls particularly in these selected communities.

1.5 Research Objectives

1. Identify existing female participation levels in sports activities in the selected communities of Mufulira district .
2. To identify the primary factors inhibiting female participation in sports among the selected communities of Mufulira district.
3. To investigate how the indicated determinants inhibit female participation in sports activities within the selected communities.
4. To establish ways of overcoming inhibitors and promote more female participation in sports within the selected communities

1.6 Research Questions

2. What are the current levels of female participation in sports activities among the selected communities of Mufulira district?
3. What factors inhibit female participation in sports activities within the selected communities of Mufulira district ?
4. In what ways do the stated factors inhibit female participation in sports within the selected communities?
5. How can community based initiatives and programs be designed to increase female participation in sports activities within the communities ?

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study will provide essential empirical insights into the primary multi-level variables inhibiting female participation in sports and physical activities within the under-explored local context of selected communities in Zambia's Mufulira District. This research is significant for its theoretical contributions to understanding gender disparities in sports participation, practical implications for intervention development, policy relevance for advancing gender equity in sports, and potential benefits for community health and development through enhanced female sports participation.

Further more, the research aims at generating focused evidence and recommendations to address inhibiting issues at various levels, hence facilitating greater female participation in sports activities within the selected local communities. Increased participation will enable women and girls to receive the substantial

verified physical, mental, social, and developmental advantages that participation in sports provides. The project examines the inhibitors to women's sports participation in under-researched Zambian local contexts, enhancing academic knowledge and practical interventions in gender equity and community development.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

This study aims to provide significant insights into the issues inhibiting female participation in sports within selected communities of Mufulira District; nevertheless, several limitations concerning its scope, methods, and potential obstacles must be recognised. These constraints shape the interpretation of results and underscore avenues for further study inquiry.

The study's methodological dependence on self-reported data via surveys and focus groups involves potential response biases that could compromise the validity of the findings. Participants may offer socially acceptable comments on their views towards sports participation or may inaccurately remember or report their participation behaviours. The mixed-methods approach, which combines quantitative and qualitative data collection to provide triangulation and reduce biases, is limited by the lack of objective measures of sports participation, such as observational data or activity tracking, which hinders accurate assessment of participation levels. Moreover, response rates may vary among demographic groups within the communities, thus introducing sampling biases that impact the representativeness of the findings.

The study's cross-sectional approach records participation patterns and perceived barriers at a singular moment, constraining comprehension of how these elements may fluctuate seasonally or develop over time. Without longitudinal data, causal linkages between identified barriers and participation levels cannot be conclusively determined, even if statistical associations exist. The lack of an intervention component in the study design precludes the empirical testing of the provided recommendations for overcoming barriers, but these recommendations will be based on the data derived from identified constraints.

The study's geographical concentration on three distinct communities in Mufulira District, that is; Kantanshi, Kankoyo, and Mukambo restricts the applicability of its findings to other communities within the district or the wider Zambian setting. Although these settlements were selected to exemplify various attributes within the district, they fail to encompass the complete array of environments in which Zambian women reside. Variations in socioeconomic, cultural, and infrastructural factors throughout several regions of Zambia may generate distinct patterns of barriers that this localised study cannot comprehensively examine. This geographical constraint underscores the necessity for analogous research in other Zambian contexts to cultivate a more holistic comprehension of the nationwide impediments to female sports participation

Resource limitations impact the extent of data collection feasible within the study's schedule and budget. Although statistically sufficient for the study population, the desired sample size of 384 survey respondents is very modest and may restrict the identification of nuanced patterns or subgroup disparities in participation and obstacles. The quantity of focus groups that can be executed is restricted by time and resources, which may hinder the thoroughness of qualitative analysis across various demographic segments of the female population in these selected communities .

1.9 Delimitation of the Study

This study is deliberately constrained in several respects to preserve a concentrated, controllable scope while guaranteeing enough depth of inquiry into the research concerns. These boundaries delineate the research's parameters and guide the accurate interpretation and application of findings.

The study is geographically limited to three communities in Mufulira District: Kantanshi, Kankoyo, and Mukambo. The communities were intentionally selected to exemplify diverse qualities within the district, encompassing differing proximities to urban centres, socio-economic profiles, and cultural influences. This geographical delineation facilitates a more concentrated and thorough analysis of participation patterns and obstacles within these particular local contexts instead of pursuing a wider yet possibly superficial inquiry across several communities. The choice of communities within a single district offers logistical benefits for data collecting and facilitates comparative research among adjacent environments that share certain traits yet may exhibit varying barrier patterns.

The study especially targets adult females aged 18 and older living in the selected communities.

1.10 Definition of Terms

To ensure clarity and consistency in this study, the following important words are defined as per their unique application in this research context:

Barriers: Elements, situations, or conditions that obstruct, limit, or inhibit action or participation in an activity (Merriam-Webster, 2022).

Female participation refers to the active involvement, engagement, inclusion, and representation of women and girls in various activities, processes, or institutions (United Nations, 2005).

Sports activities encompass organised or informal participation in sports, defined by physical exertion, skill enhancement, and often governed by rules or competitive aspects (WHO, 2022).

Stakeholders: Individuals, groups, organisations, or entities possessing an interest, concern, or influence over a specific topic, procedure, or outcome (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022).

The socio-ecological model: Is a theoretical framework that conceptualises health behaviours and social phenomena as influenced by elements at numerous interrelated levels, including individual, interpersonal, organisational, community, and policy (McLeroy et al., 1988).

A community is a collective of individuals residing in a defined geographic area who possess common traits, interests, or experiences and frequently engage with one another through formal or informal networks and organisations (CDC, 2021).

Gender norms: Socially generated concepts, expectations, and criteria about acceptable behaviours, roles, characteristics, and interactions for males and females within a particular cultural framework (UNESCO, 2020).

Sports infrastructure: Enabling sports at all levels; Sports infrastructure refers to the physical structures, facilities and related services that support the organization, executive participation and enjoyment of sporting activities and events (Copperbelt Provincial Education office 2021)

Demography: This is the statistical study of human populations, focusing on their size, structure, distribution and how these characters change over time (Central Statistic Office 2022)

Sampling: is a research methodology technique used to select a subject of individuals, or observations from a larger population with the goal of making inferences about the entire population (Cochran W.C., 1977)

1.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has created the basic framework for analysing variables impeding female sports participation within Mufulira District, Zambia communities. The discussion commenced by emphasising the significance of sports involvement in delivering comprehensive health, social, psychological, and developmental advantages while underscoring the ongoing gender discrepancy in participation rates globally and specifically within Zambia. The disparity in involvement results in women and girls frequently forgoing essential advantages that could improve their well-being and development, becoming both an equity issue and a public health challenge.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter thoroughly examines academic research regarding female participation in sports and the variables that inhibit such participation in the world, regional, and local contexts. This literature review seeks to establish the theoretical and empirical basis for the current study by analysing existing knowledge, finding gaps in understanding, and situating the present research within the broader academic debate on inhibitors to female sports participation. This evaluation will elucidate the study's theoretical framework, methodological approach, and interpretation of findings, ensuring that the research expands upon prior work while addressing critical information gaps about female sports participation in Zambian community contexts.

The literature review concludes with an analysis of research gaps, specifically emphasising the insufficient empirical examination of barriers to female sports participation in particular Zambian community contexts, such as in the selected communities of Mufulira District. This gap analysis delineates the importance and uniqueness of the present study, illustrating its potential contributions to academic comprehension and practical application in this critical domain. The review critically analyses methodological techniques, theoretical frameworks aspects in earlier studies, which informs the design and focus of the current research.

This thorough literature review establishes the academic basis and rationale for the current study's exploration of variables inhibiting female participation in sports within specific communities of Mufulira District, Zambia.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

This study used the socio-ecological model as its principal theoretical framework to analyse the various barriers inhibiting female participation in sports at multiple levels of impact. The socio-ecological model, originally introduced by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and subsequently modified for health promotion by McLeroy et al. (1988), offers an extensive framework for comprehending how human behaviours, such as

sports participation, are influenced by the interaction of factors across multiple nested levels rather than merely by individual traits or choices. This multi-level perspective is especially useful for analysing intricate social phenomena such as gender discrepancies in sports participation, which illustrate the interplay among individual, social, cultural, institutional, and policy elements.

The socio-ecological model delineates behavioural factors as functioning at five interrelated levels: intrapersonal (individual), interpersonal (relationships), organisational (institutions), community (cultural and social) and public policy (laws and regulations). The stages are depicted as concentric circles with individual variables at the core, encircled by increasingly expansive social and environmental effects. The approach highlights directional interactions between various levels, acknowledging that impacts emanate from broader contexts to individuals and vice versa, facilitated by collective action and societal change (Sallis et al., 2008). This dynamic feature of the model facilitates the analysis of how limitations at various levels interact and reinforce one another to impede female sports participation, while also indicating potential intervention locations across numerous levels.

The concept focusses on individual knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, abilities, and biological traits that may affect decisions regarding sports participation at the intrapersonal level. Intrapersonal barriers to female sports participation may encompass a lack of awareness regarding benefits, diminished perceived competence or self-efficacy, negative attitudes towards sports, insufficient skills or physical literacy, health concerns, and internalised gender norms that dissuade athletic participation (Eime et al., 2015). The individual elements serve as the most direct influences on participation decisions, however they are influenced by factors at other levels of the socio-ecological model.

The interpersonal dimension includes social interactions, relationships, and immediate social networks that affect individual behaviour. Interpersonal hurdles may encompass insufficient support or encouragement from family, discouragement from spouses or parents, lack of peer participation in sports, inadequate role models, and societal pressures to adhere to gender-specific activities (Anitha et al., 2016). In numerous traditional settings, family expectations for women's roles and obligations may directly clash with the time and energy demands of sports participation, so establishing considerable relationship obstacles to participation.

The organizational approach emphasises formal structures, institutions, and organisational attributes at the organisational level that either restrict or facilitate participation. Organisational barriers may encompass insufficient sports programs in educational institutions, absence of female-friendly facilities in workplaces or communities, lack of women's sports teams or leagues, rigid programming that fails to accommodate women's schedules, and systemic gender bias in the allocation of resources for sports (Darko et al., 2022). Educational institutions, businesses, and sports associations are crucial organisational environments that can either promote or hinder female sports participation by their policies, programs, and practices.

The community dimension encompasses cultural norms, standards, informal networks, and neighbourhood attributes that affect behaviour. Barriers at the community level may encompass restrictive cultural norms concerning acceptable female activities, insufficient public facilities for women's sports, safety apprehensions within community settings, a lack of prominent female sports role models in media, and societal stigma associated with female athleticism (Chawawa, 2021). Cultural and environmental elements establish ways that can either normalise or promote female sports participation.

The public policy level encompasses laws, rules, policies, and resource allocation decisions at local, regional, or national levels that influence opportunities and limitations. Barriers at the policy level may encompass insufficient funding for women's sports programs, absence of gender equity mandates in sports development, lack of protective measures against discrimination, minimal public investment in facilities accessible to women, and educational policies that undervalue physical education for girls (Khan et al., 2020). These macro-level elements influence the overarching context in which individual participation decisions are made.

A principal advantage of the socio-ecological paradigm for this research is its acknowledgement of the interconnection of obstacles across several levels. The absence of community facilities may correlate with insufficient public funding for women's sports, while familial discouragement of female sports participation frequently mirrors overarching cultural norms that have been internalised by individual family members. This connection underscores the necessity of addressing barriers holistically across all levels instead than concentrating solely on individual attitudes or isolated interventions.

The socio-ecological model has been effectively utilised in numerous research investigating patterns of physical activity and sports participation. Eime et al. (2013) utilised the model to create a conceptual framework illustrating the health advantages derived from youth sports participation highlighting the impact of factors at various ecological levels on participation decisions and consequent benefits. Casey et al. (2017) employed the model to investigate participation limits encountered by rural teenage girls in Australia, revealing that multi-level barriers generated compounded impediments to engagement. Mwaanga and Banda (2014) utilised ecological approaches in African contexts to analyse sport-based empowerment programs, emphasising the necessity of tackling institutional and cultural obstacles in conjunction with individual considerations.

This comprehensive theoretical framework, based on the socio-ecological model and enhanced by other viewpoints, offers a thorough lens for analysing the multifaceted variables that inhibit female participation in sports within the selected communities of Mufulira District. The study's methodological approach is directed by the design of data collection instruments that identify barriers across all ecological levels, shape the analytical framework for interpreting interactions among various constraints, and inform the formulation of recommendations that tackle barriers at multiple levels instead of concentrating solely on individual behaviour modification or single-factor interventions.

2.3. World View On Factors Inhibiting Female Participation in Sports Activities

Research across several worldwide contexts consistently shows that females participate in sports activities at lower rates than males. However, the extent of this gender disparity varies significantly by country, age group, and socio economic status.

World data from population surveys across various countries reveals that, on average, females are approximately 15-20 percentage points less likely than males to participate in regular sports activities, with this gap emerging in childhood and generally expanding during adolescence (Guthold et al., 2020). A thorough examination of physical activity trends in 168 countries revealed that only 31.3% of adult women participate in adequate physical activity through sports and recreational pursuits, in contrast to 40.5% of men, underscoring a significant and enduring gender disparity across various geographical and cultural settings.

In addition, research from various countries demonstrates that women are likely to participate in individual fitness activities, dance programs, and recreational sports characterized by aesthetic or non-contact elements. In contrast, their participation in team sports, contact sports, and competitive athletics remains significantly lower (Scheerder et al., 2018). This activity divergence frequently mirrors socialised preferences and structural opportunities, as team and competitive sports have traditionally garnered more institutional backing for male participation.

Age-related trends in female sports participation exhibit continuous reductions during significant life transitions, especially in late adolescence and early adulthood, when numerous women encounter competing objectives concerning school, employment, and family establishment (Eime et al., 2016). The decline in participation is more significant among females than males, indicating that gender-specific obstacles become more pronounced during these life stages. In numerous nations, women's participation experiences a modest resurgence in middle adulthood as children attain greater independence, although it seldom reverts to adolescent levels.

