



Article

Traditional Male Role Norms and Sexual Prejudice in Sport Organizations: A Focus on Italian Sport Directors and Coaches

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Abstract: Despite the common belief that sport is an excellent instrument to promote social inclusion, distal minority stressors, such as homophobic slurs and insulting or degrading comments, are frequently reported in sport contexts. The aim of this contribution was to expand previous knowledge on negative attitudes toward sexual minorities (gay and lesbian people) in sport-related contexts, by examining how staff employed in organizational sport contexts scored on three different dimensions of sexual prejudice toward sexual minority athletes: open rejection (i.e., blatant prejudice), denial of visibility (i.e., negative attitudes toward the coming out), and gendering performance (i.e., gender stereotypes about sport performance and skills). Furthermore, we examined the relationship between traditional norms of masculinity and dimensions of sexual prejudice. The sample consisted of 178 Italian sport directors and coaches who were asked to complete an online survey (70 women and 108 men, mostly aged from 38 to 65 years old). A repeated-measures ANOVA revealed that participants scored higher on denial of visibility, with respect to open rejection and gendering performance, independently of gender and sport role. The structural equation model showed that endorsing traditional male role norms was significantly associated with open rejection and gendering performance, whereas no significant association was found with denial of visibility. The findings provide further evidence that sexual prejudice is prevalent in sport organizations, supporting the importance of raising awareness among sports personnel about prejudiced beliefs that may lead minority people to experience severe stress-inducing situations.

Keywords: sport; sexual prejudice; traditional male roles

1. Introduction

Sport represents a significant aspect of many societies in the world, providing people with substantial physical, mental, and social health benefits ([World Health Organization 2010](#)), and generating positive outcomes for the wider community ([Schulenkorf and Edwards 2012](#)). Many developmental issues may be influenced by participation in sport, including identity formation and learning of cognitive affective, behavioral, and social skills ([Danish et al. 2004](#)), along with increased self-esteem ([Liu et al. 2015](#); [Zamani Sani et al. 2016](#)).

It is widely understood that sport can serve as a driver of social inclusion for diverse and marginalized groups ([Dashper and Fletcher 2013](#); [Kidd 2008](#); [Schulenkorf and Edwards 2012](#)). However, numerous studies have defined sport as a sex-segregated and heteronormative context ([Kavoura and Kokkonen 2020](#)). Otherwise stated, sport settings have been described as based on

rigid social constructions of masculinity and femininity, and organized around a heterosexuality principle (Kolnes 1995). An important concept in the literature of sport and heteronormativity is hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), which is the most culturally exalted form of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity in Western culture mostly reflects an authoritative, hyper-masculine, and heterosexual image of men. This hegemonic gender ideology puts gender and sexual diversity in a marginalized position, and people belonging to sexual minorities at higher risk of being stigmatized (Davis-Delano 2014; O'Brien et al. 2013; Pronger 2012), in order to reinforce and maintain the socially accepted gender order (Elling and Knoppers 2005). The aim of the current study was to investigate sexual prejudice among professionals in sport organizations, specifically focusing on different dimensions of prejudice toward sexual minority athletes (i.e., open rejection, denial of visibility, and gendering performance), and examining how they relate to the endorsement of traditional norms of masculinity.

1.1. Traditional Gender Role Expectations in Sport Contexts

Sexual minorities are a group whose sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or expression differ from heteronormative ones (Mizzi and Walton 2014). Usually, sexual minorities include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and genderqueer individuals. Evidence suggests that individuals who do not conform to traditional gender roles and expectations often experience prejudice and discrimination episodes in social situations, including sport (Lee and Cunningham 2016). Based on Meyer's Minority Stress theory (Meyer 2003), prejudice events and discrimination experiences represent particularly stressful situations for sexual minority people, emphasizing their marginalized position and the feelings that they are not valued and that their identities are wrong or immoral (Herek and Capitanio 1996; Sartore and Cunningham 2009a).

