

Influence of Self Efficacy on Soccer Engagement among Female University Students in Tanzania

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Abstract

University female students face numerous challenges, including depression, low self-efficacy, social anxiety, and a lack of self-identity due to high demand they face. Therefore, their engagement in soccer represents an excellent setting for their health and positive well-being. This study investigated the influence of self-efficacy on female students' soccer engagement in Tanzanian Universities. The study aimed at identifying the motivating factors, determining the perceived self-efficacy levels among female students soccer players, and examining the extent to which self-efficacy predicts female students' soccer participation. Guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior, the study adopted a descriptive research design, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect data from 111 respondents from 49 Higher Learning Institutions in Tanzania. Both correlation, regression and content analysis were used to analyse data. The findings indicated that the high possibility of being physically fit was the main reason for female students' engagement in soccer, believing that their active participation in soccer could increase their self-confidence. The study further found a positive relationship between self-efficacy and female students' engagement in soccer games, indicating moderate levels of self-efficacy among respondents. The findings from this study have the potential to address the numerous life challenges faced by girls and women, which hinder their full potential achievement in sports.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Soccer, Engagement, Students, Universities.

Introduction

Literature has commonly accepted the critical role of Self -Efficacy (SE) as an important factor centered on a widespread description of psychological factors influencing engagement in sports (Strain & Flemen, 2024). The multidimensional perspective emphasizes the interplay between personal beliefs and outcomes, focusing on the body, mind, and spirit as key components in personal health (Sloval et al. 2021). According to Cadene and Cadozo (2021), self-efficacy is defined as a belief in one's abilities and self-regulation, relating to controlling behavior to achieve goals. Research by Peters et al., (2022) shows that individuals with high self-efficacy tend to perform better academically, maintain physical activity, and perform better in sports. Moreover, studies reveal that self-

efficacy significantly influences effort, persistence, and performance in sports. Furthermore, individuals with higher self-efficacy believe in their abilities, resulting in increased effort and persistence, even in challenging conditions (Koçak & Güven , 2018). Indeed, Soval et al., (2021) suggests a strong link between self-efficacy and soccer engagement, particularly among female athletes, where higher self-efficacy is associated with increased engagement and performance, while lower self-efficacy can lead to anxiety and stress, potentially impacting participation

Studies indicates that one of the most common psychological factors in sports, including soccer sports is engagement (Teoldo et al., 2022; Finnegan et al., 2024). For example, a study involving 86 female soccer national team players from various countries in Europe found that as players started playing soccer from an early age, accumulating more hours in soccer-specific activities, become more engaged in soccer in later years of their life. Studies further show that as professional female soccer players typically engage in sport from early childhood (Teoldo et al., 2022; engage in sport-specific play (Peters et al, 2022); diversify into other sports (Finnegan et al., 2024); are likely to increase sport-specific practice throughout their development. (Eather, et al., 2020)

Allison and Barraco (2021) further evaluated the impact of female students participating in sports activities on the perception of sport engagement in in post-secondary education in Nigeria. The analysis of the interviews conducted showed that soccer engagement is crucial during adolescence and youth, as individuals undergo body changes, sex differences, and physical skill performance. Also, some studies showed that sports significantly enhances girls and women's confidence, self-esteem, and psychological well-being, while also reducing depression and promoting a positive body image (Eather, et al., 2022; Machado et al., 2022). Therefore, high self-efficacy, the belief in one's ability to succeed, is strongly linked to greater sport engagement, encompassing both cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Pierez, et al., 2020) as individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to participate, exert effort, persist longer, and ultimately perform better