Socio economic factors significantly influence female sports participation worldwide, with elevated education and income levels typically correlating with increased participation across various national contexts (Humphreys & Ruseski, 2015). The socioeconomic gradient frequently manifests as steeper for women than for males, indicating that economic limitations may disproportionately impact female participation. In developing nations, constrained economic resources at family and community levels constitute substantial obstacles to female participation in sports, as facilities, equipment, transportation, and program fees may be too costly for numerous prospective participants.

These global patterns offer a critical background for comprehending the issues of female sports participation in specific locales, such as Zambia's Mufulira District, emphasising both universal themes and the significance of regional elements in influencing participation opportunities and limitations. The fundamental gender difference in sports participation is stable across several countries; however, the processes underlying this disparity and the most successful strategies for correcting it differ significantly due to the cultural, economic, and institutional elements inherent to each culture.

2.4 Regional VIEW on factors inhibiting female participation in sports activities

Research conducted across various countries in Sub-Saharan Africa has identified a range of barriers that hinder female participation in sports activities throughout the region. While some barriers reflect global patterns observed across diverse international contexts, others manifest in region-specific ways shaped by particular economic, cultural, infrastructural, and institutional characteristics of African societies. Understanding these regional barriers provides important context for examining inhibitors in specific settings like Zambia's Mufulira District, highlighting both shared challenges across African contexts and the need for locally tailored approaches to addressing participation barrier.

Economic barriers represent particularly significant constraints on female sports participation across Sub-Saharan Africa, reflecting both general resource limitations in many countries and gender-specific economic disadvantages that disproportionately affect women's discretionary activities. Widespread poverty and limited household resources in many communities mean that even modest costs associated with sports participation—including equipment, appropriate attire, transportation, and participation fees—can prove prohibitive, especially for female family members whose recreational activities may receive

lower priority in household budget allocations (Khan et al., 2020). Research across multiple African countries found that women from the lowest income quintile participated in sports at less than one-third the rate of those in the highest income quintile, highlighting the strong socio economic gradient in participation opportunities.

Gender-based economic disparities exacerbate these constraints, as women throughout the region typically have lower incomes, less control over household resources, and fewer opportunities for discretionary spending compared to male counterparts. A comparative study across six African countries found that women controlled an average of only 37% of household discretionary spending despite contributing substantial labor to household production, limiting their ability to allocate resources toward personal activities including sports (African Development Bank, 2019). These economic barriers affect participation through multiple pathways, including inability to purchase necessary equipment and clothing, challenges paying membership or participation fees, and difficulties accessing transportation to reach facilities or events located beyond walking distance.

Information and awareness barriers restrict female participation through limited knowledge about available opportunities, potential benefits, and appropriate activities. Research across diverse African communities has found that women often have more limited awareness of both local participation opportunities and broader health and developmental benefits associated with regular sports participation compared to male counterparts (Chawawa, 2021). This knowledge gap reflects both limited targeted information distribution to female audiences and restricted social networks that might otherwise share sports-related information and encouragement. The information barrier interacts with motivational constraints, as limited understanding of potential benefits reduces perceived value of overcoming other obstacles to participation.

Leadership and role model deficits create additional barriers by limiting visible examples of female sporting participation and achievement that might otherwise inspire participation and demonstrate possibility. Throughout much of Sub-Saharan Africa, women remain significantly underrepresented in sports leadership positions including coaching, administration, management, and governance roles, creating systems designed and implemented primarily from male perspectives (African Union Sport Council, 2021). This leadership gap affects both program development to address female needs and symbolic representation that normalizes female involvement in sporting domains.

Similarly, limited media visibility for female athletes and women's sports restricts exposure to inspirational models that might motivate participation, particularly among young girls developing activity preferences and identities. Content analysis of sports media across nine African countries found that women's sports received an average of only 7% of total coverage, creating a substantial representation gap that affects perceptions of sporting opportunities and appropriateness (African Media Initiative, 2019). This limited visibility contributes to perceptions of sports as primarily masculine domains and provides fewer inspirational models for potential female participants, particularly in rural areas where media access may be further constrained by infrastructure and economic limitations.

Institutional barriers operate through sports organizations, community structures, and governance systems that typically prioritize male participation through resource allocation, program design, and operational practices. Throughout much of the region, sports governing bodies remain predominantly male-led and oriented toward men's sports development, with women's programs often receiving lower funding, less

attractive scheduling, inferior facilities, and limited coaching support (Women's Sport Africa, 2020). These institutional biases reflect both historical development patterns centered on male participation and ongoing gender imbalances in decision-making positions that perpetuate unequal resource allocation and attention.

At the policy level, many African countries lack effective gender equity frameworks for sports development, with limited specific targets, inadequate implementation mechanisms, and insufficient monitoring systems to ensure progress toward more balanced participation. A review of national sports policies across 12 African countries found that while 10 included general statements supporting female participation, only three established specific targets with implementation timelines, and none allocated more than 30% of development resources specifically toward female sports initiatives (African Union Sport Council, 2021). This policy-level neglect creates permissive environments for continued disparities at organizational and community levels without effective accountability mechanisms to drive systematic improvement.

Religious interpretations create specific barriers in some contexts, particularly where conservative readings of religious texts emphasize gender separation, modest dress requirements, or restrictions on female public visibility that may conflict with conventional sporting participation. In communities with significant Muslim populations, requirements regarding hijab, gender segregation, and female modesty may constrain participation in mixed-gender settings or activities requiring conventional Western sporting attire (Harper, 2018). These religious considerations vary considerably in their practical impact depending on specific interpretations, community norms, and available accommodations that might enable participation while respecting core religious values.

The regional barriers identified through research across Sub-Saharan Africa provide important context for understanding female sports participation challenges in specific settings like Zambia's Mufulira District.

2.5 Local View On Factors Inhibiting Female Participation in Sports Activities

The immediate post-independence period (1964-1970s) witnessed important developments in Zambian sporting structures, as the newly independent nation sought to establish sporting achievement as a component of national identity and international recognition. Under President Kenneth Kaunda's leadership, sports received significant government attention as part of nation-building efforts, with expanded infrastructure, program development, and international competition participation (Chipande, 2016). However, these early post-independence sports initiatives focused predominantly on male participation, with men's football in particular receiving substantial investment as a vehicle for national pride and unity. Women's sports during this period remained largely peripheral to national sporting development strategies, receiving limited funding, minimal media attention, and little institutional support beyond basic educational programs.

The historical evolution of female sports participation in Zambia thus reveals a trajectory marked by both gradual progress and persistent barriers, with opportunities shaped by intersecting influences including colonial legacies, educational development, economic fluctuations, cultural attitudes, and policy attention. Contemporary participation patterns cannot be understood without recognizing this historical context, which has established structural conditions, institutional arrangements, and cultural understandings that continue to influence women's sporting opportunities across diverse Zambian communities including

Mufulira. While significant developments have occurred, particularly in recent decades, the historical marginalization of women's sports continues to shape current participation patterns and barriers across various geographical and socioeconomic contexts in the country.

Available data indicates that females in Zambia participate less frequently in sports activities compared to their male counterparts across communities, age groups, and socioeconomic contexts, though the precise magnitude of this gender gap varies considerably based on specific settings and activity types. A national survey conducted in 2020 found that approximately a quarter (23%) of Zambian adult women engage in regular, health-enhancing physical activity through sports and recreational exercise compared to 43% of adult men, representing a substantial 20 percentage point gender gap in participation (World Health Organization, 2022). This disparity exceeds both global and regional averages, suggesting particularly pronounced gender differences in Zambian sports participation patterns that require specific attention and targeted interventions.

Significant urban-rural disparities exist in female sports participation across Zambia, with substantially higher rates typically observed in urban areas compared to rural settings. Research conducted in Southern and Copperbelt Provinces found that urban women were approximately 2.7 times more likely to participate regularly in sporting activities than their rural counterparts, with this geographical differential exceeding the gender gap in some contexts (Mwafulirwa, 2022). This spatial pattern reflects multiple factors including greater availability of facilities and programs in urban areas, more progressive gender attitudes in some urban contexts, higher education levels, and greater exposure to diverse sporting models through media and international influences.

Despite these challenges, some positive developments indicate potential for expanded female sports participation in Zambia. Growing recognition of sports' contributions to health, education, and development objectives has increased attention to participation opportunities, while international development partnerships have supported various initiatives promoting female involvement through schools, community organizations, and targeted programs. Increased visibility of elite female athletes in certain sports has provided inspirational models of achievement, gradually shifting perceptions of appropriate female activities and capabilities. These encouraging trends suggest potential for expanded participation if persistent barriers can be effectively addressed through evidence-based, contextually appropriate interventions targeting the specific constraints identified in particular community settings.

The policy environment surrounding female sports participation in Zambia comprises a complex array of formal policies, institutional arrangements, implementation mechanisms, and resource commitments that collectively shape the enabling framework for women's and girls' participation in sporting activities. Understanding this policy context provides important perspective on how government priorities, regulatory frameworks, and official directives influence participation opportunities and constraints across different sporting domains and geographical locations within the country.

Zambia's National Sports Policy (2012) represents the primary policy framework governing sports development nationwide, establishing overall objectives, institutional responsibilities, and implementation approaches for promoting sports participation and excellence across all population segments. The policy includes explicit recognition of gender equality as a guiding principle, stating that "equal opportunities shall be provided for participation in sports regardless of gender" and acknowledging historical inequities that have disadvantaged female participation (Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development, 2012,

p.14). This formal recognition of gender equality represents an important policy foundation for promoting female sports participation, establishing official commitment to addressing disparities and creating accountability framework for implementation actions.

However, analysis of the policy's specific provisions reveals limitations in translating these general principles into operational directives with clear implementation pathways. While gender equality appears as a cross-cutting theme throughout the document, the policy provides limited specific targets, weak accountability mechanisms, and few dedicated provisions addressing female participation barriers directly (Mwaanga & Banda, 2014). Unlike policies in some other African nations that establish concrete metrics, timeline requirements, and resource allocations for gender equity in sports, Zambia's approach relies more on general statements of principle without robust implementation frameworks to ensure practical applications align with stated values.

As with the sports policy, however, implementation mechanisms for these gender policy provisions demonstrate significant limitations. The policy assigns responsibility for sports-related gender initiatives primarily to the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development rather than establishing clear cross-ministerial implementation frameworks, creating potential coordination challenges between gender expertise and sports sector knowledge (Mwafulirwa, 2022). Resource commitments for implementation remain limited, with no specific budget allocations identified for sports-focused gender equality initiatives within either ministry's operational frameworks, reducing practical capacity to translate policy intentions into programmatic realities across different sports contexts.

Mufulira District in Zambia's Copperbelt Province represents a distinctive context for examining female sports participation, shaped by its particular historical development, economic characteristics, cultural dynamics, and infrastructure conditions that create specific opportunity structures and constraints for women and girls seeking sporting involvement. Understanding these contextual factors provides essential foundation for investigating participation barriers within selected communities, as local conditions significantly influence how broader national patterns manifest in particular settings.

Historically, Mufulira's development has been intimately connected to copper mining operations established during the colonial period and continued through post-independence economic transitions. Founded in 1933 as a mining settlement, the town developed around Mufulira Copper Mines, with urban planning, infrastructure development, and social services including recreational facilities shaped substantially by mining company investments and priorities (Banda et al., 2016). This mining-centered development created distinctive sporting infrastructures, organizational structures, and participation patterns that differ somewhat from many other Zambian communities, particularly regarding company-supported recreational facilities and programs that historically provided important sporting opportunities for employees and their families.

The district's geographical characteristics include the main urban center of Mufulira town surrounded by peri-urban settlements and outlying rural communities, creating diverse environmental contexts within the district boundaries. Located approximately 385 kilometers north of Lusaka and 40 kilometers from the Democratic Republic of Congo border, Mufulira occupies a relatively remote position compared to provincial capital Ndola, affecting connectivity, resource access, and external influences on local development including sporting infrastructure and programming (Mufulira Municipal Council, 2019). This geographical positioning has historically contributed to both opportunities through mining

investment and challenges related to remoteness from national centers of sporting administration and development.

Economically, Mufulira's development trajectory has been significantly shaped by mining sector fluctuations, with profound implications for sports infrastructure, program sustainability, and household resources affecting participation opportunities. Following mining industry privatization in the 1990s, substantial workforce reductions and operational restructuring created economic challenges that affected both municipal and household resources available for supporting sports activities (Banda et al., 2016). These economic transitions particularly impacted company-supported recreational programs and facilities that had historically provided important sporting opportunities, creating sustainability challenges for infrastructure maintenance and program continuation that continue to influence contemporary participation options.

These economic limitations particularly affect female participation decisions, as household resource allocation patterns typically prioritize male sporting needs when facing financial constraints, reflecting broader gender inequities in family expenditure decisions.

Infrastructure conditions within Mufulira District demonstrate the historical influence of mining development alongside contemporary challenges related to maintenance, accessibility, and gender-responsiveness of available facilities. The district contains approximately 14 formal sports facilities including the main Mufulira Stadium (15,000 capacity), Kamuchanga Stadium, various school playing fields, and neighborhood courts and grounds distributed across different communities (Mufulira Municipal Council, 2019). While this facility density exceeds national averages for similar-sized districts, significant quality and accessibility limitations affect their practical utility for supporting female participation specifically.

Facility assessment conducted in 2019 found that approximately 57% of Mufulira's sporting infrastructure required significant maintenance or rehabilitation, with common problems including damaged playing surfaces, inadequate lighting, non-functional sanitation facilities, and deteriorated support infrastructures (Copperbelt Provincial Sports Office, 2020). These quality limitations disproportionately affect female users who may have greater concerns about safety, hygiene, and appropriate facilities for personal care, creating practical barriers to utilization despite nominal availability within district boundaries. Gender-specific facility features represent particular gaps, with assessment finding that only 4 of 14 public sports facilities included adequate changing and shower facilities for female users, while just 3 provided sufficient privacy measures to enable comfortable participation without public exposure during activity.

