

ABSTRACT

Title: Oppression versus Empowerment: A Philosophical Analysis of Female Participation in Sport

Objectives: Utilising feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, this thesis aims to define and critically analyse what the concepts of oppression and empowerment mean in relation to women. In determining that women's oppression is systemic, internalised and exploitative, the findings are applied to the female sport category. This discussion primarily focuses on whether sport has the propensity to perpetuate the oppression of women through its rules and conventions, categorisations, financially and emotionally exploitative practices, and through novel methods such as health data manipulation. Drawing upon current texts in the field of sports studies, the theme that sport can be a source of empowerment for women is discussed.

Methodology: This thesis employed a desk research approach, gathering, interpreting and critically assessing information from second-hand data, including, but not limited to, philosophical texts, journal articles, newspaper sources and social media. This thesis draws upon ideas from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* to provide a more thorough philosophical analysis of the terms 'oppression' and 'empowerment'. This thesis also draws upon standpoint theory, the origins of which lie in the work of feminist philosophers such as Sandra Harding and Nancy Hartsock. The theory assumes that knowledge is 'always socially situated', and those who are socially located as 'insiders' have an epistemological advantage when producing such knowledge.

Results: It is concluded that sport has the potential to be a vital source of bodily empowerment for women, but also a site where oppression can manifest. In addition to several specific policy recommendations, three broad policy recommendations to help sports governing bodies tackle women's oppression and enable women's empowerment are presented. It is proposed that sports governing bodies ought to take the majority of the responsibility in making such changes. Effective changes can be brought about through a review of rules and codes, responding with protective measures, the eventual reformation of education, and the introduction of non-traditional sports.

Keywords: Oppression, Empowerment, Beauvoir, Ethics, Sport, Philosophy