As noted by Msambichaka; (2018); Aikawa, (2021), a dropout from physical activity during adolescence is a public health problem in Tanzania, especially for girls. In similar way, a report of Football Association of Africa (2019), indicates that girls' football participation decreases from 72% in primary school to 44% in secondary school, with only 40% of secondary schools providing equal access (Strain, et al. 2022; Leseth, 2013). Some reported barriers by Peng and Zhay (2021) that limit effective participation girls in sports ranges from negative peer perceptions, limited facilities, and lack of self-efficacy. Worldwide, football, (referred as soccer in this paper) which is the world's most popular sport, has historically been dominated by men. However, in recent years, women's football has been gaining momentum and attracting an increasing number of fans and players worldwide As noted by Furukawa, (2023), African women, including Nigerian Asisat Oshoala, South African Thembi Kgatlana, and Cameroonian Ajara Nchout, have made significant contributions to international football, earning recognition in top leagues worldwide. As sports industry frequently promotes phrases like "believe in yourself" and "have confidence in your

abilities." there is a need to evaluate the impact of self-efficacy on university-age female students' soccer engagement, a crucial stage in their self-esteem struggle (Guthold., et al (2020). In the same vein, Bekker et al., (2023) study highlights the importance of early adolescence for self-efficacy development, with girls experiencing a decline in self-efficacy and positive feelings. As noted by (2023), the pursuit of equality in women's football has become a recurring theme, with frequent declarations from federations, administrators, coaches, and players. To the inattentive observer, achievements such as Banyana Banyana winning the 2022 Women's African Cup of Nations (WAFCON) for the first time in their history or Zambia and Morocco making their debut at the 2023 FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) Women's World Cup and Nigeria and Zambia's qualification to Paris 2024, along with the proliferation and accomplishments of African footballers in top leagues, might appear as signs of progress.

Particularly, Nxumalo & Beetge, (2019) asserts that in South Africa Universities, low self-efficacy, capability, and body image concerns contribute to less engagement of female students in sports. In the same way, a study by scientists from the University of Birmingham has found that teenage girls who play football have higher levels of self-confidence than those who play other sports (Ding, 2018; Clark, (2012). Studies by Ede et al. (2011); Kane, (2016); Bekker et al., (2023) indicates that university-aged students are at higher risk of unhealthy lifestyles, with males engaging in riskier behaviors like alcohol abuse, but higher participation in physical activity, compared to females (UN, 2018). Similarly, Liu et al. (2019) found high scores of depression, anxiety, and stress in women, with gender-specific risk higher than men (Gao et al. 2022).

Problem Statement

Existing research on the sports engagement during adolescence and youth indicates that physical activeness is very important as it promotes their individual well-being. Nonetheless, some studies showed that female students engage less in sports due on the perception of their physical self-efficacy and social self-concept (Shoval et al. 2021; Feng et al. 2020). In particular, the results of the study by Cadene and Cadozo (2021) showed that engagement in sports among women contribute to improving the perception of one's own abilities and skills, as well as emotional expression, and social attractions, while decreasing the perception of a gender inequality. In other words, high level of self-efficacy can be enhanced through active sports engagement by female students. None the less, the extant research on sports participation suggests that a majority of women engage in sports for the sake of getting equal opportunities, as sports helps them feel included in the organization and in the society. Additionally, Brace et al. (2020) insists that women and girls often receive negative 'feedback' related to their body, which contributes to their negative perception of their negative self- efficacy contributing to sedentary lifestyles. Recognizing the growing importance of soccer sports among women and girls in Tanzania, various national initiatives have been undertaken including the Tanzania Ladies First (LF); a national sports

competition exclusively for women inaugurated in 2017. However, despite this crucial initiative, less participation of women in soccer sports have been reported with low self-efficacy noted to majority of those who were actively engaged in soccer (Furukawa, 2023). Thus, despite the fact that many scholars have studied female soccer in non academic setting from different psychological contexts, there is still a gap in research on campus soccer sport, especially when examined on different psychological dimensions. Hence, this study assumes that self-efficacy is an important outcome of sports engagement that has not received the attention it deserves from different scholars especially in HLIs in Tanzanian context. Therefore, this paper explores self-efficacy perceptions in soccer, highlighting their significant impact on motivation and engagement, with high levels indicating increased behavioral, motivational, and cognitive engagement in among female students (Halforty and Radder, 2015).