The geographical distribution of available facilities demonstrates significant disparities, with concentration in central urban areas while peri-urban and rural communities face substantial access limitations. Mapping analysis found that residents of central Mufulira lived an average of 1.2 kilometers from the nearest public sports facility compared to 5.7 kilometers for residents of outlying communities, creating significantly greater physical access barriers in peripheral areas (Mufulira Municipal Council, 2019). These geographical disparities particularly affect female participation given women's typically greater mobility constraints related to transportation limitations, safety concerns, and time restrictions, making distance barriers especially problematic for potential female participants in underserved areas of the district.

Organizational structures supporting sports development within Mufulira include both government institutions and non-governmental entities that collectively shape participation opportunities across different communities. The District Sports Office operates under the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development with responsibility for implementing national sports policies, coordinating local programs, and supporting facility development within district boundaries (Copperbelt Provincial Sports Office, 2020). This governmental structure provides institutional foundation for sports development, though with limited human and financial resources for addressing female participation barriers specifically, as the office operates with minimal staffing and modest operational budget for serving the entire district population.

Various sporting associations maintain local chapters within Mufulira, including football, netball, volleyball, athletics, and basketball organizations that coordinate competitive structures and developmental programs in their respective codes. Research across these district-level sporting bodies found significant variations in female participation support, with the Mufulira Netball Association demonstrating strongest orientation toward women's participation (as expected given the sport's female focus), while other associations showed limited specific attention to female involvement despite nominal inclusion of women's divisions within their structures (Mwafulirwa, 2022). These organizational patterns reflect broader national trends regarding gender imbalances in sports leadership, resource allocation, and program development that affect local implementation of sporting opportunities within the district.

Non-governmental organizations provide additional organizational support for sporting development in Mufulira, though with varying attention to female participation specifically. Religious institutions including churches and faith-based youth groups offer various recreational activities, sometimes including gender-specific programming that creates culturally acceptable participation pathways for women and girls within religious community contexts (Kunda, 2018). Educational institutions represent important organizational contexts influencing female sports participation within Mufulira, with the district containing approximately 42 primary schools, 8 secondary schools, and 2 tertiary institutions that provide varying sporting opportunities through curricular and extracurricular programming (Mufulira Municipal Council, 2019). Research across educational settings found substantial variations in female sports support, with some institutions demonstrating relatively equitable approaches through balanced resource allocation, female coaching staff, and diverse activity offerings, while others showed significant gender disparities in facility access, program quality, and participation encouragement despite formal policy requirements for equitable educational sporting opportunities (Copperbelt Provincial Education Office, 2021).

Cultural dynamics within Mufulira demonstrate both distinctive characteristics related to mining community history and broader patterns reflecting national cultural influences on gender and sports participation. The district's development as a mining center created somewhat cosmopolitan cultural environment compared to many other Zambian settings, with workforce migration bringing diverse ethnic influences and industrial employment creating economic structures less directly connected to traditional agricultural gender divisions (Banda et al., 2016). This mining culture historically emphasized male recreational activities aligned with the predominantly male workforce, though with gradual expansion of women's participation opportunities particularly through company-sponsored social welfare programs for employees' families.

Religious influences represent important cultural factors affecting female sports participation within Mufulira, with the district containing diverse faith communities including various Christian denominations (predominantly Catholic, United Church of Zambia, Seventh-Day Adventist, and Pentecostal congregations) alongside smaller Muslim and traditional religious populations. Research among faith communities found varying approaches to female sporting involvement, with some conservative denominations emphasizing modest attire, gender-separate activities, and prioritization of family responsibilities that may constrain participation options, while other religious communities actively support female sports through church-based programs and theological frameworks emphasizing physical development as part of holistic wellbeing (Kunda, 2018).

Safety considerations represent significant contextual factors affecting female sports participation in Mufulira, with varying security conditions across different communities and timeframes. Crime statistics indicate moderate overall security challenges within the district, with particular concerns in certain neighborhoods and regarding specific timeframes including evening hours when many sporting activities occur (Mufulira Municipal Council, 2019). These security considerations affect female participation decisions through both actual risk levels and perceived safety concerns that may discourage travel to facilities, involvement in outdoor activities, or participation beyond daylight hours when visibility and public presence provide additional security through informal surveillance.

Transportation infrastructure within Mufulira creates additional contextual influences on sports accessibility, particularly for female participants facing mobility constraints. Public transportation services operate primarily along main routes connecting central areas while providing limited coverage to peripheral communities, creating access challenges for residents of outlying areas seeking to reach centralized sporting facilities (Mufulira Municipal Council, 2019). These transportation limitations particularly affect female participants who typically have reduced access to private vehicles, greater safety concerns regarding walking long distances (especially during evening hours), and time constraints related to domestic responsibilities that make extended travel to sporting venues especially problematic.

Taken together, these factors create a distinctive environment for female sports participation in Mufulira District, with both enabling conditions and constraining influences that shape opportunities across different communities and population segments. Related Studies on social-cultural barriers

Research examining socio-cultural barriers to female sports participation has documented how cultural norms, social expectations, gender ideologies, and community attitudes constrain women's and girls' involvement in sporting activities across diverse contexts. These socio-cultural factors create powerful influences on participation decisions through both external social sanctions and internalized beliefs that discourage female sporting involvement, operating as fundamental constraints that often underlie and reinforce other barrier types. Understanding these socio-cultural dimensions provides essential context for examining female sports participation challenges within specific settings like Mufulira District.

Studies investigating gender ideology influences on sports participation have documented how cultural beliefs about appropriate male and female behaviors create normative boundaries that constrain women's sporting involvement in many societies. Cross-cultural research spanning diverse regions found that societies with more rigid gender differentiation consistently demonstrate lower female sports participation, with traditional beliefs about gender-appropriate activities creating both external social pressures and internalized identity constraints that limit women's willingness to engage in activities culturally coded as

masculine (Pfister, 2015). These gender ideology effects operate across various sporting contexts but appear particularly pronounced for activities traditionally associated with masculine characteristics including strength, aggression, and competition, creating activity-specific barriers that vary based on cultural coding of different sports forms.

Within Zambian contexts specifically, research has documented how traditional gender ideologies influence perceptions of appropriate female activities, creating normative constraints on sports participation. Qualitative studies in multiple provinces found that pervasive cultural messages emphasize domesticity, modesty, nurturance, and service to others as core feminine virtues, while physical prowess, competitiveness, and public achievement more commonly associated with sporting excellence are typically coded as masculine traits (Chawawa, 2021). These cultural frameworks create conceptual tensions between female gender identity and athletic identity that many potential participants must navigate, particularly in more traditional communities where rigid gender expectations persist despite broader societal changes toward more flexible gender arrangements in urban and educated populations.

Research examining socialization processes has highlighted how differential childhood experiences and messages regarding physical activity contribute to gender disparities in sports participation that persist into adulthood. Studies documenting early childhood socialization across both global and Zambian contexts have found that girls typically receive less encouragement for physical play, fewer opportunities for developing fundamental movement skills, and more frequent interruptions of active play for domestic responsibilities compared to male counterparts (Chawawa et al., 2019). These early socialization differences establish both skill gaps that affect later participation competence and psychological orientations regarding appropriate activities that shape subsequent interest and involvement throughout the lifespan.

Family influence research has documented how household attitudes and expectations significantly affect female sports participation decisions, particularly in cultural contexts emphasizing strong family authority structures. Studies across various African communities including Zambia have found that parental and extended family attitudes toward female sporting involvement strongly predict actual participation, with family gatekeepers often exercising decisive influence over women's and girls' activity choices through both explicit permissions/prohibitions and implicit approval/disapproval signals (Mwaanga & Banda, 2014). These family influences appear particularly significant during adolescence when identity formation processes increase sensitivity to social approval, creating critical transition periods when many potential female participants either establish or abandon sporting involvement based substantially on family responses to their activities.

Marriage institutions have received specific research attention regarding their impacts on female sports participation, as conjugal relationships often introduce additional constraints through both practical responsibilities and normative expectations regarding appropriate married women's activities. Studies across various Zambian communities have documented sharp participation declines following marriage, with research in Copperbelt Province specifically finding that women's sports participation typically declined 40-70% after marriage (Mwafulirwa, 2022). These marriage effects reflect both increased domestic duties creating time constraints and spousal authority dynamics in which husbands may explicitly or implicitly discourage wives' sporting involvement as incompatible with their perceptions of appropriate married women's priorities and public activities.

Modesty norm research has investigated how cultural standards regarding appropriate female dress, deportment, and public display influence sports participation through concerns about activity-specific requirements that may conflict with modesty expectations. Studies in various Zambian communities have found that concerns about revealing clothing, physical positions required by certain sports, and public visibility during activity represent significant barriers particularly for adolescent girls and women navigating emerging sexuality alongside community judgment (Chawawa, 2021). These modesty considerations create activity-specific barriers that vary based on particular sporting requirements, with activities necessitating revealing attire or certain body positions/movements facing stronger cultural resistance compared to those more compatible with modesty standards.

Research examining religious influences has documented how faith traditions and interpretations affect female sports participation through both doctrinal positions and practical implementations within religious communities. Studies across various Zambian religious contexts have found significant variations in how faith communities approach female sporting involvement, with some conservative interpretations emphasizing gender separation, modest attire requirements, and prioritization of domestic religious duties that may constrain participation options, while other religious communities actively support female sports through theological frameworks emphasizing physical development as part of holistic wellbeing (Kunda, 2018). These religious factors create community-specific participation contexts that vary considerably based on local interpretations and accommodations rather than representing uniform constraints across all faith traditions.

Media representation research has examined how limited visibility of female athletes and sportswomen in public discourse affects participation through restricted role models and normalization of sports as primarily masculine domains. Content analysis of Zambian sports media has documented severe underrepresentation of women's sports, with female sporting activities receiving less than 10% of total media coverage despite representing approximately 40% of participants nationally (Mwamba, 2018). This representation gap affects participation through both symbolic messaging about appropriate female activities and practical knowledge limitations regarding available opportunities, creating environments where female sporting involvement appears exceptional rather than normalized as regular community practice.

Research on intergenerational transmission has investigated how cultural attitudes regarding female sports participation evolve across generations, documenting both persistent traditional influences and emerging changes in gender expectations. Studies spanning multiple generations of women in Zambian communities have found significant attitudinal shifts, with younger cohorts typically demonstrating more positive orientations toward female sports participation compared to older generations (Chawawa, 2021). These generational differences suggest gradual cultural evolution toward more expansive conceptions of appropriate female activities, though with ongoing influence from older generations who often control resources and authority within family and community structures that affect participation opportunities for younger women and girls.

Educational influences have received significant research attention, with studies documenting how formal education affects cultural attitudes toward female sports participation through both explicit content and structural experiences that may challenge traditional gender arrangements. Survey research across multiple Zambian provinces has found strong correlations between educational attainment and supportive

attitudes toward female sporting participation, with secondary and higher education particularly associated with more progressive perspectives on gender and physical activity (Mwafulirwa, 2022). These educational effects reflect both exposure to alternative gender perspectives through curricular content and broader impacts of education on critical thinking, exposure to diverse viewpoints, and receptiveness to non-traditional arrangements across various life domains including sports participation.

Urbanization research has examined how rural-urban differences affect cultural attitudes toward female sports participation, with studies consistently finding more permissive normative environments in urban settings compared to traditional rural communities. Comparative studies across different Zambian community types have documented that urban residents typically demonstrate more progressive attitudes regarding appropriate female activities, with research in Copperbelt Province specifically finding that urban residents were approximately 2.2 times more likely to support female participation in diverse sporting activities compared to rural respondents from the same region (Mwafulirwa, 2022). These geographical variations reflect multiple influences including greater exposure to diverse cultural models, higher education levels, more developed infrastructure, and different economic structures in urban areas that collectively create more enabling environments for female sports participating. A significant branch of research has examined how socio-cultural barriers interact with other constraint types, documenting complex relationships between cultural norms and practical obstacles that collectively restrict female sports participation. Studies across various Zambian communities have found that cultural factors both directly constrain participation through normative pressures and indirectly influence other barriers through effects on resource allocations. Transportation cost research has documented how mobility expenses create specific economic barriers that disproportionately affect female sports participation. Studies in Copperbelt communities including Mufulira found that transportation to sporting facilities represented a significant participation constraint. (Mwafulirwa, 2022). These transportation costs create particular barriers for female participants who typically have reduced access to private vehicles, greater safety concerns necessitating paid transport rather than walking (especially during evening hours), and family responsibility patterns that require returning home promptly rather than remaining near facilities for extended periods to maximize single-trip value.

Equipment and attire studies have investigated how material requirements for participation create economic barriers that vary across different sporting activities and participant needs. Market research across urban centers including Copperbelt towns found that appropriate sports bras (250-500 Kwacha), modest uniform options (300-600 Kwacha), and female-sized protective equipment (varies by sport) represented significant expenses often excluded from basic team or program provisions, creating additional costs for female participants beyond standard equipment expenses (Mwafulirwa, 2022). These specialized equipment gaps affect participation feasibility, comfort, and cultural appropriateness, establishing additional economic barriers beyond basic participation costs that may render involvement impractical or culturally problematic without these supplementary investments.

Research on opportunity costs has examined how economic structures influence time allocation decisions regarding sports participation, particularly for women facing multiple competing demands on limited time resources. Economic analysis across various Zambian contexts has documented how women's income-generating activities, often essential for family survival in resource-constrained environments, create fundamental time competition with discretionary activities including sports (Chawawa et al., 2019). These economic necessity patterns mean that potential sport time represents not just leisure forgone but actual

income loss for many women engaged in informal sector work, creating much higher effective participation costs through opportunity costs compared to those with salaried positions or without primary economic responsibilities within household structures.

Employment pattern research has investigated how occupational characteristics influence female sports participation through effects on income, time flexibility, and physical energy. Studies across various Zambian employment sectors found significant variations in women's sports participation based on occupational categories, with formal sector employees demonstrating participation rates approximately 3.2 times higher than informal sector workers and 2.8 times higher than those engaged primarily in subsistence activities (Mwafulirwa, 2022). These employment effects reflect multiple economic dimensions including higher disposable income, more predictable work schedules allowing regular activity commitments, and typically less physically demanding labor that leaves greater energy reserves for recreational physical activities among formal sector workers compared to other occupational categories.