Several authors have described sport as a heterosexist context, organized around heteronormative and hegemonic masculinity's principles (Sartore-Baldwin 2013; Veri 1999). Heteronormativity refers to a belief, culturally shaped, according to which heterosexuality is the norm. It assumes that men are naturally attracted to women, both sexually and romantically, and women are attracted to men. Same-sex attractions are not recognized, neither by the general public nor by its social institutions (Macgillivray 2000). Heteronormativity is strongly rooted in the belief that males and females have different characteristics and roles that, in turn, elicit rigid gender-based expectations. Griffin (1998) identified five specific functions that sport serves and that help to reinforce and maintain the normality of heterosexuality. It defines and strengthens conceptions of traditional masculine principles, provides a suitable and secure context for male bonding and intimacy, strengthens male dominance and female subordination, establishes status among other males, and strengthens heterosexuality. With this respect, Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1990) claims that sport represents a cultural idealization of masculinity and heterosexuality, thus stigmatizing other sexual behaviors (Kavoura and Kokkonen 2020; Lawley 2018). Through sport, the body is also disciplined to promote and defend heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity, reinforcing the illusion that masculinity is a natural state that characterizes men, rather than something that is continually negotiated and supported (Davison and Frank 2007; Kavoura and Kokkonen 2020).

1.2. Sexual Prejudice in Sport

Sport is organized such that male domination and power are reinforced and maintained by dictating behaviors appropriate to the gender of the person (Kolnes 1995). Prior studies have suggested that holding traditional gender role beliefs is associated with a higher tendency to develop negative attitudes toward those who do not conform to traditional gendered expectations and then, to express sexual prejudice (Cunningham and Melton 2012, 2013; Lee and Cunningham 2016). As such, the endorsement of traditional gender role attitudes might undergird sexual prejudice. Consistently, Cunningham and Melton (2012) found a positive association between sexism and prejudice toward sexual minority coaches. Sexual prejudice refers to the collective negative attitudes and stereotypes directed towards

individuals who identify themselves as or are presumed to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transsexual (LGBT) (Herek 2000), since their attitude is experienced as unnatural (Herek and Capitanio 1996) and immoral (Sartore and Cunningham 2009a). Sexual prejudice can be acted through explicit negative actions targeting sexual minorities, negative expectations about the results associated with being a sexual minority, and beliefs that negative evaluations of society are justified and represent one's self-image. Sexual prejudices are pervasive in sport culture and contexts, involving athletes as well as coaches and sports administrators (Krane 2018). Sexual prejudice has a negative influence on LGBT people and, in addition, also prevents LGBT people from sports teams and organizations to reach their full potential. Griffin (1992) identified six manifestations of sexual prejudice in sport: silence, denial, excuses, promotion of a heterosexual image, attack, and gender preferences. These dimensions have been grouped into (1) attacks toward sexual minority people in sports, (2) silence/denial, and (3) gender stereotypes. Attacks refer to actions such as avoidance and rejection of sexual minority athletes, or those who are perceived as such, or the perpetration of discrimination or violence, through both verbal and non-verbal behavior. The dimension of silence/denial represents a tendency to deny the presence of sexual minorities and to hold biased attitudes towards sexual minority people. The dimension of gender stereotypes corresponds to the inclination to attribute natural and innate abilities and sport performance based on gender and sexual orientation stereotypes. Not all individuals express a similar degree of sexual prejudice. Prior studies suggest that gender is a crucial factor, with men expressing more prejudice toward sexual minorities than women do (Lee and Cunningham 2016; Sartore and Cunningham 2009a). This would be mainly due to a strictly masculine society, in which men might feel compelled to conform to anti-LGBT attitudes and to hold negative attitudes toward sexual minorities in order to solidify their status as heterosexual (Herek and Garnets 2007).