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the motivating factors for female students' engagement in soccer in HLIs in Tanzania
2. To examine the perceived self-efficacy levels among female students' soccer players in HLIs in Tanzania
3. To examine the extent in which self-efficacy levels predicts female students' engagement in soccer in HLIs in Tanzania in HLIs in Tanzania

Research Questions

1. What are the factors that motivate female students to engage in soccer in HLIs in Tanzania?
2. What are the perceived self-efficacy levels among female students' soccer players in HLIs in Tanzania?
3. To what extent does self-efficacy predict the female students' engagement in soccer in HLIs in Tanzania?

Literature Review

Innumerable studies were reviewed to enrich the paper with substantive knowledge on how to enhance female students' self-efficacy and participation in soccer sports in HLIs. The study adopted the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) put forth by Icek Ajzen in 1991 which is an extensively utilized psychological framework for forecasting and comprehending human behavior in various settings. According to this theory, the most accurate predictor of people's actual conduct, is their behavioral intentions. Three primary factors comprise these intentions: the person's attitude toward the conduct, the subjective norm pertaining to the behavior, and the person's projected capacity to carry out the behavior. The theory further suggests that individuals who find an activity enjoyable, receive positive reinforcement, and have faith in their ability to complete it are more likely to engage in it (Cadena and Cardzo, 2021). With reference to the theory, physical exercise is a deliberate,

planned behavior, driven by positive attitudes and perceived behavioral control that increases the likelihood of occurrence when others perceive it as necessary and encourage it. Therefore, the TPB acknowledges that individuals with positive attitudes, strong support from significant others, and high self-confidence, competence, and control over physical activities are more likely to engage in physical activities. Therefore, the theory anchors with study objectives as it explores how attitudes, social pressures, and beliefs about control influence sports participation of female students by denoting that positive attitudes, encouragement, and confidence in one's ability to overcome challenges enhance this desire (Brace et al. 2020). Furthermore, the theory supports this study as it explores how the perceived control over a behavior, a key component of TPB, is influenced by one's self-efficacy beliefs; and therefore, higher self-efficacy leads to stronger perceived behavioral control, which in turn influences intentions and ultimately behavior.

Self-Efficacy and Soccer Engagement

Self-efficacy is a psychological mechanism that relies on self-appraisals and self-persuasion to determine an individual's belief in their capabilities to control situations (Bandura, (1997). Accordingly, self-efficacy is a person's perception of their own skills, indicating that if individuals have confidence in their ability to manage a variety of situations, they are likely to be more engaged in life, job, and other responsibilities (Benlian and Yang, (2013). As noted by Sabelo et al., (2019), self-efficacy is not based on skills, but on the individual's belief in their ability to achieve success with their skills. Based on the study by Hapler, et al, (2021), self-efficacy judgments are formed by complex cognitive processes involving the selection, interpretation, and integration of information derived from six different sources: performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, physiological arousal, emotional states. Therefore, self-efficacy beliefs are the mediating mechanism between these sources and affect, behavior, and cognition. A study by Guthold, et al., (2019) show that female university students face higher rates of depression and anxiety disorders due to factors like lifestyle changes, economic burden, and academic fears, which are influenced by gender differences, cultural influences, and family dysfunction. Likewise, Zhaohui (2020) denotes that self-efficacy influences social behaviors and contributes to the regulation of environmental behavior patterns. In sports, research shows that higher self-efficacy leads to greater persistence and effort in sports, as measured by motor performance and muscular endurance. For example, according to research spanning several decades, (Aikawa, 2021; Avugos, et al., 2023), self-efficacy has been found to have a significant role in athletic performance. Thus, strong self-efficacy increases the likelihood that athletes will set difficult objectives, persevere through failures, and perform better under duress.