Research on economic benefits has investigated potential positive economic outcomes associated with female sports participation, documenting how sporting involvement may generate returns that partially offset participation costs through various pathways. Studies examining educational and employment outcomes have found that regular sports participation correlates with improved school retention, higher educational achievement, and enhanced employment prospects for women and girls, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds who gain access to educational pathways, supportive networks, and developmental experiences through sporting involvement (Mwaanga & Banda, 2014). While these economic benefits typically emerge over longer timeframes rather than providing immediate returns on participation investments, they represent important potential outcomes that may justify resource allocations to overcome initial economic barriers if effectively communicated to participants and their families.

Research on economic inequality has examined how socioeconomic disparities affect sporting opportunities across different population segments, documenting how resource distribution patterns create unequal participation possibilities that frequently disadvantage female community members. Inequality studies across Zambian communities have found that economic stratification creates particularly pronounced participation gaps for women and girls, as gender disparities in access to discretionary resources are typically larger in lower-income contexts where greater competition for limited family resources intensifies gender-based allocation patterns favoring male activities (Mwafulirwa, 2022). These findings suggest that broader economic inequality patterns significantly affect female sports participation opportunities, with more equitable general resource distribution potentially supporting more balanced gender participation patterns through reducing zero-sum competition for extremely limited household discretionary spending.

Research examining infrastructure and access barriers to female sports participation has documented how physical facilities, spatial arrangements, and material resources constrain women's and girls' involvement in sporting activities across diverse contexts. These infrastructural factors create fundamental accessibility limitations through both absolute facility shortages and gender-specific design characteristics that affect usability for potential female participants. Understanding these infrastructural dimensions provides

essential context for examining female sports participation challenges within specific settings like Mufulira District, where physical access represents a necessary foundation for sporting involvement.

Studies investigating facility availability have documented how insufficient quantity and distribution of sports infrastructure creates significant participation barriers, particularly in resource-constrained environments. Research across multiple Zambian provinces found substantial facility shortages nationwide, with approximately one public sports facility per 41,000 residents compared to recommended international standards of one facility per 10,000 population (Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development, 2020). These absolute infrastructure limitations create fundamental constraints on participation opportunities for all potential users, with competition for scarce resources often disadvantaging female participants when access arrangements and scheduling decisions reflect implicit or explicit gender hierarchies that prioritize male activities.

Within Zambian contexts specifically, research has documented significant geographical disparities in infrastructure distribution, creating unequal access conditions across different community types. Facility mapping studies found that urban residents lived an average of 1.8 kilometers from the nearest public sports facility compared to 8.3 kilometers for rural residents, with intermediate distances for peri-urban populations (Mwafulirwa, 2022). These spatial disparities significantly affect participation possibilities, with distance barriers particularly impacting female potential users who typically face greater mobility constraints related to transportation limitations, safety concerns during travel, and time restrictions associated with domestic responsibilities that limit feasible travel radius for regular participation.

Research examining facility quality has highlighted how infrastructure condition and maintenance status affect usability beyond simple availability, with deteriorated facilities creating functional access barriers despite nominal existence within communities. Assessment studies across Zambian sporting venues found that 64% of existing public sports facilities required significant maintenance or rehabilitation, with common problems including damaged playing surfaces, inadequate lighting, non-functional sanitation facilities, and deteriorated support infrastructure (Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development, 2020). These quality limitations affect participation feasibility, safety, and experience quality, creating substantial functional barriers that may render nominally available facilities effectively unusable for maintaining regular participation, particularly for users with higher expectations or requirements regarding basic facility conditions.

Research focusing specifically on Copperbelt communities including Mufulira has documented how mining company infrastructure investments historically created distinctive sporting environments that differ somewhat from other Zambian settings. Historical analysis shows that mining operations established recreational facilities and supported sports programs as components of employee welfare systems and community development initiatives, creating relatively developed sporting infrastructure compared to many other Zambian communities (Banda et al., 2016). However, these mining-supported facilities typically emphasized male-dominated activities aligned with predominantly male workforces, creating gender-imbalanced infrastructure development that continues to shape contemporary participation opportunities despite subsequent ownership and operational changes in the mining sector.

Facility management research has examined how operational practices and governance systems affect access beyond physical infrastructure characteristics, documenting how

Research examining school-based infrastructure has highlighted the crucial role of educational facilities in providing sporting access, particularly for young people developing initial interests and skills. Assessment studies across Zambian schools found substantial variations in available facilities, with urban and high-resource schools typically offering more developed infrastructure compared to rural and under-resourced institutions (Chawawa, 2021). Gender disparities appear even within individual schools, as facility usage patterns and scheduling often prioritize boys' activities over girls' programs when shared infrastructure must accommodate multiple users. These educational facility limitations particularly affect female students who may have fewer alternative community-based participation options compared to male counterparts who more commonly access informal playing spaces and non-school programs.

Safety feature research has investigated how security characteristics influence infrastructure usability, particularly for female users with heightened vulnerability concerns in public spaces. Facility assessment studies found that only 42% of Zambian public sports facilities incorporated adequate lighting for evening use, 37% provided security personnel or monitoring systems, and 28% offered secure storage for personal belongings during participation (Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development, 2020). These safety limitations significantly affect female utilization decisions, as security concerns frequently restrict women's willingness to access facilities during non-daylight hours, in isolated locations, or without accompanying trusted companions, creating temporal and social access barriers beyond simple physical proximity to available infrastructure.

Research on transportation infrastructure has examined how mobility systems affect overall sporting accessibility through influencing travel feasibility to available facilities. Transportation studies in Zambian communities found that public transit routes predominantly serve central corridors and primary roads while providing limited coverage to residential areas where potential participants reside, creating significant "last mile" challenges that extend effective travel times and costs (Mwafulirwa, 2022). These transportation limitations particularly affect female participants who typically have reduced access to private vehicles, greater safety concerns regarding walking (especially during evening hours), and time constraints that render lengthy or complex travel arrangements especially problematic for maintaining regular participation schedules.

Informal space research has investigated how non-designated areas function within overall sporting infrastructure systems, documenting the utilization patterns and gender characteristics of improvised play spaces within communities. Observational studies across Zambian neighborhoods found significant gender disparities in informal space utilization, with males occupying approximately 83% of non-designated playing areas including vacant lots, streets, and multi-purpose public spaces (Chawawa, 2021). These utilization patterns reflect both social norms regarding appropriate female public visibility and safety concerns that constrain women's and girls' comfortable access to unregulated spaces, creating additional infrastructural disadvantages beyond formal facility limitations when informal alternatives remain predominantly male domains.

Equipment access research has examined how material resource availability affects participation possibilities beyond fixed infrastructure, documenting how sporting goods access creates additional barrier dimensions. Market studies across Zambian communities found significant limitations in equipment availability, affordability, and appropriateness for female users, with particular shortages in women's-specific equipment including appropriate supportive garments, correctly sized protective gear,

and culturally appropriate attire options (Mwafulirwa, 2022). These equipment access limitations create material barriers that compound physical infrastructure constraints, as facility availability alone proves insufficient for enabling participation without accompanying access to necessary equipment and appropriate attire that meets both functional and cultural requirements for comfortable female involvement.

Research on digital infrastructure has investigated how information technology systems increasingly influence sporting access through affecting awareness, registration, communication, and coordination dimensions of participation. Digital access studies across Zambian communities found significant disparities in technology availability and utilization, with only 42% of women regularly accessing internet services compared to 57% of men, and substantial urban-rural differences in connectivity that affect information access regarding available sporting opportunities (Mwamba, 2018). These digital disparities create information barriers that compound physical access limitations, as limited awareness of available programs, schedule changes, registration requirements, or participation opportunities prevents utilization of physically accessible infrastructure when digital communication increasingly mediates program administration and participation coordination.

Infrastructure policy research has examined how governance systems influence facility development through resource allocation decisions, design standards, and maintenance priorities that collectively shape the physical participation environment. The collective body of research on infrastructure and access barriers provides important foundation for understanding how physical facilities, spatial arrangements, and material resources constrain female sports participation within specific settings like Mufulira District. These infrastructural factors create fundamental accessibility limitations through both absolute facility shortages and gender-specific design characteristics that affect usability for potential female participants. Understanding these physical access dimensions is essential for developing effective, contextually appropriate approaches to expanding sporting opportunities for women and girls, as infrastructure represents a necessary foundation for participation regardless of motivation, cultural permission, or economic capacity to engage in sporting activities.

2.6 Related Studies

Research examining socio-cultural barriers to female sports participation has documented how cultural norms, social expectations, gender ideologies, and community attitudes constrain women's and girls' involvement in sporting activities across diverse contexts. These socio-cultural factors create powerful influences on participation decisions through both external social sanctions and internalized beliefs that discourage female sporting involvement, operating as fundamental constraints that often underlie and reinforce other barrier types. Understanding these socio-cultural dimensions provides essential context for examining female sports participation challenges within specific settings like Mufulira District.

Studies investigating gender ideology influences on sports participation have documented how cultural beliefs about appropriate male and female behaviors create normative boundaries that constrain women's sporting involvement in many societies. Cross-cultural research spanning diverse regions found that societies with more rigid gender differentiation consistently demonstrate lower female sports participation, with traditional beliefs about gender-appropriate activities creating both external social pressures and internalized identity constraints that limit women's willingness to engage in activities culturally coded as masculine (Pfister, 2015). These gender ideology effects operate across various sporting contexts but

appear particularly pronounced for activities traditionally associated with masculine characteristics including strength, aggression, and competition, creating activity-specific barriers that vary based on cultural coding of different sports forms.

2.7 Research Gap

The comprehensive review of literature examining female sports participation barriers reveals significant knowledge gaps regarding the specific factors inhibiting women's and girls' sporting involvement within particular Zambian community contexts, especially understudied settings like Mufulira District. While considerable research has documented participation constraints across global, regional, and broader national levels, limited empirical investigation has examined the specific manifestation, relative importance, and interaction of different barriers within distinct local Zambian communities. This contextual specificity gap represents a significant limitation in existing knowledge that constrains the development of targeted, effective interventions to address participation barriers in particular settings where environmental, cultural, economic, and infrastructural characteristics create unique configurations of constraints requiring tailored approaches rather than generic solutions.

A fundamental gap exists in empirical evidence documenting current female sports participation levels within specific Zambian communities, with limited quantitative data available beyond broad national estimates that mask significant local variations. While national surveys suggest approximately 23% of Zambian adult women engage in regular sporting activities (WHO, 2022), this aggregated figure provides inadequate foundation for understanding participation patterns in particular localities like Mufulira District, where historical mining influences, specific infrastructure conditions, and local cultural characteristics likely create distinctive participation contexts that differ from national averages. Without precise baseline participation data for specific communities, both researchers and practitioners lack essential information for identifying priority populations, measuring intervention effects, and developing targeted approaches addressing particular local participation gaps rather than relying on assumptions based on national patterns that may not accurately reflect local conditions.

A significant methodological gap exists regarding empirical assessment of the relative importance of different barrier types within specific Zambian community contexts. While qualitative research has identified numerous potential constraints operating across various settings, limited quantitative investigation has measured the comparative influence of different factors or established hierarchies of constraint significance that might inform intervention prioritization. This methodological limitation leaves unclear whether economic, infrastructural, cultural, temporal, security, or educational factors represent the most significant barriers in particular communities, creating challenges for stakeholders attempting to allocate limited resources toward addressing the most influential constraints rather than focusing on factors that may be less determinative of actual participation decisions within specific local contexts.

Research examining barrier interaction and compounding effects demonstrates particular limitations within Zambian community contexts, with insufficient investigation of how multiple constraints simultaneously affect participation decisions rather than operating as isolated factors. While broader theoretical frameworks acknowledge the interconnected nature of different barrier types, empirical research specifically documenting these interaction patterns within Zambian communities remains inadequate for understanding how various constraints combine to create comprehensive participation obstacles that exceed the sum of individual barrier effects. This interaction gap limits understanding of the

complex decision-making processes through which potential female participants navigate multiple simultaneous constraints when considering sporting involvement, potentially leading to overly simplistic intervention approaches that address single barrier types without recognizing compounding effects requiring comprehensive solutions.

A geographic knowledge gap exists regarding female sports participation in smaller urban centers and peri-urban communities like those within Mufulira District, with existing Zambian research concentrated primarily in major urban areas (particularly Lusaka) or distinctly rural settings. This geographical imbalance creates limited understanding of participation patterns and barriers in intermediate community types including mining towns and secondary urban centers, where unique combinations of industrial history, infrastructure development, cultural influences, and economic conditions likely create distinctive participation contexts requiring specific investigation rather than extrapolation from findings in dissimilar geographical settings. The limited research specifically examining Copperbelt communities like Mufulira represents a significant spatial gap in understanding how regional characteristics including mining sector influences affect female sports participation opportunities and constraints.

Life-course perspectives on female sports participation in Zambian contexts demonstrate substantial research limitations, with insufficient longitudinal or cross-sectional investigation of how barriers evolve across different female life stages from childhood through adolescence, early adulthood, middle age, and older adulthood. While existing research documents some life transition effects, particularly regarding marriage and motherhood, comprehensive understanding of how participation constraints and opportunities change throughout women's lives within specific Zambian community contexts remains inadequately developed. This life-course gap limits understanding of critical intervention points and age-specific approaches that might address particular barriers affecting women during different life stages rather than applying generic interventions without recognizing age-specific constraint configurations.

A significant intervention research gap exists regarding evidence-based approaches to addressing female participation barriers within specific Zambian community contexts. While various programs and initiatives have attempted to increase women's sporting involvement, rigorous evaluation research documenting intervention effectiveness, implementation challenges, sustainability factors, and contextual influences on outcomes remains severely limited. This evaluation gap creates insufficient evidence base for identifying best practices, replicable models, and scalable approaches that effectively address participation barriers in contextually appropriate ways, leaving stakeholders with limited guidance for developing successful interventions beyond trial-and-error approaches that may inefficiently utilize limited resources available for sports development initiatives.

