

# Innovations

## Challenges and Perspectives of Women Football Premier League Clubs of Ethiopia

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges and perspectives of women football premier league clubs of Ethiopia. Cross-sectional study design was used. Total populations of the study was 478 players, 34 Coaches, 20 Club managers, 41 Referees and 2 Federation managers, from the total population, 373 samples was taken by the researcher as the subjects. Questionnaire, Interview, Training session observation with check list and Document analysis was used as data collection instruments for data collection. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviation, percentage and frequency was used to assess whether low socio-economic states and cultural factors affect female football premier league clubs in Ethiopia and to identify challenges and perspectives of Women premier league football clubs. The result shows that players have strong family support, and substantial barriers related to funding, facilities, coaching development, and organizational structures present, coaching strategies focusing on individual learning styles, pass variation, and communication are highly effective. Skill recall and error correction strategies are perceived as moderately effective, but there is a significant need for improvement in the strategies related to practice encouragement and basic skill development. The resource constraints facing female football clubs, the lack of basic infrastructure (fields, equipment, and changing facilities), along with financial and organizational challenges, seriously hinders the development and growth of the sport. The findings reveal significant challenges hindering the effectiveness of coaching in women's football clubs across multiple areas; financial planning, societal attitudes, administrative support, coaching expertise, facilities, player attitudes, and skilled personnel the mean scores consistently indicate substantial shortcomings and strongly suggest that improving coaching effectiveness requires a comprehensive strategy addressing both systemic issues (funding, facilities, administrative support) and individual/team-level factors (player attitudes, coach training).*

**Keywords:** *football, challenges, perspectives, premier, and league*

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## Introduction

Football, the world's most popular sport, is experiencing a surge in female participation, marking a period of significant transformation (Petty, K., & Pope, S., 2019). While its global popularity continues to grow, women's involvement has historically been limited by societal norms that traditionally view sport as male-dominated and male-centered. This male dominance has created significant obstacles for women seeking to enter, thrive, and succeed in the sport (Brady, 2002). The United States Women's National Team (WNT)'s victory in the 1999 Women's World Cup (WWC) marked a pivotal moment, setting a record for attendance at a women's sporting event (Henderson, 2022). Mia Hamm and Michelle Akers' inclusion in the FIFA 100 (Wadesango, 2010) further symbolized the growing recognition of women's contributions (Narcotta-Welp, 2022). Over the past three decades, the establishment of the WWC (1990) and professional women's teams has significantly increased women's involvement in football. Nevertheless, exclusion persists in many parts of the world, necessitating initiatives like the Mathura Youth Sports Association (MYSA) to create opportunities for young women (Williams, 2003). The landscape of women's football remains fraught with challenges that hinder its growth and development on a global scale. According to the FIFA Women's Football Survey (2014), only 15% of registered football players worldwide are female, and a mere 7% of registered coaches are women. This stark underrepresentation highlights the systemic barriers that exist within the sport, which limit opportunities for women and girls (Culvin, 2023).

The Football Association's vision for the development of women's football, articulated in their Women and Girls Football Strategy (2008), emphasizes the need for growth and excellence. However, it also points out significant issues within the elite structures of the game, particularly within the FA Women's Premier League (FA WPL) (Sequerria, 2014). The FA WPL has been criticized for its lack of quality and competitiveness, which poses a challenge in elevating the profile of women's football to a mainstream audience (Flanagan, 2013). To address these shortcomings, the strategy proposed the establishment of a new summer league aimed at enhancing the quality of women's football. Research conducted by Gorreti Wangari, Prof. Elishiba Kimani, and Dr. Geoffrey Wango (2017) in Kenya identified a range of challenges faced by women football players in premier league clubs (Wangari, 2017). Funding emerged as the primary obstacle, compounded by societal negative attitudes towards women's football that result in poor participation rates. Additional barriers include biological factors such as menstruation and pregnancy, poor governance within football organizations, and restrictive gender roles that limit women's involvement in sports (Srinivasa Gopalan, S., Liu, S., Mann, C., & Buckler, E. J., 2024).