On the other hand, athletes who lack self-efficacy are more likely to have weaker drive, avoid challenging tasks, and set softer goals (Brace et al., 2020). In sports profession, self-efficacy is measured by examining psychological efficacy referring to accepting and trusting

oneself and having a sense of control, professional thought efficacy which is one's belief of their professional competencies; and personality efficacy which indicates a person's belief in their ability to perform behaviors that lead to specific outcomes (Tirmzai et al., 2020). As noted by Smith, and Weir, (2020), athletes who have strong self-efficacy will be more willing to engage, work more, and stick with it longer, which will improve their performance in sports and exercise. Therefore, self-efficacy beliefs are expected to play a central role in motivating behavior change, such as the initiation and maintenance of regular physical activity. In addition, since learning and development in team sport contexts are not done in isolation, Bandura (1991) extends efficacy theory to allow for the inclusion of collective efficacy, a group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment." Furthermore, recent literature has provided findings to show how self-efficacy can determine engagement in sports and exercise.

Based on the results of research data analysis, by Mozolev et al., (2020); Fing, et al., (2020); Fawver, et al., 2021), a very significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and sports engagement exists since athletes' self-efficacy influence the choice of winning techniques and perseverance while applying it. This means that the higher the self-efficacy, the higher the sport engagement. More so, Allison and Berraco, (2021) argues that engagement is known as one of the ideal experiences that athletes can develop through their practice. In particular, it is considered a persistent experience with core dimensions that involves a long period of sports participation rather than a state. In the context of sports, engagement is characterized into confidence, (the belief in one's own ability to reach a particular level of performance and goals), dedication, (the desire to devote time and effort to pursuing significant goals), vigor, (the presence of physical, mental, and emotional energy or vitality), and enthusiasm, (the sense of enjoyment in the sporting activity) (Gathold, et al., 2019).

Empirical Review

Several scholars have underlined the influence of self-efficacy on soccer engagement in earlier studies. Notably, Peters et al., (2022) affirms that, soccer players and their coaches know that successful performance in soccer sport is based, in part, on psychological factors. One of those factors is self-efficacy: the confident belief that one can perform skillfully, cope with performance pressure, and sustain the hard work necessary to perfect one's skills (Bandura, 1997). Thus the study by Teoldo et al., (2023) examined the association between self-efficacy, sports participation, and academic achievement among university level female students. A positive relationship between self-efficacy and sports performance of athletes was observed at the 0.01 level and a negative relationship between academic achievement and sports performance was observed in the case of non-athlete students. Similarly, Pierez et al., (2020) carried out a study to compare the self-efficacy of male and female soccer players where by the inter varsity soccer tournament were taken as the subjects. Results of the study revealed that there were no significant difference existed

between male and female inter varsity soccer players in their self-efficacy. Moreover, Al-Tawel, (2017), undertook a study of female students' perceptions of the barriers to participate in physical and sports activities at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University; using stratified random sampling, the study found out that social and religious barriers; university related barriers; academic barriers; and psychological barriers were the most important barriers limiting female students' participation in sports. Also, the study by Efe, (2023) examined the physical self-perceptions of individuals with physical disabilities and their motivation to participate in sports. Using multiple regression analysis, the t-test and one-way ANOVA results revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the sub-dimensions of general self, physical self, physical condition, sports competence and physical attractiveness among respondents.