Table 1: Gap Analysis in Female Sports Participation Research

Research Dimension	Existing Knowledge	Identified Gaps	Significance
Participation Data	National-level statistics showing approximately 23% female participation	Limited community-specific quantitative data on participation levels in settings like Mufulira District	Prevents accurate baseline understanding and targeted interventions for specific communities

Barrier Hierarchy	Qualitative identification of multiple barrier types without clear prioritization	Limited quantitative assessment of relative barrier importance within specific communities	Constrains resource allocation decisions and intervention prioritization
Barrier Interaction	Theoretical recognition of interaction without empirical documentation	Insufficient investigation of how multiple barriers simultaneously affect decisions	Limits understanding of complex constraint patterns requiring comprehensive solutions
Geographical Coverage	Research concentrated in major urban areas and some rural settings	Limited investigation of smaller urban centers and mining communities like Mufulira	Creates knowledge gaps regarding distinctive patterns in important community types
Life-Course Perspective	Some documentation of major transitions without comprehensive age analysis	Insufficient understanding of barrier evolution across female life stages	Restricts development of age-appropriate interventions addressing stage-specific constraints
Intervention Effectiveness	Limited evaluation research documenting program outcomes and implementation factors	Inadequate evidence base regarding effective approaches in specific Zambian contexts	Impedes development of evidence-based interventions with demonstrated effectiveness
Theoretical Application	General application of frameworks without context-specific adaptation	Limited testing of socio-ecological model applicability to Zambian community contexts	Constrains theoretical development and contextually appropriate framework application

These identified research gaps collectively justify the current study's focus on examining factors inhibiting female participation in sporting activities within selected communities of Mufulira District. By generating empirical evidence regarding participation patterns, barrier configurations, constraint interactions, and contextual influences within this understudied setting, the research will address significant knowledge gaps while providing practical insights to inform targeted interventions addressing the specific participation constraints operating in these communities. This contextually specific approach recognizes that effective solutions require understanding particular local manifestations of barriers rather than simply applying generic approaches based on national patterns or international models without adequate adaptation to the unique characteristics of communities like those in Mufulira District.

2.8 Chapter Summary

This literature review establishes the importance of the current study's focus on examining factors inhibiting female participation in sporting activities within selected communities of Mufulira District and

the specific knowledge gaps this research will address through empirical investigation of participation patterns and barriers in this understudied setting. By generating original evidence regarding the particular constraint configurations operating in these communities, the study will contribute to both scholarly understanding of contextual influences on female sports participation and practical intervention development aimed at increasing women's sporting opportunities and access to the extensive benefits that regular physical activity provides for health, wellbeing, and personal development.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological approach that will guide the investigation of factors inhibiting female participation in sporting activities within selected communities of Mufulira District. The methodology has been carefully designed to address the research objectives through systematic, rigorous procedures that enable comprehensive examination of participation patterns, barriers, and potential interventions within the specific local context. This methodological framework provides the structured approach through which empirical evidence will be gathered, analyzed, and interpreted to answer the research questions while maintaining scientific validity and practical relevance. Together, these methodological components establish a comprehensive, rigorous approach to investigating female sports participation barriers in the selected communities, creating a structured framework for gathering empirical evidence that addresses the research questions while maintaining scientific validity, practical relevance, and ethical integrity throughout the research process.

3.2. Research Design

This study will employ a mixed methods research design that integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine comprehensively the factors inhibiting female participation in sporting activities within selected communities in Mufulira District. The mixed methods approach represents an appropriate methodological framework for addressing the research objectives, as it combines the complementary strengths of different data collection and analytical strategies to generate both breadth and depth of understanding regarding the complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon of female sports participation barriers. This integrated design acknowledges that neither quantitative nor qualitative approaches alone would provide sufficient insight into the diverse factors operating across individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy levels that collectively influence participation decisions and opportunities.

The mixed methods design will follow a sequential explanatory structure, beginning with quantitative data collection and analysis followed by qualitative investigation that explores and elaborates upon patterns identified through the initial quantitative phase. This sequential approach enables findings from the quantitative component to inform the focus and sampling of the subsequent qualitative phase, creating an iterative process that enhances the relevance and specificity of qualitative inquiry based on initial quantitative results. The sequential structure also facilitates integration of findings through connecting quantitative patterns with qualitative explanations, providing more comprehensive understanding than parallel implementation would allow.

The quantitative component will consist of a cross-sectional survey administered to a representative sample of the female population in the selected communities to assess their current levels of sports

participation and perceived barriers to involvement. This survey approach enables systematic measurement of participation patterns and constraint perceptions across a statistically significant sample, generating findings that can be generalized to the broader female population within these communities with appropriate confidence levels. The structured format of survey data collection facilitates standardized comparison across different demographic segments and barrier categories, enabling statistical analysis of relationships between participant characteristics and reported obstacles to identify significant patterns and associations within the dataset.

The survey instrument will collect data on multiple dimensions including: (1) demographic characteristics such as age, marital status, education level, household composition, and employment status; (2) current sports participation patterns including frequency, types of activities, contexts of involvement, and participation history; (3) perceived barriers to participation across different categories including socio-cultural, economic, infrastructural, time/domestic responsibility, safety/security, and educational constraints; (4) relative importance ratings of different barrier types in affecting personal participation decisions; and (5) potential intervention preferences and suggestions for increasing female sports involvement. This comprehensive measurement approach captures both descriptive information on current participation and explanatory data on factors constraining involvement, creating a multidimensional dataset for statistical analysis.

Quantitative data analysis will employ both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to identify participation patterns and barrier relationships within the survey data. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency, and variability metrics will characterize participation levels and barrier prevalence across the sample, establishing baseline understanding of current conditions. Inferential techniques including chi-square tests, correlation analysis, multiple regression, and analysis of variance will examine relationships between demographic factors and both participation patterns and perceived barriers, identifying significant associations that suggest priority areas for intervention or particular population segments facing heightened constraints. Factor analysis will assess underlying dimensions among reported barriers to determine if certain constraint types cluster together in patterns requiring coordinated intervention approaches rather than isolated strategies addressing single factors independently.

The qualitative component will consist of focus group discussions with purposively selected female residents of the target communities to explore their perspectives and experiences with sports participation and barriers in greater depth than survey methods allow. These semi-structured group discussions will create opportunities for interactive exploration of participation challenges, constraint mechanisms, and potential solutions through facilitated conversation among women sharing similar life circumstances but potentially diverse experiences and viewpoints. The focus group approach enables generation of rich, contextualized data regarding how women understand, experience, and negotiate participation barriers within their specific community settings, providing explanatory depth beyond the descriptive patterns established through quantitative methods.

3.3. Study Site

This research will be conducted in three selected communities within Mufulira District of Zambia's Copperbelt Province: Kantanshi, Kankoyo, and Mukambo. These specific communities were selected through purposive sampling to represent different geographical, socioeconomic, and infrastructural

characteristics within the district while remaining logistically feasible for data collection within available resource constraints. Understanding the distinctive features of these study sites provides essential context for interpreting findings regarding barriers that may reflect particular local conditions rather than universal constraints affecting all communities equally.

Mufulira District represents an appropriate broader research setting due to several characteristics that make it particularly relevant for examining female sports participation barriers. Located in Zambia's Copperbelt Province approximately 385 kilometers north of Lusaka, Mufulira has historically developed around copper mining operations that significantly shaped community infrastructure, economic conditions, and social structures since the town's establishment in 1933. The district contains a diverse mixture of urban, peri-urban, and rural settlements with varying infrastructure development, population density, and socioeconomic characteristics, creating different contextual environments for female sports participation within relatively close geographical proximity. With an estimated population of approximately 204,000 residents according to recent census projections, the district provides sufficient scale for meaningful research while remaining manageable for focused investigation within resource constraints (Central Statistical Office, 2022).

The district's economic history centered around mining operations has created distinctive sporting infrastructure development compared to many other Zambian contexts, with historical corporate investment in recreational facilities followed by sustainability challenges during mining sector privatization and workforce reductions in recent decades (Banda et al., 2016). This historical trajectory has established sporting infrastructure that differs somewhat from both agricultural rural areas and administrative urban centers elsewhere in Zambia, creating a distinctive context for examining how infrastructure transitions affect current participation opportunities. The district's position in Copperbelt Province also provides insight into a geographical region that remains understudied regarding female sports participation despite its historical significance in Zambian economic and social development.

Within this broader district context, the specific communities selected for investigation represent different settlement types, economic conditions, and infrastructure development levels that collectively provide diverse environments for examining female sports participation barriers:

Kantanshi represents an urban residential area within central Mufulira, characterized by relatively developed infrastructure, higher population density, and more established service provision compared to other district communities. With an estimated population of approximately 28,000 residents, this community contains both middle-income and low-income neighborhoods with varying housing quality, educational access, and economic opportunity levels (Mufulira Municipal Council, 2019). Sporting infrastructure within Kantanshi includes the main municipal stadium, several school facilities with community access provisions, and some neighborhood courts and grounds distributed across different sections of the community. This urban setting provides perspective on female sports participation barriers in an environment with relatively developed infrastructure but potentially different constraints related to urban lifestyle patterns, safety considerations, and cultural expectations compared to less developed areas.

Kankoyo represents a peri-urban settlement approximately 5 kilometers from central Mufulira, with historical development closely connected to nearby mining operations that significantly influenced community infrastructure and economic conditions. With an estimated population of approximately 18,000 residents, this community demonstrates intermediate characteristics between urban and rural

environments, with moderately developed infrastructure, mixed housing quality, and economic conditions strongly influenced by mining sector changes in recent decades (Mufulira Municipal Council, 2019). Sporting infrastructure within Kankoyo includes one community sports ground, limited school facilities, and some informal play spaces, representing intermediate development between urban and rural extremes. This peri-urban setting provides important perspective on communities transitioning between traditional and modern characteristics, with potentially distinctive barrier configurations reflecting both urban influences and more traditional social structures persisting within this intermediate environment.

Mukambo represents a rural community approximately 15 kilometers from central Mufulira, characterized by agricultural activities alongside some mining influence, lower population density, limited infrastructure development, and more traditional cultural practices compared to urban settings. With an estimated population of approximately 12,000 residents distributed across a wider geographical area, this community demonstrates different living patterns, economic activities, and infrastructure access compared to more developed areas within the district (Mufulira Municipal Council, 2019). Sporting infrastructure within Mukambo includes minimal formal facilities beyond basic school grounds, with greater reliance on informal spaces and traditional gathering areas for physical activities. This rural setting provides valuable contrast to more developed communities, offering perspective on how infrastructure limitations, traditional cultural influences, and different economic patterns create potentially distinctive barrier configurations affecting female sports participation in less developed environments.

These three communities collectively provide appropriate diversity for examining how female sports participation barriers manifest across different contextual environments within the same district, allowing comparison across urban, peri-urban, and rural settings while maintaining geographical concentration that enables feasible data collection within resource constraints. The communities share certain district-level influences including administrative structures, broader cultural patterns, and historical mining influences, while demonstrating important variations in infrastructure development, economic characteristics, and potentially cultural attitudes that may create different barrier configurations requiring context-specific understanding rather than uniform characterization.

This purposive selection of communities represents a methodologically appropriate approach for the research objectives, as it enables examination of contextual variations in participation barriers while remaining logistically feasible within resource constraints. While findings cannot be automatically generalized to all Zambian communities, the deliberate inclusion of different settlement types provides valuable perspective on how barriers manifest across diverse environments, enhancing theoretical understanding of contextual influences on female sports participation while generating practical insights relevant for similar communities elsewhere in Zambia and potentially other African countries with comparable characteristics.

3.4. Target Population

The target population for this study comprises adult women aged 18 years and above who currently reside in the selected communities of Kantanshi, Kankoyo, and Mukambo within Mufulira District. This population focus aligns directly with the research aim of examining factors inhibiting female participation in sporting activities, as it encompasses the primary demographic whose participation barriers constitute the central investigation focus. Understanding the characteristics of this target population provides

essential context for both methodological decisions and interpretation of findings regarding participation patterns and constraints.

The estimated total female population aged 18+ across the three communities is approximately 30,800, based on recent census projections and district demographic data. This population includes approximately 14,900 adult women in Kantanshi, 9,600 in Kankoyo, and 6,300 in Mukambo, reflecting the different community sizes and settlement patterns across urban, peri-urban, and rural environments respectively (Central Statistical Office, 2022). These population figures inform sample size calculations for the quantitative component while providing context for understanding the overall demographic framework within which participation barriers operate across these communities.

The age criterion of 18 years and above was established for several important methodological and conceptual reasons. Legally, this threshold represents adulthood in Zambia, enabling direct consent from participants without requiring parental permission that might complicate recruitment and potentially influence response patterns, particularly regarding culturally sensitive topics related to gender norms and family expectations. Developmentally, adults have typically established independent identity patterns, decision-making capabilities, and life circumstances that differ from adolescents and children, creating distinctive participation barrier configurations requiring specific investigation rather than combining adult and youth perspectives that might reflect substantially different constraint experiences. Practically, focusing on adult women allows more direct assessment of their experiences and perceptions through primary data collection methods appropriate for mature respondents with developed capacity for self-reflection and articulation regarding participation barriers and decision processes.

This diverse target population provides appropriate focus for examining the factors inhibiting female participation in sporting activities, as it encompasses the primary demographic whose participation barriers constitute the central investigation focus while including sufficient internal variation to examine how different life circumstances may create distinctive barrier configurations requiring targeted understanding rather than uniform characterization. The adult focus allows direct assessment of participation constraints through appropriate data collection methods, while the community-based approach provides contextual specificity for understanding how barriers manifest within particular local environments rather than relying on generic national patterns that may obscure important local variations in participation opportunities and constraints.

3.5. Sample and Sample Size

Community	Estimated Adult Female Population	Proportional Allocation	Sample Size
Kantanshi	14,900	48.4%	186
Kankoyo	9,600	31.2%	120
Mukambo	6,300	20.4%	78
Total	30,800	100%	384

Together, these complementary sampling approaches for quantitative and qualitative components create a comprehensive research design that balances statistical validity with interpretive depth, enabling both generalizable patterns through representative survey sampling and rich contextual understanding through purposively diverse focus group composition. This integrated sampling strategy aligns with the mixed methods research design, leveraging different participant selection approaches appropriate to each

methodological component while ensuring comprehensive coverage of the female population whose sports participation barriers constitute the central focus of this investigation.