In a society where gender roles are well defined, male athletes who do not reflect the categories of strength, courage, aggressiveness, competitiveness, and heterosexuality could be labeled with derogatory names such as faggot, queer, or expressions such as "play like a girl" (Symons and Klugman 2014). Similarly, women who are involved in sports that are considered masculine, such as sports involving power, strength, and combat, are more susceptible to the lesbian stigma (Brackenridge et al. 2008; Griffin 2014). They must not behave as excessively feminine to prevent the risk of being sexualized and trivialized; similarly, they must not act too masculine to avoid being demonized (Sartore and Cunningham 2009b). Pressures on male and female athletes to conform to heteronormative social roles lead to a variety of negative consequences. Symons et al. (2017) outlined a wide set of negative emotions related to experiences of sexism and homophobia in sport contexts, including distress, feeling uncomfortable and withdrawn, shame, and negative affects such as depression. Other scholars have highlighted how the perception of a heteronormative culture shaping sport organizations leads sexual minorities to conceal their own sexual orientation (Scandurra et al. 2019), with deep implications in terms of positive adjustment and identity development.

1.3. *The Present Study*

To date, there is limited research exploring how sexual discrimination is embedded at the organizational level of sport-related contexts, especially when considering the Italian context. Overall, studies from the U.S. and U.K. have evidenced a decrease in cultural homophobia in sport settings during the last two decades (Adams et al. 2010; Anderson et al. 2016; Bush et al. 2012). This evidence is also supported by the increased number of sexual minority athletes disclosing their sexual orientation and the increasing focus that sport organizations are devoting to equality and inclusion policies for sexual minorities. However, as outlined by Symons et al. (2017), there are comprehensive national studies (e.g., Kosciw et al. 2018) that suggest that homophobia still surrounds sexual minority people in their educational and sport environments. With respect to the Italian context, where the current study was conducted, previous studies have highlighted that sexual minorities continue to face societal heterosexism and homophobic climates (Amodeo et al. 2020; Bacchini et al. 2020; Baiocco et al. 2018). Capranica and Aversa (2002) noticed a solid male hegemony in sport-related professions in Italy when

analyzing the 2000 Summer Olympic Games. Similarly, in a more recent qualitative research study based on focus groups, Scandurra et al. (2019) found that men's dominance and the stigmatization of gay men are still widespread in the Italian soccer context. Analyzing data from a sample of Italian male athletes, Baiocco et al. (2018) found that gay men dropped out of sports more frequently than heterosexual men, because of a fear of being bullied and prominent familial pressure to adhere to masculine-type sports.

Diversity competence for sport management professionals is of relevant concern, because of a variety of sociodemographic factors that have made sport organizations increasingly diverse during the last two decades (Lee and Cunningham 2019). In this context, the investigation of commitment to diversity and attitudes toward sexual minorities held by people who work in organizational contexts is crucial (Cunningham 2011). To date, however, the literature on this topic remains underdeveloped (Cunningham 2011). Furthermore, no studies, to our knowledge, have focused on sexual prejudice held by professionals in Italian sport settings. This study sought to fill this gap in the literature, by investigating sexual prejudice among Italian sport directors and coaches. We used a specific scale for sport-related contexts developed by Baiocco et al. (2020) that focuses on three different dimensions of sexual prejudice: open rejection (OR), denial of visibility (DV), and gendering performance (GP). The OR dimension assesses blatant and open prejudice directed toward lesbian and gay people in sports contexts; the DV dimension refers to the belief that sexual orientation is a private issue that should not be discussed. This is consistent with a "don't tell, don't ask" attitude, which attempts to nullify and deny lesbian and gay athletes' visibility and existence (Anderson 2014) and which has been documented as being deeply rooted in Italian culture (Lingiardi et al. 2005, 2016). The GP dimension assesses the belief that gay men are less competitive than heterosexual men or that lesbian women are less suitable for sports that are generally considered as more appropriate for girls. Thus, we examined how participants scored on dimensions of sexual prejudice, also investigating the potential effect of gender and role in the sport context. Finally, we investigated how the endorsement of traditional male role beliefs was associated with sexual prejudice dimensions, controlling for gender and sport role. Based on prior evidence, we hypothesized that scores of DV were higher than the other two dimensions of sexual prejudice and that traditional male role norms were associated with all dimensions of sexual prejudice.