Similarly, Legesse (2022) explored assessment of nutritional factors affecting player's performance of Woliso town football club in Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia (LEGESSE, A. D. , 2022). The study revealed that prospects for women football players significantly impact their performance and quality of play. Key hindrances included

inadequate communication among stakeholders, lack of familial support, minimal media attention, and low motivation among players to acquire new skills. To cultivate quality female players who can compete at international levels, it is essential to evaluate and enhance training programs within female football clubs. However, countries like Ethiopia face numerous challenges in developing their leagues and fostering an environment conducive to growth (Tilahun., 2018).

Despite various studies addressing the challenges faced by women's football clubs across different contexts, gaps remain in understanding how these barriers interact and influence one another. Common themes identified in existing research include funding shortages, societal attitudes towards women in sports, low player motivation, biological constraints, and ineffective communication among stakeholders. Addressing these interconnected issues is crucial for creating a supportive framework that allows women's football to flourish globally.

## **Methods and materials**

### **Study Design and Area**

Cross-sectional study design was used to assess the challenges and perspectives of female football premier league clubs in Ethiopia.

### **Sampling Technique and Sample Size**

In this study simple random sampling & purposive sampling techniques was applied. Total populations of the study was 478 players, 34 coaches, 20 club managers, 41 referees and 2 federation managers, from the total population, 373 samples were taken by the researcher. Simple random sampling: for female premier league football players and Purposive sampling technique: for coaches, club managers, federation worker, referees and audiences. If the population is small then the sample size can be reduced slightly. This is because a given sample size provides proportionately more information for a small population than for a large population. Where  $n$  is the sample size and  $N$  is the population size.

$$n_o = \frac{n}{1 + \frac{n}{N}} = \frac{384}{1 + \frac{384}{478}} = 213$$

### **Instrument**

Questionnaire, Interview, Training session observation with check list and Document analysis was used as data collection instruments for data collection.

### **Methods and procedure of Data-collection**

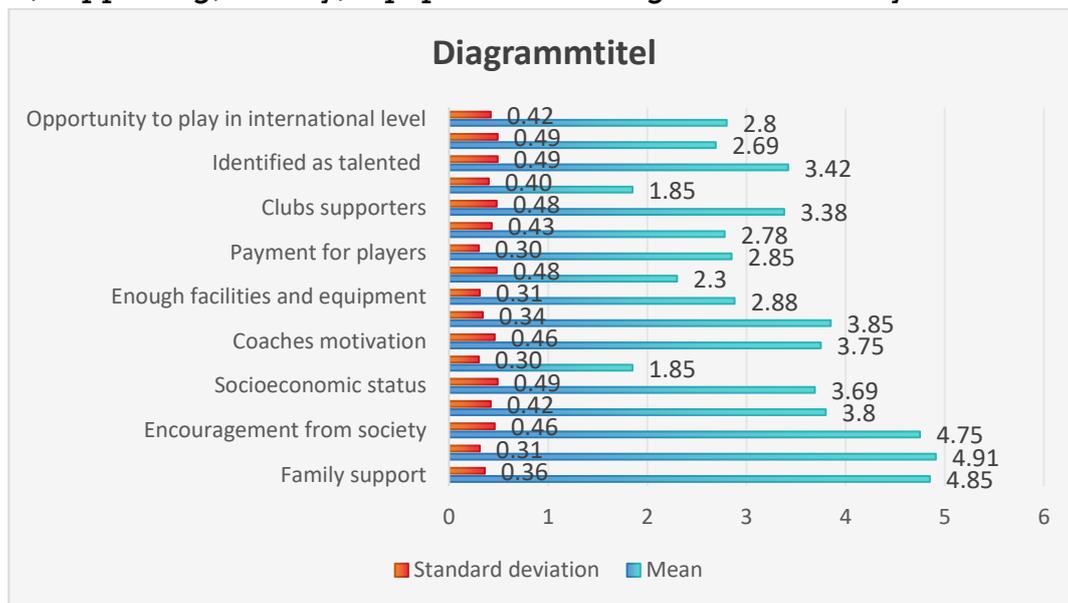
Questionnaire was distributed to the selected students after acquiring their consent by the researcher, and all was duly filled and returned. And the researcher was seen the previous documents on this issue to analyze the previous findings, the training session observation by using observation check list; semi-structured questioners will be organized to obtain data from the respondents.