3.6. Sampling procedure/Techniques

This study will employ different sampling procedures for its quantitative and qualitative components, with each approach tailored to the specific methodological requirements and objectives of the respective research elements. These complementary sampling techniques are designed to ensure appropriate participant selection for generating both statistically valid patterns through survey research and richly contextualized understanding through focus group discussions.

For the quantitative survey component, a multi-stage sampling procedure will be implemented to select participants in a systematic manner that ensures appropriate representation across the three target communities while maintaining practical feasibility for field implementation. This procedure involves several sequential stages:

Stage 1: Proportional Allocation - The calculated total sample of 384 participants will be distributed proportionally across the three communities based on their estimated adult female population sizes, resulting in 186 participants from Kantanshi, 120 from Kankoyo, and 78 from Mukambo as previously detailed. This proportional allocation ensures that each community receives appropriate representation reflecting its relative size within the overall study area.

Stage 2: Geographical Stratification - Each community will be divided into geographical sections based on existing administrative boundaries or natural divisions to ensure appropriate spatial distribution across different neighborhoods or areas with potentially varying characteristics. In Kantanshi, this will involve division into 6 sections reflecting different residential zones; in Kankoyo, 4 sections based on neighborhood clusters; and in Mukambo, 3 sections reflecting the more dispersed rural settlement pattern. Sub-samples will be allocated proportionally across these sections based on population distribution within each community.

Stage 3: Systematic Household Selection - Within each geographical section, households will be selected using systematic sampling along predetermined routes, with random starting points and fixed selection intervals. Field researchers will follow designated paths through each section, selecting households at consistent intervals appropriate to the required sub-sample size relative to total households in that section. For example, in densely populated sections requiring 40 participants from approximately 800 households, every 20th household might be selected following a randomly determined starting point.

Stage 4: Participant Identification - At each selected household, all female residents aged 18+ will be identified to determine eligibility for participation. To prevent clustering effects that might reduce sample diversity, only one participant will be selected per household regardless of how many eligible women reside there. This approach ensures independence of observations by preventing multiple participants from the same household environment who might share similar constraints and experiences that would reduce overall sample diversity.

Stage 5: Within-Household Selection - In households with multiple eligible women, selection will employ the next-birthday method to ensure randomization rather than convenience or self-selection. This approach involves selecting the eligible woman whose birthday occurs next following the interview date, providing an objective selection criterion unrelated to participant characteristics that might influence sports

participation patterns or barriers. This method prevents selection biases that might occur if researchers or household members subjectively determine which eligible woman participates based on availability, interest, or other potentially relevant factors.

The qualitative sampling approach prioritizes capturing the range of perspectives and experiences regarding sports participation barriers rather than precise population proportions. This purposive strategy is methodologically appropriate for focus group research seeking depth of understanding through interactive discussion rather than statistical generalization through representative sampling. However, the structured diversity within groups helps ensure that findings reflect varied experiences rather than perspectives limited to particular demographic segments within the communities.

Together, these complementary sampling approaches for quantitative and qualitative components create a comprehensive sampling strategy that balances statistical validity with interpretive depth. The systematic, multi-stage approach for survey sampling enables generalizable findings about participation patterns and barrier prevalence, while the purposive, diversity-focused approach for focus groups facilitates rich contextual understanding of how barriers operate within women's lived experiences. This integrated sampling strategy aligns with the mixed methods research design, leveraging different participant selection approaches appropriate to each methodological component while ensuring comprehensive coverage of the female population whose sports participation barriers constitute the central focus of this investigation.

3.7. Research Instruments

This study will employ multiple research instruments designed specifically to gather comprehensive data addressing the research objectives through both quantitative and qualitative approaches. These instruments have been carefully developed to ensure appropriate measurement of key concepts while remaining culturally relevant and accessible for participants across diverse educational and socioeconomic backgrounds within the target communities. The complementary instruments will generate different data types that collectively provide comprehensive understanding of female sports participation barriers across multiple dimensions.

For the quantitative component, a structured questionnaire will serve as the primary research instrument for surveying the sample of 384 women across the three communities. This questionnaire has been developed through a systematic process involving literature review, conceptual framework alignment, expert consultation, and pilot testing to ensure content validity, cultural appropriateness, and practical administrability within the field research context. The questionnaire comprises several specific sections addressing different aspects of the research objectives:

Both research instruments have undergone pilot testing with small samples representative of the target population but from communities not included in the main study. This preliminary testing enabled refinement of question wording, sequence adjustments, time requirement verification, and identification of potentially problematic items requiring modification before full implementation. Additionally, both instruments received expert review from research professionals familiar with the cultural context and subject matter to ensure content validity, cultural appropriateness, and methodological soundness.

Together, these complementary research instruments provide appropriate tools for generating both breadth of understanding through standardized survey measurement and depth of insight through interactive focus group exploration. The instruments have been carefully designed to address the research objectives while

remaining accessible and culturally appropriate for the target population, creating a solid methodological foundation for gathering valid, reliable data regarding female sports participation barriers in the selected communities.

3.8. Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Ensuring the validity and reliability of research instruments represents a crucial methodological consideration for generating trustworthy findings that accurately reflect the phenomena under investigation. This study implements and enhances the validity and reliability of both quantitative and qualitative instruments, recognizing the complementary but distinct quality criteria appropriate for different methodological approaches within the mixed methods design.

For the quantitative survey questionnaire, content validity can be established through systematic development processes that ensure that the instrument comprehensively measures the intended constructs regarding female sports participation and inhibitors. The questionnaire is developed based on extensive literature review identifying key inhibitor dimensions and previous measurement approaches, ensuring alignment with established theoretical frameworks particularly the socio-ecological model guiding this research. Item generation incorporated barrier categories and specific constraints identified through previous studies while adapting measurement approaches to the particular cultural and community contexts of the target population. This literature-based foundation ensures that the instrument addresses theoretically significant dimensions rather than omitting important barrier categories that might influence participation.

Through these rigorous validation procedures, appropriate reliability assessment approaches, and comprehensive pilot testing, the research instruments demonstrate strong methodological quality suitable for generating trustworthy findings regarding female sports participation barriers in the selected communities. The complementary validation approaches across quantitative and qualitative instruments create methodologically sound measurement tools that balance structured reliability with contextual sensitivity, producing consistent measurement while remaining responsive to the specific cultural and community contexts characterizing the research setting.

3.9. Data Collection procedure/Techniques

This study will implement a sequential mixed methods data collection process, beginning with the quantitative survey component followed by qualitative focus groups that explore and elaborate upon patterns identified through initial quantitative findings. This sequential approach enables findings from the quantitative phase to inform the qualitative inquiry focus, creating an iterative process that enhances overall research quality and relevance. Data collection will be conducted over a three-month period according to a structured timeline that accommodates both methodological components while allowing for preliminary analysis between phases.

For the quantitative component, survey data will be collected through structured interviews conducted by trained research assistants who will administer the questionnaire to selected participants across the three target communities. This interview-based approach, rather than self-administration, ensures consistent implementation regardless of participant literacy levels while maintaining standardized question presentation and response recording across all participants. Face-to-face administration also enables clarification of potentially confusing items, improves response rates compared to self-administered

approaches, and creates opportunities to build rapport that enhances data quality through increased participant engagement and response accuracy.

Quality control measures will be implemented throughout data collection including field supervisor observation of randomly selected interviews (approximately 10% of total), daily debriefing sessions to address procedural questions or challenges, and review of completed questionnaires for completeness and internal consistency before final acceptance into the dataset. These quality assurance processes help identify and address potential issues during data collection rather than discovering problems during analysis when correction opportunities have passed. Daily summaries of completion rates, challenges encountered, and procedural adjustments will be maintained to document field implementation and inform ongoing quality improvement throughout the data collection period.

Data management procedures will establish secure, systematic handling of information from initial collection through final storage and analysis. Completed questionnaires will receive unique identification codes linking to the sampling frame while removing direct personal identifiers, maintaining participant privacy while preserving analytical connections to sampling data. Physical questionnaires will be stored in locked containers during field collection periods and transferred daily to secure project offices for safe storage. Data entry will occur concurrently with collection using a custom database that includes validation rules to identify potential entry errors or inconsistencies requiring verification against original questionnaires.

For the qualitative component, focus group discussions will be conducted following preliminary analysis of survey data, allowing quantitative findings to inform discussion topics and sampling while maintaining core focus on the central research questions. Focus groups will be implemented approximately 4-5 weeks after survey completion, providing sufficient time for basic quantitative analysis while maintaining research momentum and community engagement throughout the project period. This sequential timing enables identification of patterns requiring further exploration through qualitative inquiry while remaining within reasonable overall project timeframes.

Focus group recruitment will follow the previously detailed purposive sampling procedures, with potential participants identified through multiple channels to ensure appropriate diversity within the age-stratified groups. Initial contact with potential participants will explain the research purpose, focus group process, time requirements, and voluntary nature of participation, followed by screening questions that verify eligibility and assess characteristics to ensure appropriate group composition diversity. Invitations will be confirmed 2-3 days before scheduled discussions with reminder contacts one day prior to maximize attendance and reduce last-minute cancellations.

Focus groups will be conducted in community venues that offer privacy, comfort, appropriate seating arrangements, and minimal external distractions or interruptions that might compromise discussion quality. Venues will be selected for neutral associations (avoiding locations with particular religious, political, or social affiliations that might influence participant comfort or response patterns) and accessibility for participants from throughout the target community areas. Sessions will be scheduled at times identified as convenient for the majority of participants in each age-stratified group, with different timeframes as needed to accommodate varying availability patterns across different life stages and occupational circumstances.

Discussions will be documented through audio recording (with explicit participant permission) supplemented by assistant note-taking regarding non-verbal aspects, group dynamics, and key points that might require special attention during transcription and analysis. Immediately following each discussion, debriefing sessions between moderator and assistant will document initial impressions, emerging themes, methodological observations, and potential adjustments needed for subsequent groups based on implementation experience. These debriefing notes provide valuable contextual information beyond verbal content alone, enhancing the richness of qualitative data available for subsequent analysis.

Throughout both quantitative and qualitative data collection, rigorous ethical protocols will be maintained including informed consent procedures, confidentiality protections, voluntary participation principles, and ongoing respect for participant autonomy regarding discussion topics or questions they may prefer not to address. These ethical dimensions recognize the responsibility to conduct research that respects and protects the individuals and communities participating in the study while generating valid knowledge regarding female sports participation barriers. All data collection activities will adhere to approved ethical guidelines and procedures established during the research planning and approval process.

This comprehensive, sequential data collection process creates appropriate methodological implementation of the mixed methods research design, generating complementary quantitative and qualitative data that collectively address the research objectives regarding factors inhibiting female sports participation in the selected communities. The structured procedures, quality control measures, and ethical protocols ensure rigorous, systematic data collection while remaining flexible enough to accommodate the practical realities of field research in community settings.

3.10. Data Analysis

This study will employ a comprehensive analytical approach that integrates both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques to generate meaningful insights addressing the research objectives. The analysis process follows the sequential mixed methods design, beginning with quantitative analysis of survey data, followed by qualitative analysis of focus group discussions, and culminating in integrated interpretation that synthesizes findings across both methodological components. This analytical integration creates deeper understanding than either method alone could provide, aligning with the study's mixed methods design rationale.

For the quantitative component, analysis will begin with data preparation procedures ensuring quality and integrity before substantive statistical processing. Raw survey data will undergo thorough cleaning processes including consistency checks to identify logically impossible or highly improbable response patterns, range validations ensuring all values fall within expected parameters, and missing data assessment determining appropriate handling approaches based on patterns and extent of missingness. These preparatory steps establish a high-quality dataset supporting valid statistical inferences rather than conclusions based on erroneous or compromised data inputs.

Descriptive statistical analysis will establish fundamental patterns within the survey data, characterizing participation levels and barrier prevalence across the sample. This analysis will generate frequency distributions, percentages, measures of central tendency, and variability metrics for key variables including participation frequency, activity types, and barrier ratings across different categories. Descriptive statistics will be calculated both for the overall sample and disaggregated by community and

demographic subgroups to identify potential variation in participation patterns and perceived barriers across different population segments. These descriptive results provide baseline understanding of current conditions while establishing foundation for more complex analytical approaches examining relationships between variables.

The qualitative analysis process will begin with data familiarization through repeated reading of transcripts, reviewing discussion notes, and if necessary, listening to recording segments to clarify ambiguous passages or verify significant tonal elements not fully captured in transcription. This immersion creates comprehensive understanding of the dataset before beginning more structured analytical procedures, ensuring analysts develop sensitivity to nuances, contexts, and implicit meanings beyond surface content alone. Familiarization notes documenting initial impressions, potential themes, and analytical questions provide foundation for subsequent coding processes while preserving early insights that might inform later interpretive decisions.

3.11. Ethical Considerations

This study will adhere to rigorous ethical standards throughout all phases of research implementation, recognizing the fundamental responsibility to respect participants' rights, dignity, and wellbeing while generating knowledge that may benefit their communities. Ethical research practice requires thoughtful attention to multiple dimensions including institutional approval, informed consent, confidentiality protection, voluntary participation, vulnerable population considerations, cultural sensitivity, and appropriate benefits distribution. These ethical principles will guide all research activities from planning through implementation to reporting, ensuring that the study not only generates valid knowledge but does so in ways that respect and protect the individuals and communities participating in the research.

Institutional approval will be obtained from all relevant oversight bodies before commencing data collection, establishing formal ethical review and authorization for the research procedures. Approval will be sought from the University Ethics Review Committee, which will assess the research protocol against established ethical standards to ensure participant protection and methodological appropriateness. Additionally, permission will be obtained from the Zambia National Research Authority, which oversees research implementation within the national context, and from the Mufulira District Council, which holds local authority over the specific communities where research will be conducted. This multi-level approval process ensures the research meets ethical standards across institutional, national, and local governance frameworks before implementation begins.

Informed consent represents a cornerstone ethical principle that will be rigorously implemented throughout the research. All participants will receive clear, comprehensive information about the study's purpose, procedures, time requirements, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality provisions, voluntary nature, and their rights regarding participation decisions. This information will be provided in writing through an information sheet translated into appropriate local languages and verbally explained to ensure comprehension regardless of literacy levels. Participants will have opportunities to ask questions and seek clarification before making participation decisions, ensuring their consent is truly informed rather than merely procedural. Documentation of consent will be maintained through signed forms for literate participants or recorded verbal consent for those unable or uncomfortable with written documentation, creating appropriate records while accommodating different participant preferences and capabilities.