2. Materials and Method

2.1. Participants and Procedure

Participants who were involved in the study were 178 Italian professional sport directors ($n = 126$) and coaches ($n = 52$) affiliated with UISP—Italian Association of Sport For all. The study was approved by the Steering Committee of the Association (date: 25 January 2019), and conformed to the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki on Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects. Participants were invited to complete an online survey during winter 2018/2019 by the steering body of the association (the study started at the end of December 2018 and ended in March 2019). By clicking on a link that was sent by email, participants accessed the first page of the survey containing the informed consent of the study, including the risks and benefits associated or derived from research participation. Before starting the survey, participants had to give their consent by clicking on the button "I give consent to participate". Privacy was guaranteed in accordance with Italian laws 196/2003 and 101/2018. Participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any time without any adverse consequence.

Seventy women (39.3%) and 108 men (60.7%) participated in the study. A major part of the sample was aged from 38 to 50 (36.8%) and from 51 to 65 (43.4%) years old. Participants held a professional membership that included several sport disciplines. The majority of the sample was employed in the gymnastics field (35%); the other sport disciplines included soccer, basketball, swimming, volleyball, boxing, snorkeling, tennis, skating, mountain sport, riding, and dance (all percentages < 5%).

Furthermore, 71% of participants reported to practice sport. Of these, 51% indicated that they practice sport at least 2–3 times in a week.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Sexual Prejudice in Sport

Participants were asked to complete the Sexual Prejudice in Sport Scale (SPSS), developed by [Baiocco et al. \(2020\)](#), that measures the negative attitudes and prejudice toward LG people in sports-related contexts, in terms of open rejection (OR), denial of visibility (DV), and gendering performance (GP). The OR subscale consisted of seven items reflecting blatant and open prejudice expressed directly toward LG people in sports-related contexts (sample items were “LG athletes should be treated negatively because of their sexual orientation” and “LG athletes should be treated as second-class people”; Cronbach’s alpha for the current study’s sample was 0.95); the DV subscale included five items assessing the belief that sexual orientation is a private matter that should not be discussed (sample items were “Sexual orientation of LG athletes is a private matter that should not be discussed” and “I’d feel uncomfortable if LG athletes talked about their sexual orientation openly”; Cronbach’s alpha for the current study’s sample was 0.60); the GP subscale was composed of seven items measuring the belief that gay men are less competitive than heterosexual men or that lesbian women are less suitable for those sports more suited to girls (sample items were “Lesbian women are more skilled in sports than heterosexual women” and “Gay men are less competitive than heterosexual men”; Cronbach’s alpha for the current study’s sample was 0.88). Each item was rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating negative attitudes.

2.2.2. Male Role Norms

We used eight items from the Male Role Norms Scale (MRNS; [Thompson and Pleck 1986](#)) to assess the endorsement of traditional male role norms. The MRNS is widely used ([Lease et al. 2010](#)), showing adequate reliability and validity ([Thompson and Pleck 1986](#); [Whitley 2001](#)). Items were translated from English into Italian by two native Italian speakers, and then, translated from Italian into English by an American native English speaker to confirm that the translation was accurate. Sample items were “If I heard about a man who was a hairdresser and a gourmet cook, I might wonder how masculine he was” and “When a man is feeling a little pain he should try not to let it show very much”. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which each item adequately described them. Items were rated using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (never applies) to 7 (always applies), with high scores reflecting high endorsement of traditional male role norms. Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was 0.91.

