

A Study of Structural Challenges and Strategic Prospects for the Development of Women's Wrestling in Algeria: A Comparative Perspective with Egypt and Tunisia

1. Introduction

Combat sports have undergone profound changes in recent decades, particularly in terms of gender inclusion. Women's wrestling became an official Olympic sport at the 2004 Athens Games (UWW, 2004), marking a historic shift in societal perceptions of female participation in traditionally male-dominated sports. Petrov (1997) notes that in many traditional societies, wrestling has long been considered a “symbolically male space,” preventing its development among girls.

A study by Louakhch et al. (2020) confirmed that women's sports in Algeria face significant structural and social barriers. Based on a survey conducted with 15 female swimmers at the semi-Olympic pool in Bou Saâda (M'sila), the study found that 65% of the obstacles stemmed from restrictive social norms and traditions, while 88% were due to inadequate infrastructure—namely the lack of private pools, female coaches, and appropriate facilities. These findings underscore the need for privacy-adapted sports environments and awareness campaigns to challenge stereotypical perceptions of women's participation in sports. Kaddour Bey (2016) emphasized that despite the challenges posed by difficult environments and limited resources, success is still possible when training programs are intelligently adapted to the specific needs of the target population. His study with children with intellectual disabilities demonstrated that significant motor improvements can be achieved through structured and responsive interventions, highlighting the potential of well-designed programs even in constrained contexts

By contrast, countries like Egypt and Tunisia have adopted gender-integrated sports development models that enabled them to achieve tangible results. These

two nations recorded a combined total of 68 gold medals in women's wrestling between 1997 and 2023 (UWW Africa, 2023). In comparison, Algeria secured only two medals during the same period, highlighting institutional shortcomings and a lack of strategic planning.

This discrepancy is due to multiple factors, notably the absence of institutional vision, weak training systems, cultural dominance of stereotypes, and exclusion from educational programs. This study seeks to provide a rigorous academic diagnosis of the current state of women's wrestling in Algeria, identify the key barriers to its growth, and propose realistic pathways for establishing an inclusive and equitable sports system.

The study centers around the following questions:

- What is the extent of the organizational and academic performance gap in women's wrestling in Algeria compared to Egypt and Tunisia?
- How do cultural and institutional factors affect the development of this sport?
- What mechanisms can be used to build an integrated system based on successful regional models?

2. Definition of Terms

- Women's Wrestling:** An Olympic combat sport practiced by women, governed by UWW rules. In this study, it refers to organized athletic practices by girls in licensed Algerian clubs, both for training and official competition.

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- **Sports Training:** Defined by Weineck (1993) as a systematic process aimed at developing athletes' physical, technical, and tactical abilities through structured programs. In this study, it refers to training programs provided to female wrestlers in Oran and Constantine.
- **Sports Policy:** Refers to the legal and institutional framework that governs the goals and management of sports (UNESCO, 2015). Operationally, it encompasses legislation and official decisions issued by the Algerian Ministry of Youth and Sports (2010–2023) that influence the development of women's sports.

3. Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

This study draws from the following theoretical frameworks:

- **Sports Empowerment Theory** (Lafferty & Wakefield, 2017): Argues that sports serve not only for entertainment or competition but also as a powerful tool for freeing women from gender norms and offering spaces for physical and social expression.
- **Hierarchical Development Model** (Ben Yahia, 2019): Links athletic excellence to a triad: a broad grassroots base, specialized infrastructure, and clear government support.

UWW Africa (2023) reports that 80% of continental achievements in women's wrestling are associated with the presence of female coaches and dedicated training centers. Similarly, Saidani (2021) found that 70% of Egyptian clubs that incorporated wrestling into their educational programs achieved positive competitive results.

Petrov (1997) adds that in societies where combat sports are seen as male domains, girls are systematically excluded, which hinders the emergence of female sports role models.

4. Research Methodology and Tools

- **Approach Used:** Descriptive analytical method, allowing for the collection and contextual analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.
- **Research Tools:**
 - A 30-item closed-ended questionnaire administered to female wrestlers.
 - Semi-structured interviews with 15 coaches and administrators.
 - Document analysis of African Wrestling Federation reports (1997–2023).
- **Sample:**
 - Active female wrestlers: 25 (stratified random sampling)
 - Coaches and trainers: 15 (purposive sampling)
 - Administrators: 5 (quota sampling)
- **Validity and Reliability:**
 - Face validity assessed by 7 experts, with a 92% agreement rate.
 - Reliability measured using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.87$).
 - Objectivity ensured by randomizing questionnaire items.

5. Results and Table Analysis

Table 1: Infrastructure Comparison between Countries (1997–2023)

Indicator	Algeria	Egypt	Tunisia
Specialized Training Centers	2	15	12
Certified Female Coaches	5	45	38
Annual National Competitions	4	12	10

Analysis of Table 1: The data reveal that Algeria suffers from a severe lack of infrastructure compared to Tunisia and Egypt. With only two training centers and five certified female coaches, Algeria lacks the capacity to support competitive development. This infrastructural gap explains its underwhelming continental performance.

Table 2: Main Challenges in Algeria (% of Responses)

Challenge	Percentage
Lack of Financial Support	88%
Gender Stereotypes	65%
Poor Media Coverage	92%
Lack of Female Coaches	78%

Analysis of Table 2: The primary challenges identified include poor media coverage (92%) and lack of financial support (88%), which hinder infrastructure and training quality. Additionally, 65% of respondents noted that wrestling’s reputation as a “violent” sport discourages community support for female participation.

6. Discussion of Results

1. Organizational Gaps: The 88% reporting a lack of financial support correlates with Algeria's limited facilities. Ben Yahia (2019) notes that Tunisia allocates 15% of its sports budget to women's programs.
2. Cultural Perceptions: Gender stereotypes hinder 65% of female participation, consistent with Petrov's (1997) argument about the masculinization of combat sports.
3. Success of Tunisian and Egyptian Models: Integrating wrestling into school curricula created a wider practice base. UWW Africa (2023) attributes 40% of Tunisia's medals to educational inclusion.

7. Conclusions

- Algeria's poor infrastructure reflects the absence of a coherent institutional vision for developing women's wrestling.
- Cultural stereotypes continue to be a major barrier to female participation.
- The Egyptian and Tunisian development models offer adaptable blueprints.
- There is an urgent need to create a national database to monitor the evolution of women's sports.

8. Recommendations

Structural:

- Establish five regional women's wrestling centers by 2030.
- Integrate wrestling into high school physical education programs.

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Cultural:

- Launch national media campaigns to challenge gender stereotypes.
- Provide incentives to clubs that promote female participation.

Academic:

- Develop training programs for female coaches in partnership with physical education institutes.
- Create a national observatory to track progress in women's wrestling.

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