Confidentiality protection will be systematically implemented through multiple mechanisms ensuring participant privacy throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting processes. During data collection, interviews and focus groups will be conducted in private locations where conversations cannot be overheard by non-participants, protecting disclosure confidentiality at the point of information gathering. Data management procedures will establish secure handling of information, with physical materials stored in locked containers and electronic data protected through password security and encryption when appropriate. Identifiable information will be separated from research data through coding systems that maintain analytical connections while removing direct identifiers from working datasets. Reporting procedures will ensure no individual participants can be identified in research outputs, with findings presented at aggregate levels or through anonymized quotations that protect individual identity while preserving authentic voices in qualitative reporting.

These comprehensive ethical considerations establish a robust framework for conducting research that respects participants' rights and dignity while generating valuable knowledge regarding female sports participation barriers. By systematically addressing approval requirements, informed consent processes, confidentiality protections, voluntary participation principles, vulnerability considerations, benefit-risk balances, cultural sensitivity needs, reciprocity obligations, and data control issues, the research implements ethical practice throughout all aspects of the study. This ethical commitment ensures that the investigation not only produces valid findings regarding factors inhibiting female participation in sporting activities but does so through processes that honor and protect the individuals and communities contributing to this knowledge generation.

3.12. Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a comprehensive methodological framework for investigating factors inhibiting female participation in sporting activities within selected communities of Mufulira District. The methodology has been carefully designed to address the research objectives through systematic, rigorous procedures that enable thorough examination of participation patterns, barriers, and potential interventions within the specific local context, while maintaining both scientific validity and ethical integrity throughout the research process.

Together, these methodological elements create a comprehensive, rigorous approach to investigating female sports participation barriers in the selected communities, establishing a sound framework for gathering empirical evidence that addresses the research questions while maintaining scientific validity, practical relevance, and ethical integrity throughout the research process. The careful integration of complementary methodological approaches, appropriate sampling strategies, validated instruments, systematic data collection procedures, comprehensive analytical techniques, and rigorous ethical standards creates a strong methodological foundation for generating valuable insights regarding factors inhibiting female participation in sporting activities within Mufulira District communities.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research objectives. The purpose of this study was to examine the factors inhibiting female participation in sports activities in selected communities of Mufulira District. Data were collected from 300 respondents drawn from three

communities—Kantanshi, Kankoyo, and Mukambo. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. The results are presented using tables and charts for clarity.

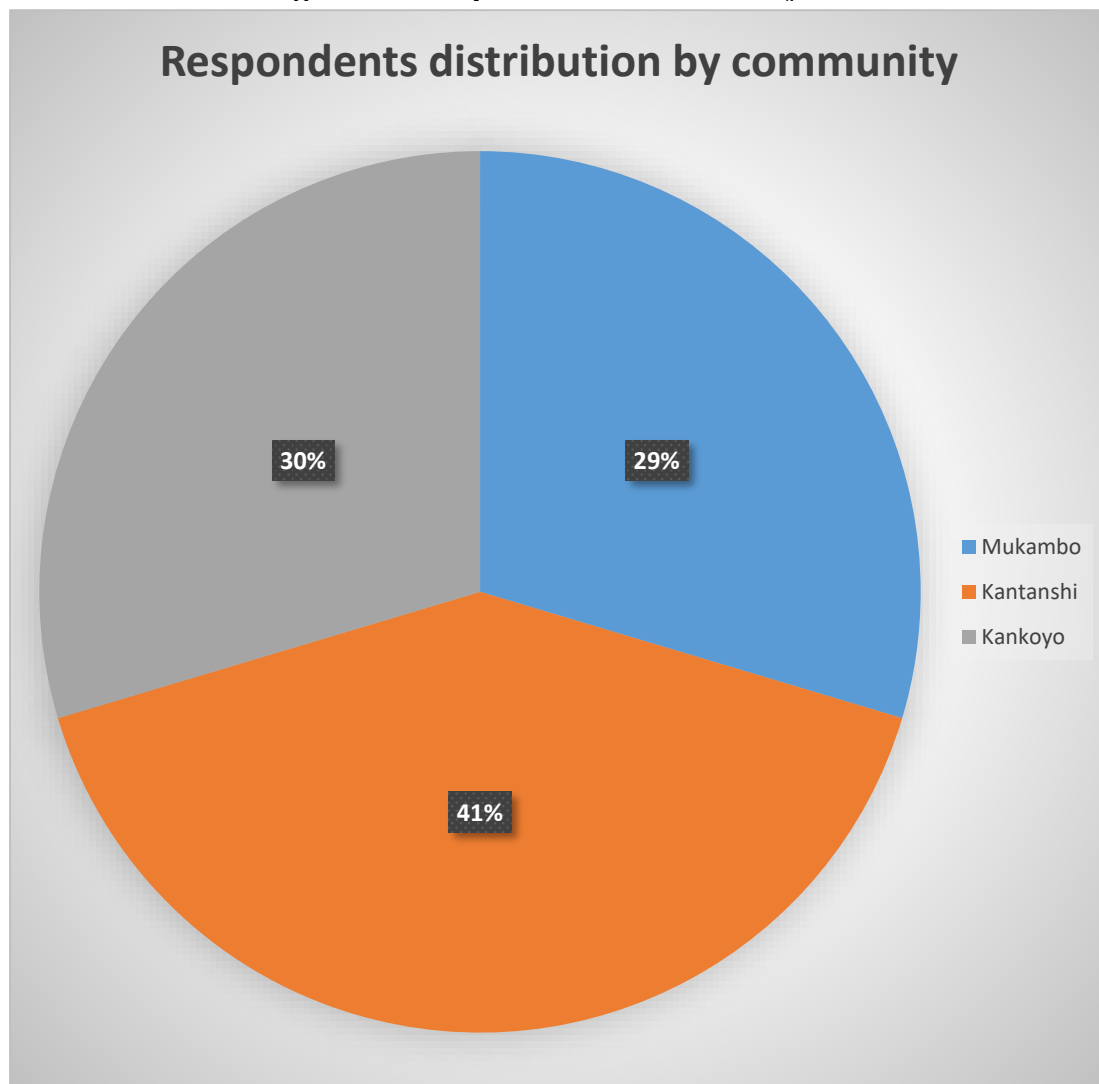
4.1 Demographic Characteristics

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

VARIABLE	CATEGORY
Community	Kantanshi (44%), Kankoyo (32%), Mukambo (32%)
Age group	18–25 (30%), 26–35 (35%), 36–45 (25%), 46+ (10%)
Marital Status	Single (45%), Married (48%), Divorced/Widowed (7%)
Education	None (5%), Primary (25%), Secondary (50%), College/University (20%)

SOURCE: Research Findings (2025)

Figure 4.2: Respondent Distribution by



SOURCE: Research Findings (2025)

The demographic data indicate a balanced representation of respondents from all three communities. The majority were aged between 18 and 35 years, showing that the study captured a youthful and active population. Married women formed the largest category, reflecting how domestic responsibilities may influence female participation in sports. Educationally, most respondents had attained at least secondary education, implying basic awareness of health and fitness benefits.

The first research objective was to identify existing female participation levels in sports activities in Kantanshi, Kankoyo and Mukambo

Analysis of the 300 respondents (100 per community) revealed significant differences in female sports participation football:

Table 4.3 Respondent Distribution by Community

COMMUNITY FEMALE PARTICIPATION	PERCENTAGE (%)
Kantanshi	30%
Kankoyo	25%
Mukambo	20%

SOURCE: Research Findings (2025)

Kantanshi shows the highest participation (30%), indicating relatively favourable conditions such as better sports spaces or more supportive community attitudes. Kankoyo has moderate participation (25%), suggesting some access but also notable constraints. Mukambo has the lowest participation (20%), pointing to limited facilities or stronger cultural restrictions

Figure 4.4 female participation in football

4.2 Levels of Female Participation in other sports

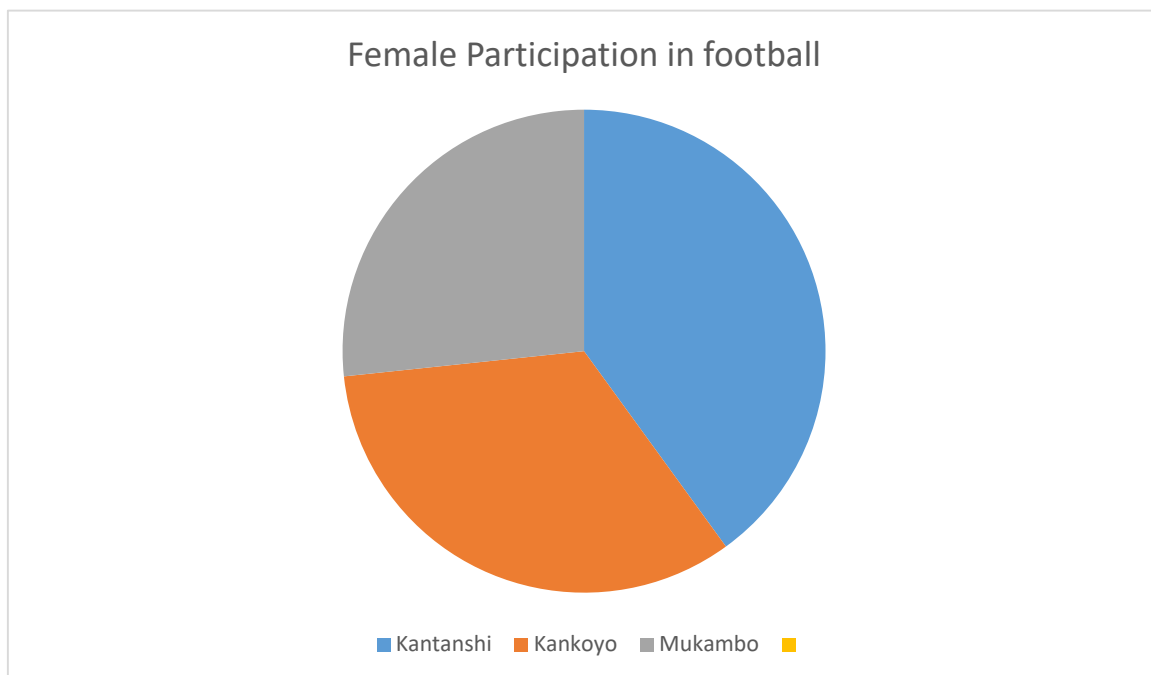


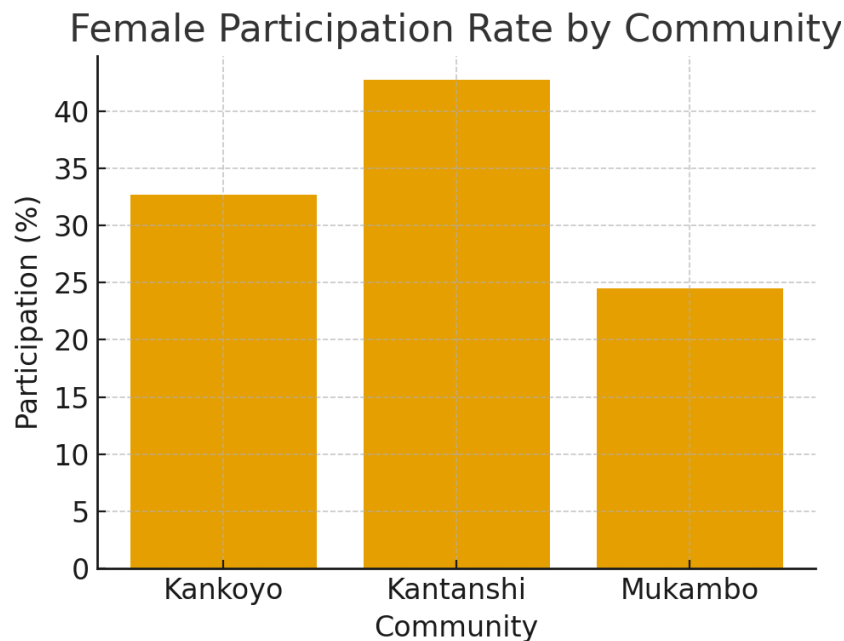
Table 4.2: Female Participation in Sports over the Past Six Months COMMUNITY	PARTICIPATION (%)
Kankoyo	32.7

Kantanshi	42.7
Mukambo	24.5

Table 4.5 Female Participation By Community

SOURCE: Research Findings (2025)

Figure 4.6 Female Participation Rate by Community



SOURCE: Research Findings 2025

The data reveal that Kantanshi recorded the highest female participation rate at 42.7%, followed by Kankoyo with 32.7%, while Mukambo recorded the lowest at 24.5%. The overall average participation across the three communities remains below 40%, indicating limited engagement of women in sports. These results highlight the continuing gender gap in sporting activities in Mufulira District.