2.3. Statistical Analyses

As a preliminary step, we estimated the bivariate correlations among the study’s variables for the entire sample, for women only, and for men only. Furthermore, we examined how participants scored on dimensions of sexual prejudice by conducting a repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) in SPSS® 21.0 (IBM Corporation, Armonk NY, USA) for Windows®. Participants’ gender and role in the sport context were added in the analysis as between-subject factors. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$. The associations between male role norms and dimensions of sexual prejudice in sport were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) in Mplus version 8 ([Muthén and Muthén 2017](#)). Due to the non-normality distribution of data (values of kurtosis were $>|10|$ for sexual prejudice items), the Robust Maximum Likelihood estimator was used (MLR). Multiple fit indices were used to evaluate model fit: chi-square likelihood ratio statistic, CFI (Comparative Fit Index), RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) with associated 90% CI, and SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual). Guided by suggestions provided in [Hu and Bentler \(1999\)](#), an acceptable

model fit was defined by the following criteria: CFI \geq 0.95, RMSEA \leq 0.06, and SRMR $<$ 0.05. All the effects in the model were controlled for gender and role in the sport context.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for the entire sample and split by participants' gender are reported in Table 1. As can be observed, the endorsement of traditional male role norms held a positive relationship with open rejection and gendering performance, whereas no significant association was found between denial of visibility and traditional male role norms. These results applied for both women and men in the sample. Overall, participants reported relatively low scores of traditional male role norms and sexual prejudice on average.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations.

	1	2	3	4	Mean (Range 1–7)	SD
Overall sample						
1. Traditional Male Role Norms	1				2.80	1.40
2. Open rejection	0.20 ***	1			1.24	0.65
3. Denial of visibility	0.14	0.41 ***	1		2.34	1.02
4. Gendering performance	0.24 ***	0.62 ***	0.42 ***	1	1.62	0.87
Women only						
1. Traditional Male Role Norms	1				2.40	1.30
2. Open rejection	0.23 *	1			1.17	0.51
3. Denial of visibility	0.22	0.42 ***	1		2.16	0.97
4. Gendering performance	0.30 *	0.53 ***	0.42 ***	1	1.52	0.79
Men only						
1. Traditional Male Role Norms	1				3.06	1.41
2. Open rejection	0.16 *	1			1.26	0.63
3. Denial of visibility	0.05	0.36 ***	1		2.43	1.02
4. Gendering performance	0.19 *	0.59 ***	0.37 ***	1	1.66	0.87

*** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.05$.

3.2. Mean Scores Differences in Sexual Prejudice Dimensions

The repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant main effect of sexual prejudice dimensions, $F(1, 174) = 35.31$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.17$. Bonferroni post hoc analyses revealed that participants reported higher mean scores on DV ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 1.01$), compared to OR ($M = 1.22$, $SD = 0.59$; $p < 0.001$) and GP ($M = 1.60$, $SD = 0.84$; $p < 0.001$) mean scores. Differences in OR and GP were also significant ($p < 0.001$). No significant effects were found on the basis of gender and role in the sport context (all $ps > 0.05$). Furthermore, no significant interaction effect emerged from the analysis (all $ps > 0.05$).

3.3. Gender Role Attitudes as Predictors of Sexual Prejudice in Sport

Results of the structural equation modeling are displayed in Figure 1. The model showed an adequate fit to the data—MLR $\chi^2(43) = 76.68$, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.07 with 90% CI [0.04, 0.08], SRMR = 0.05. As can be observed, male role norms were positively associated with OR and GP, whereas no significant association was found with DV. Among control variables, gender was associated only with DV, with men reporting higher values than women. Role in the sport context was not associated with any variable in the model.