### Method of Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviation, percentage and frequency was used to analyze weather basic facilities and essential equipment’s fulfilled or not and to identify if there was lack of financial, well organized planning and grass roots level. Correlation was also used to test main challenges and perspectives that face women football clubs to be successful. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

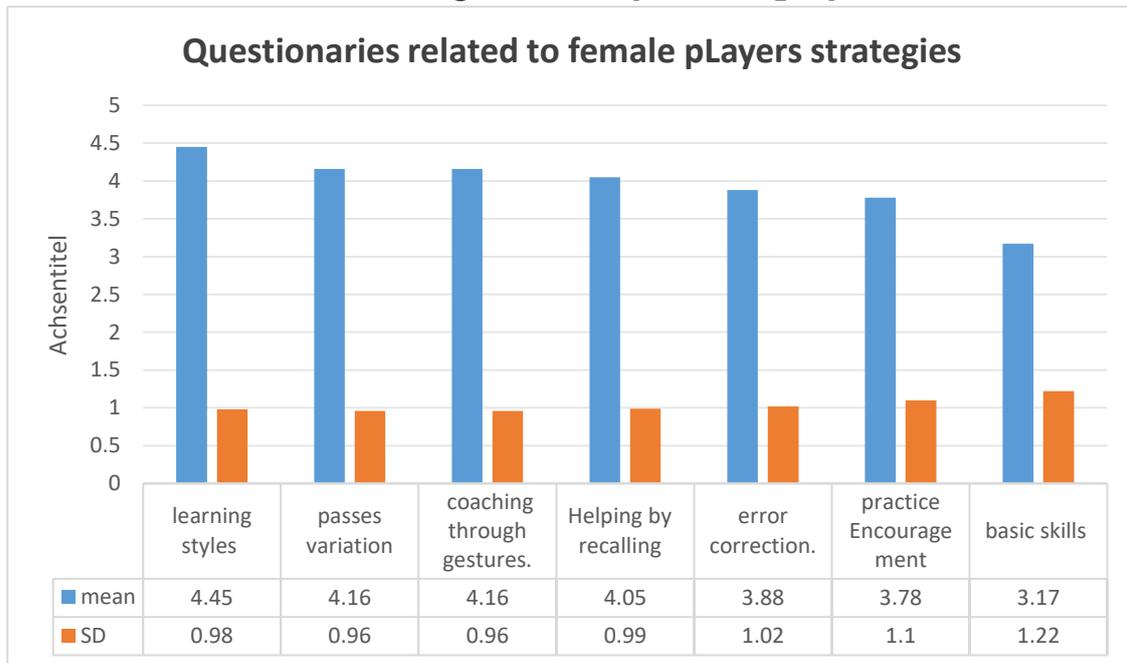
### Results

Figure 1; Supporting, Facility, Equipment and Budget Related Analysis



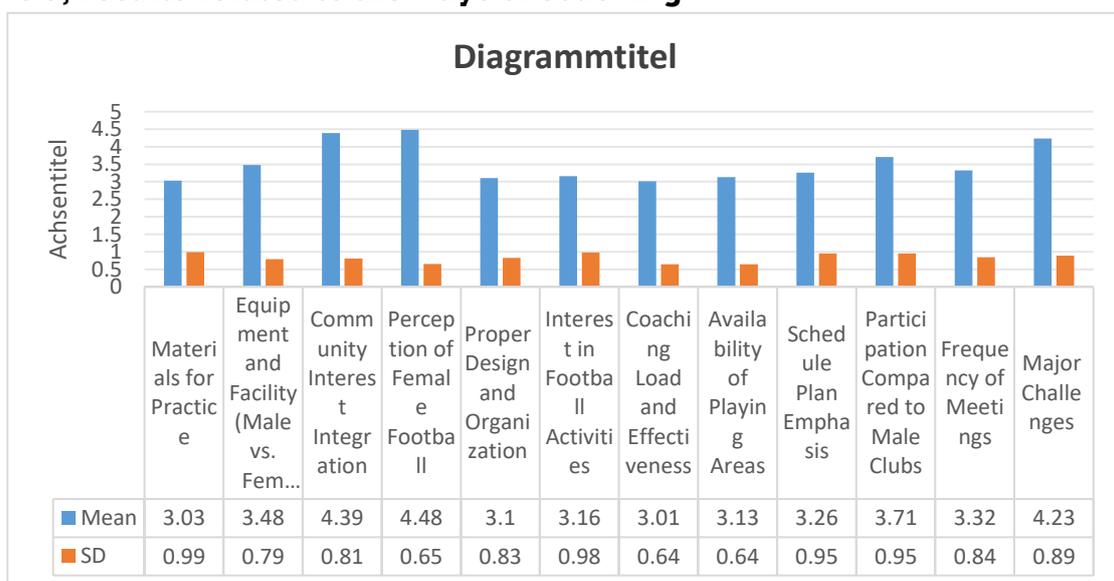
From the above figures, it can be seen that family support 4.85 (SD ± 0.36), encouragement from society 4.91 (SD ± 0.46), qualified coaches 3.80 (SD ± 0.42), socioeconomic status 3.69 (SD ± 0.49), sufficient football field 3.85 (SD ± 0.31), enough facilities and equipment 2.88 (SD ± 0.31), clubs supporters 4.38 (SD ± 0.49), and zone sport commission 4.85 (SD ± 0.36), coaching motivation 4.91 (SD ± 0.31) and talent identification/elite players 3.42 (SD ± 0.49), theoretical session 1.85 (SD ± 0.30), appropriate payment 2.30 (SD ± 0.48), payment for players 2.85 (SD ± 0.30), and payment difference 2.78 (SD ± 0.43). After mentioned variables sub scales of the study indicates that players have strong family support, and substantial barriers related to funding, facilities, coaching development, and organizational structures present. Success hinges not only on individual talent and family support but also on a comprehensive approach that addresses socioeconomic inequalities, improves infrastructure, enhances coaching expertise, and creates clearer pathways for advancement in the sport.