Table 4.7: Mean Perceived Barrier Levels Among Respondents

BARRIER	MEAN SCORE (1-5)
Norms	3.29
Cost	3.25
Safety	3.15
Lack of Time	3.07
Lack of Facilities	3.01
Low Value	3.0

SOURCE: Research Findings (2025)

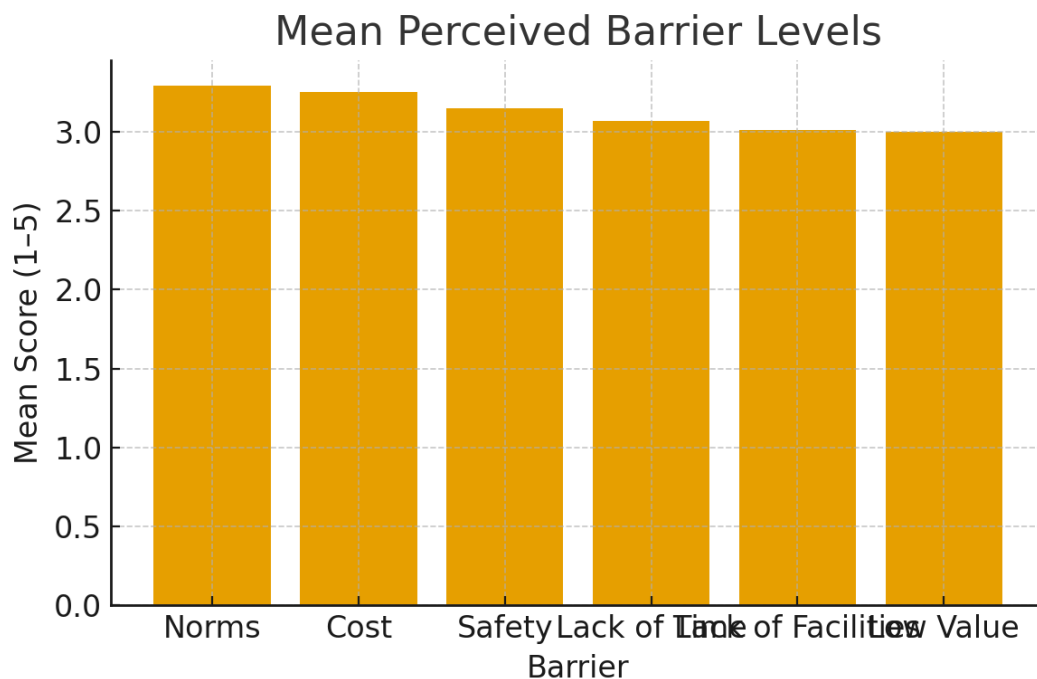


Figure 4.8 Mean Perceived Barrier Levels Among

SOURCE: Research Findings (2025)

The analysis of barriers shows that societal norms scored the highest mean (3.29), indicating they are the strongest inhibitors of female participation in sports. Cost and safety concerns followed closely, suggesting economic and security-related limitations also play significant roles. Lack of time, facilities, and low perceived value of sports further compound the problem, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of the barriers.

Table 4.8: Preferred Strategies to Improve Female Participation in Sports

STRATEGY	SELECTION (%)
More Facilities	18.4
Improve Safety	18.9
Flexible Scheduling	17.4
Change Norms	16.0
Subsidise Costs	16.9

SOURCE: Research Findings (2025)

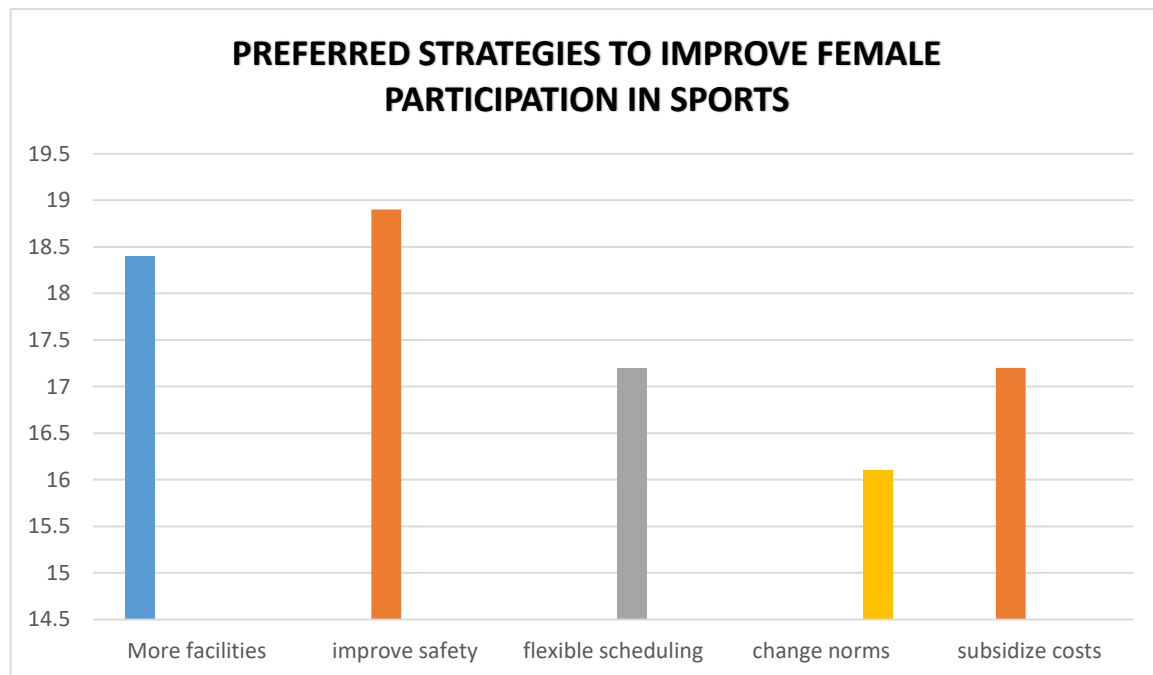


Figure 4.9 preferred strategies to improve female participation in sports

SOURCE: Research Findings 2025

Respondents identified improving safety (18.9%) and providing more facilities (18.4%) as the most effective ways to enhance participation. Flexible scheduling and subsidizing costs were also emphasized, indicating that convenience and affordability are crucial to women's involvement. The data further underscore the need for social norm change and educational interventions to shift cultural attitudes and increase awareness of the value of sports participation.

4.5 Summary of the Findings

The findings reveal that female participation in sports across the three selected communities of Mufulira District remains below 40%, signifying a pervasive gender gap. Kantanshi had the highest participation rate, followed by Kankoyo and Mukambo. Cultural expectations, safety concerns, and economic barriers were identified as the most critical inhibitors, while respondents prioritized structural and educational strategies as key to improving engagement.

The results suggest that women's sports participation cannot be effectively addressed through isolated efforts. Instead, comprehensive interventions are required, combining infrastructure investment, policy reform, community sensitization, and empowerment initiatives. These findings set the stage for the subsequent chapter, which provides conclusions and recommendations based on these results.

5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusion, and recommendations derived from the study on the factors inhibiting female participation in sports activities across selected communities of Mufulira District: Kantanshi, Kankoyo, and Mukambo. It also offers suggestions for future research based on the findings presented in Chapter Four.

5.1 Summary of The Study

The study explored the major barriers affecting women's participation in sports activities. Using 300 respondents from the three targeted communities, the study investigated the levels of female participation, the challenges they face, and the strategies that can be employed to improve their involvement in sports.

The findings showed that female participation in sports remains low, with Kantanshi recording 42.7%, Kankoyo 32.7%, and Mukambo 24.5%. Cultural norms, economic constraints, safety concerns, lack of time, and inadequate sports facilities were identified as the dominant barriers.

Respondents also highlighted several strategies to enhance participation, including the provision of more sports facilities, improving safety, changing community perceptions, subsidising costs, and offering flexible schedules.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that female participation in sports activities across the selected communities of Mufulira District—namely Kantanshi, Kankoyo, and Mukambo—remains significantly low, with none of the communities reaching even half of their potential involvement levels. This low participation reflects the existence of multiple barriers that collectively disadvantage women and girls in accessing sports opportunities. The findings indicate that cultural and societal norms are the most dominant factors restricting participation. In many households, women are expected to prioritize domestic responsibilities, childcare, and home management over recreational or competitive sporting activities. Such gendered expectations limit the time available to females and discourage them from participating in sports. In addition, cultural beliefs that label sports as masculine activities further undermine women's confidence and acceptance in sports environments. Without societal transformation, these deeply rooted norms will continue to restrict women's involvement.

Furthermore, the study concludes that economic challenges form a substantial barrier to female sports participation. Women and girls often lack the financial resources needed to purchase sports attire, equipment, and related materials. This situation is worsened by high poverty levels in certain communities, where sports participation becomes a low priority compared to basic needs. The absence of financial support programmes targeting female athletes means that many potential participants remain excluded simply because they cannot afford the necessities for involvement.

Safety concerns also emerged as a critical barrier. Many females feel unsafe in sports spaces due to poor lighting, overcrowded facilities, absence of supervision, and fear of harassment or abuse. Such environments discourage women from using community sports grounds, especially during late hours. The study therefore concludes that lack of safety is not just a physical barrier, but also a psychological one that greatly affects women's willingness to engage in sports.

Additionally, the study found that limited sports infrastructure and poor scheduling of sports activities negatively affect female participation. Most sports facilities in the selected communities are either inadequate or inaccessible to females due to male dominance, poor maintenance, or lack of gender-responsive planning. Sports programs and events are often scheduled during times that conflict with women's daily responsibilities, making consistent participation difficult.

Overall, the study concludes that low female participation in sports is caused by a combination of cultural, economic, social, and structural factors. Addressing these barriers requires a multi-stakeholder approach involving government bodies, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Sport, schools, community leaders, and families. Interventions must be holistic, focusing on cultural transformation, infrastructure provision, safety enhancement, economic support, and creation of inclusive sports programs. The study ultimately affirms that improving female participation in sports will contribute significantly to women's empowerment, community development, and national sports advancement.

Overall Conclusion

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that female participation in sports activities within the selected communities of Mufulira District—Kantanshi, Kankoyo, and Mukambo—remains significantly low despite the well-known physical, social, and psychological benefits associated with sports involvement. The research revealed that although some progress has been made to encourage participation, numerous barriers persist, preventing women and girls from fully engaging in sports.

The study established that cultural and societal norms remain the most influential obstacles to female participation. Deep-rooted beliefs about gender roles continue to shape community perceptions, often placing domestic responsibilities above recreational or competitive activities for women. This not only limits their available time but also affects their motivation and confidence to participate. Without deliberate efforts to shift cultural attitudes, women will continue to face resistance in sports environments.

The findings also show that economic challenges are a significant barrier. Many women lack adequate financial resources to purchase sports attire, shoes, or equipment, making participation difficult, especially in low-income communities where basic needs take priority. The absence of financial support programs intensifies this barrier. In addition, the study concluded that safety concerns—including harassment, poor lighting, and lack of supervision—further discourage women from participating in sports. These issues make many sports spaces unwelcoming and unsafe for female participants.

The research also found that limited sports infrastructure and rigid scheduling negatively affect participation. Existing sports facilities are often inadequate, overcrowded, or controlled by male groups, making them inaccessible to women. Sports programs rarely consider the daily responsibilities of women, resulting in poor turnout.

Overall, the study concludes that the low levels of female participation in sports in Mufulira District stem from interconnected cultural, social, economic, and structural barriers. Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach involving the Government, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Sport, schools, community leaders, and families.

Importantly, increasing female participation in sports has significant potential benefits. Women who engage in sports experience improved physical health, higher self-esteem, stronger social networks, and enhanced leadership skills. Communities also benefit through increased social cohesion, reduced idle behavior, and talent development. At the national level, greater female involvement supports gender equality and strengthens sports development programs.

In conclusion, improving female participation in sports is not only crucial for the empowerment of women and girls but also essential for community and national development. Implementing the recommended strategies—such as improving facilities, ensuring safety, reducing economic barriers, and challenging cultural norms—can significantly enhance women’s engagement in sports across Mufulira District and beyond.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations to the Government

1. Increase funding for sports infrastructure development, prioritising safe and accessible facilities for women.
2. Strengthen national policies promoting gender equality in sports.
3. Implement national programs that support girls and women in sports, including scholarships and talent development.
4. Provide grants and incentives to communities establishing female-focused sports programs.

5.3.2 Recommendations to the Ministry of Education

1. Integrate gender-sensitive sports programs within the school curriculum.
2. Train and deploy more female sports teachers and coaches.
3. Provide adequate sports equipment specifically for girls’ teams.
4. Organize inter-school tournaments that encourage female sports participation.

5.3.3 Recommendations to the Ministry of Sport

1. Develop community outreach initiatives to promote female participation.
2. Enforce gender equality policies in sports associations and local clubs.

3. Support female sports groups with equipment, training, and coaching workshops.
4. Ensure sports spaces are safe, inclusive, and accessible for women and girls.

5.3.4 Recommendations to Schools

1. Provide flexible sports schedules that consider girls' domestic and academic responsibilities.
2. Encourage the formation of diverse girls' sports teams.
3. Sensitise parents on the importance of girls' participation in sports.
4. Maintain safe and well-equipped school sports grounds.

5.3.5 Recommendations to Community Leaders

1. Conduct sensitisation campaigns to challenge cultural norms limiting female participation in sports.
2. Promote community-based sports clubs for girls and young women.
3. Work with local authorities to ensure safety in community sports spaces.
4. Encourage families to support women and girls' involvement in sports.

5.4 Recommendations for Further Research

Future research should focus on:

1. The impact of gender-based violence on female sports participation.
2. The influence of parental attitudes on girls' involvement in sports.
3. Long-term community benefits of increased female participation in sports.
4. The effectiveness of school and community programs in promoting gender-inclusive sports participation.

5.4 Chapter Five Summary

Chapter five provided a comprehensive discussion of the key findings of the study on factors inhibiting female participation in sports activities in selected communities. The chapter began by summarizing the major challenges identified through data analysis, including cultural restrictions, inadequate sports facilities, lack of supportive policies, limited parental encouragement, school-level barriers, and negative community perceptions towards females participating in sports.

The discussion highlighted how these factors interact to reduce girls' confidence, opportunities, and motivation to engage in sporting activities. Cultural norms—such as beliefs that sports are meant for boys—were found to be the strongest inhibitors across all study areas. The study also noted the absence of female role models in sports, which further discourages young women from taking part in physical activities. In addition, lack of funding, inadequate equipment, and insufficient trained female coaches emerged as significant institutional constraints.

Based on these findings, the chapter provided targeted recommendations to stakeholders including the government, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Sports, schools, and community leaders. These recommendations called for policy reinforcement, community sensitization, investment in sports

infrastructure, school-based sports programs, empowerment of female athletes, and capacity building for teachers and coaches. Emphasis was placed on creating an inclusive environment that supports equal participation for girls and boys.

The chapter concluded by emphasizing that increasing female participation in sports requires a multi-sectoral approach. It stressed that community mindset change, institutional support, and national policy implementation must work together to eliminate gender-based barriers. Ultimately, promoting female participation in sports contributes not only to physical health but also to gender equality, empowerment, and social development in the selected communities and beyond.

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