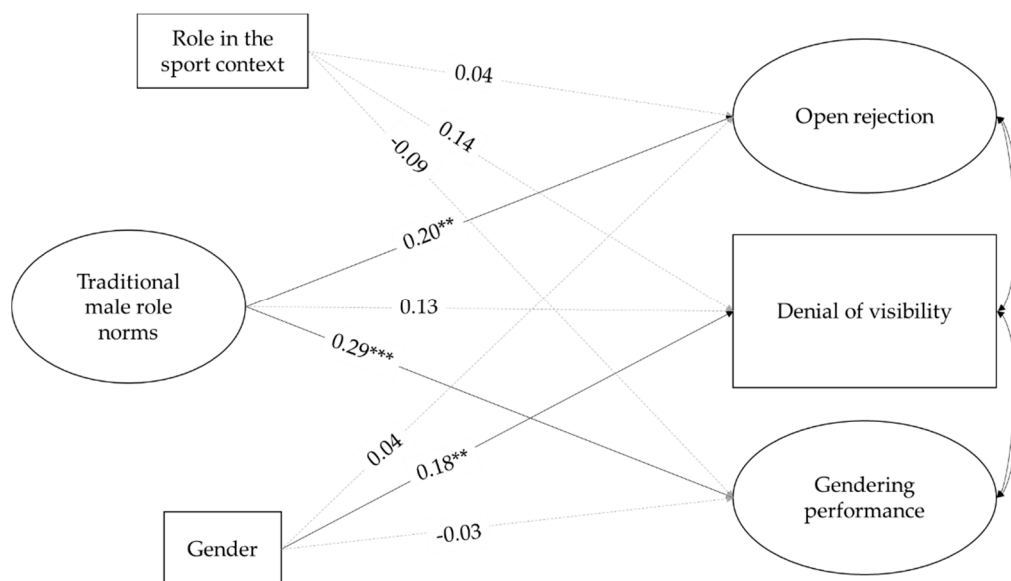


Figure 1. Results from the structural equation modeling. Notes. Standardized coefficients are reported. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$.

4. Discussion

In the last two decades, we have assisted to a progressive decreasing in homophobia and its blatant manifestations in society (Anderson 2011). However, sport continues to be described as a sex-segregated social context, based on conventional gender divisions and heterosexuality as a central organizing principle (Symons et al. 2017). The aim of this contribution was to expand previous knowledge on sexual prejudice in sport organizations, by examining specific dimensions (i.e., open rejection, denial of visibility, and gendering performance) of sport-related sexual prejudice in a sample of Italian sport directors and coaches. Furthermore, we investigated how the individual's endorsement of traditional male role norms related to these three dimensions of sexual prejudice. The results highlighted that despite generally low levels of reported sexual prejudice on average, negative attitudes against sexual minorities in sport contexts persist. Participants reported higher scores of denial of visibility with respect to the other dimensions, with no differences between sport directors and coaches, and between men and women. Furthermore, we found a significant difference between mean scores for open rejection and gendering performance, with participants scoring higher on gendering performance rather than on open rejection. When examining the association between male role norms and sexual prejudice dimensions, we found that the endorsement of traditional male role norms was significantly associated with open rejection and gendering performance.

In line with our hypotheses, sport directors and coaches involved in this study reported higher scores of denial of visibility, thus indicating that they hold more negative attitudes about the coming out of LG people in sport settings. This finding provides further support to the “don't ask, don't tell” attitude that has been documented in several prior studies (Anderson 2014; Griffin 1998), including those from the Italian context (Baiocco et al. 2020; Lingiardi et al. 2005; Scandurra et al. 2019). The results also highlight significantly higher scores of gendering performance, with respect to open rejection toward LG people in sport-related contexts. This means that both sport directors and coaches displayed a higher tendency to consider specific athletic abilities and performance as expressions of an innate set of skills depending on one's gender and sexual orientation, thus supporting the hypothesis that gender stereotypes are still prevalent in sport-related contexts, compared to open instances of discrimination. Thus, while overt instances of sexual discrimination and prejudice seem to have progressively decreased over time (Anderson 2011), subtler and indirect forms of prejudice against sexual minorities, such as those related to the gendering of performance, still persist and require attention in sport organizations (Symons et al. 2017). We also found that these differences in sexual prejudice scores were not influenced

by gender and sport role. The presence of gender differences has been documented in several prior studies focused on samples of students, parents, and former players (Cunningham and Sartore 2010; Gill et al. 2006; Sartore and Cunningham 2009a), showing that men express more prejudice toward sexual minorities than women do. To our knowledge, no studies have investigated potential gender- and sport role-based differences, thus further investigation is needed on this topic.