**Figure 2; results related to strategies used by female players**



From the above figures, it can be seen that the mean of 4.95 (SD ± 0.43) of individuals learning styles, 4.16 (SD ± 1.02) of pass variation , 4.16 (SD ± 0.96) communication , 4.05 (SD ± 0.99) of skill recall , 3.88 (SD ± 0.43) of error correction , 3.78 (SD ± 1.1) of practice encouragement and 3.17 (SD ± 1.22) of basic skill development. The analysis using results shows that coaching strategies focusing on individual learning styles, pass variation, and communication are highly effective. Skill recall and error correction strategies are perceived as moderately effective, but there is a significant need for improvement in the strategies related to practice encouragement and basic skill development.

**Figure 3; results related to the ways of coaching**



The above figure results shows as adequate materials for practice with mean of 3.03 (SD  $\pm$  0.99), equipment and facility comparison (male vs. female) 3.48 (SD  $\pm$  0.79) community interest integration, 4.39 (SD  $\pm$  0.81) perception of female football, 3.48 (SD  $\pm$  0.65), proper design and organization of female football, 3.10 (SD  $\pm$  0.83), interest in football activities 3.16 (SD  $\pm$  0.98), coaching load and effectiveness, 3.01 (SD  $\pm$  0.64), availability of playing areas, 3.13 (SD  $\pm$  0.64) schedule plan emphasis 3.26 (SD  $\pm$  0.95) participation compared to male clubs, 3.71 (SD  $\pm$  0.95), frequency of meetings 3.32 (SD  $\pm$  0.84), and major challenges to effective coaching, 4.23 (SD  $\pm$  0.89). So, Analysis indicates a mixed picture for coaches of female football teams; community support and the overall perception of female football are positive. But, significant challenges remain in terms of resources, organizational structure, and player interest. Coaches face considerable obstacles in providing quality training due to inadequate facilities, materials, and overwhelming workloads.