The analysis of the associations between traditional male role norms and sexual prejudice dimensions in sport-related contexts showed significant links with open rejection and gendering performance. No significant relationship was found between traditional male role norms and denial of visibility. As proposed by Griffin (1992) and stressed in a recent study by Baiocco et al. (2020), this result would support the need to investigate the multidimensionality of sexual prejudice in sports settings, not only because it can manifest through different forms, but also because of different ideological systems that may support one or the other form, with broad implications for intervention efforts. Based on the findings of the current study, it seems that the endorsement of traditional gender role attitudes only undergirds open rejection and gendering performance. This is in line with prior studies finding that individuals who expressed sexist attitudes were more prone to express sexual prejudice than their counterparts were (e.g., Cunningham and Melton 2012; Lee and Cunningham 2016). Contrary to our expectations, denial of visibility was not related to heteronormative beliefs. In this respect, it might be possible that the denial of visibility could be associated with a non-specific discomfort associated with homosexuality and homosexual people, rather than to the endorsement of heteronormative beliefs. Although limited, the prior literature has highlighted that homosexuality may elicit emotional discomfort, even when people show positive attitudes toward homosexuality at a cognitive level (Ernulf and Innala 1987). Future studies should further investigate this hypothesis and contribute towards expanding our knowledge and understanding of factors that may support and undergird sexual prejudice.

The results of the current study should be considered in light of several limitations. The main limitation refers to the use of self-report measures, which could be influenced by social desirability biases, and specifically by the high need, for many people in our society, to be outwardly non-prejudiced. Furthermore, we did not examine differences related to specific sporting disciplines (e.g., soccer vs. dance), thus we were not able to verify whether sexual prejudice is more pervasive in some contexts rather than in others. Furthermore, other factors that may be related to sexual prejudice should be considered and investigated in future studies (e.g., conservative political ideology, religious fundamentalism, and interpersonal contact with sexual minorities). Cunningham and Melton (2013), for instance, found that both religious fundamentalism and not having lesbian or gay friends were associated with sexual prejudice toward LG coaches. Overall, these findings support the notion that sport is becoming more inclusive and welcoming for sexual minorities, although subtler forms of sexual prejudice might still be embedded at the organization level of sport-related contexts. Furthermore, they highlight that there are dimensions of sexual prejudice (i.e., open rejection and gendering performance) that strictly relate to people's adherence to traditional gender norms and expectations, whereas more subtler forms, such as denial of visibility, require further investigation.

Collectively, the results of the current study suggest that efforts should be made to improve sport directors and coaches' attitudes toward and their management of diversity. One of the most common recommendations from research is that people who work in sport contexts should be instructed about discrimination and how it can manifest in sport practice (Fynes and Fisher 2016). Sport professionals should be aware of how they can impact on the wellbeing of athletes and what they can do to ensure minority athletes have full participation in sport (Lee et al. 2019). Some researchers have pointed to the importance of training opportunities for sport personnel, emphasizing the value that diversity brings to the sport organization, and helping them to enhance and increase their pro-diversity beliefs (Cunningham 2011).

5. Conclusions

Further research is needed to better understand how to ensure safe and inclusive sporting environments for sexual minorities. Whilst not overtly expressed, sexual prejudice in sport organizations is still widespread. Numerous attempts to increase the inclusion of sexual minorities in sport have been made in recent decades. However, more efforts should be put into the recognition of sporting cultures as being deeply rooted in heteronormative ideological systems, in order to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion.

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