### **Discussion**

The current study indicates that payers have strong family support and substantial barriers; funding, facilities, coaching development, and organizational structures. Success hinges not only on individual talent and family support but also on a comprehensive approach that addresses socioeconomic inequalities, improves infrastructure, enhances coaching expertise, and creates clearer pathways for advancement in the sport. In line with the results scholar reveals that while individual talent and family support are essential components of athletic success, they must be complemented by systemic changes within the sporting environment. Coaches play a pivotal role in addressing these challenges by advocating for better funding, improved facilities, enhanced coaching education, and equitable organizational structures. By adopting a comprehensive approach that considers these various factors, the sports community can create a more supportive and effective environment for athletes to thrive (Aguilar, 2013).

The analysis this study shows that coaching strategies focusing on individual learning styles, pass variation, and communication are highly effective. Skill recall and error correction strategies are perceived as moderately effective, but there is a significant need for improvement in the strategies related to practice encouragement and basic skill development. While techniques addressing individual learning styles, pass variation, and communication are highly successful, significant improvements are needed in player encouragement and foundational skill development. This highlights the importance of a balanced coaching approach that considers all aspects of player development. Coaches should not only focus on advanced techniques but also reinforce basic skills and ensure players are motivated and engaged throughout their training (Lauder, 2013).

Analysis indicates a mixed picture for coaches of female football teams. While community support and the overall perception of female football are positive, significant challenges remain in terms of resources, organizational structure, and

player interest. Coaches face considerable obstacles in providing quality training due to inadequate facilities, materials, and overwhelming workloads. According to Weiss and Ferrer-Caja (2002), a positive team culture that fosters motivation and enjoyment is essential for sustaining player interest. Coaches must navigate these dynamics while also addressing individual player needs and motivations, which can be particularly challenging in resource-constrained environments. By focusing on these areas, stakeholders can maximize the potential of female athletes in football (Collison, 2024).

The findings reveal significant challenges hindering the effectiveness of coaching in women's football clubs. Across multiple areas; financial planning, societal attitudes, administrative support, coaching expertise, facilities, player attitudes, and skilled personnel indicate substantial shortcomings and strongly suggest that improving coaching effectiveness requires a comprehensive strategy addressing both systemic issues (funding, facilities, administrative support) and individual/team-level factors (player attitudes, coach training). In contrast to the results the presence of skilled personnel beyond coaches such as sports scientists, psychologists, and nutritionists can enhance the overall effectiveness of coaching programs. The challenges identified in the findings underscore the necessity for a comprehensive strategy that addresses both systemic issues such as funding, facilities, and administrative support and individual/team-level factors like player attitudes and coach training (Kristiansen, 2011). By adopting a holistic approach that incorporates insights from scholarly research, stakeholders can work towards creating a more supportive environment for coaching in women's football clubs, ultimately leading to enhanced performance and growth within the sport (Milimo, 2024).

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of the data reveals significant insights into the challenges and perspectives faced by female football clubs in Ethiopia, particularly in relation to low socioeconomic status and cultural factors.

1) **Socioeconomic Status and Cultural Factors;** The findings indicate that financial constraints are a major barrier for players and clubs alike. The lack of sufficient funding severely limits access to quality facilities, equipment, and coaching resources, which are essential for player development and competitive performance. The substantial barriers highlighted such as inadequate facilities, low payment for players, and insufficient organizational support underscore the impact of economic disparities on the growth of women's football in Ethiopia. Cultural factors also significantly affect participation and support for female football. The strong family support and encouragement from society indicate that positive cultural attitudes can foster participation; however, these are often overshadowed by traditional gender roles that limit opportunities for women in sports. The perception of female football reflects a

mixed societal view, where community interest integration shows potential for growth but also highlights existing stereotypes that need to be addressed.

**2) Challenges Faced by Women Premier League Football Clubs;** The analysis reveals several critical challenges that female football clubs encounter. Notably, the discrepancy in resources compared to male clubs indicates a persistent inequality in support and infrastructure, which hampers the development of women's football. Additionally, the coaching landscape reflects inadequacies with mean scores indicating challenges in coaching load and the availability of adequate materials for practice. These challenges contribute to the overall struggle for quality training and player development. The coaching strategies employed also highlight areas needing improvement. While individual learning styles and communication strategies are perceived as effective, there is a clear need for enhanced focus on basic skill development and practice encouragement. This suggests that while coaches are attempting to adapt their methods to better suit female players, there remains a significant gap in foundational training that could elevate the overall quality of play.

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