Furthermore, Nxumalo, and Beetge, (2017) examined sports participation of female university students in South African Universities. Using logistic regression analysis, the study indicated that safe access to sporting facilities and the poor state of university sporting facilities were deterrents to sports participation. On the same vein, Brunton, and Quinton, (2020), examined the factors that enable and inhibit female students' participation in university sport and active recreation using an interpreted qualitative design. The study also identified specific behaviour change techniques that could be used within interventions to increase participation rates. Using six focus groups discussion, the findings revealed that, having a sense of belonging; building confidence; bespoke communication; more opportunities; better pricing and distance to travel were the main reasons for female students' engagement in sports (Rosenberg, 1979)

None the less, Hoval, et al., (2020) examined, whether engagement in sports, self-efficacy and grade level affect academic achievements of adolescents focusing on gender. The study found that, girls engaged with the competitive sports showed better academic achievements than the boys and girls in the other groups, while boys engaged with competitive sports demonstrated the lowest academic achievements. Furthermore, Joshua, et al., (2023) carried out a study to investigate the sociocultural factors influencing women's participation in sports as perceived by female undergraduates in the University of Ilorin. Using simple random sampling the study found that, culture, family background, religion, peer grouping and gender influence females' participation in sports. Similarly, Hands et al. (2016) reported that, males were consistently reported as more physically active than females regardless of age or measure. Often, this difference results in females identified as under active and at risk of long term poor health outcomes. In the same way, Liu et al. (2019) used scale analysis and pointed out that the highest scores of depression, anxiety and stress appeared, and concluded that in terms of gender, women have a higher increased risk than men (Gao et al., 2022).

Research Gap

Research shows self-efficacy influences effort, persistence, and performance in sports and exercise, but within-participant effects are inconclusive due to its non observable nature and the uncertainty of measuring self-efficacy versus other psychological variables (Chi, et al., 2024). Firstly, previous studies indicated a positive correlation between self-efficacy and sports achievement, but there was a need to explore the dynamics across different sports disciplines and specific contexts. Therefore, due to the unique demands, skill requirements, and psychological challenges in each sport, this study explores the impact of self-efficacy on soccer performance across female students' teams in different HLIS. Furthermore, the literature on self-efficacy and soccer achievement is primarily western-focused, overlooking cultural factors in diverse regions, including collectivism, social support systems, and societal expectations. As highlighted by Machado et al., (2022), there is a need for research in culturally diverse settings to understand the relationship between self-efficacy and soccer achievement, highlighting the need for comprehensive understanding. Moreover, research on self-efficacy's predictive value in soccer achievement is limited, but addressing these gaps can provide insights for female students' soccer development programs, coaching strategies, and sports psychology interventions in diverse contexts.

Methodology**Research Design**

The research utilized a descriptive research design, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure methodological triangulation and complementary. Also, the chosen design allowed the researcher to summarize responses from various groups, collect perceptions, and opinions on female students' engagement in soccer in HLIs and collect multi-sourced data from a wide population in a short period.

Description of the Study Area and Target Population

The study was conducted in eight out of forty- nine public and private universities and university colleges in Tanzania. According to Tanzania Council of Universities report, (2024) as of February 2024, the number of approved university institutions operating in Tanzania is 49, whereas 19 are public-owned and 30 are private-owned university institutions. Specific Higher Learning Institutions were targeted by this study due to its considerable concentration of female students with soccer teams. In fact, Orth, et al., (2010) indicates that college-age female students are prone to unhealthy eating habits, and a sedentary lifestyle which can increase the risk of obesity; hence necessitating this study to target them. As noted by Anderson, and Harnois, (2020), female students experience discrimination and prejudice in male-dominated higher education, which in turn could result in a lower sense of belonging. Therefore, their active engagement in soccer has the potential to empower them and provides opportunities for them to lead a healthier lifestyle.

Sampling and Sample Size

In this study the researcher used purposive and stratified random sampling techniques to select universities, female students, and sport officials from eight HLIS. Moreover, the researcher used a formula from Yamane (1967) to calculate sample size in proportions, with a 95% confidence level and .05 precision level for the study. During data collection process, the total population for female students soccer players in the selected HLIs were 330 respondents where by a total of 111 female students' respondents, were selected. In the same manner, 10 sports officials were purposely selected to provide the information on managerial, policy and technical aspects of female students' engagement in soccer. Since they offer guidance and leadership to participants, ensuring the safety and fairness of the competition, their inclusion in this study was important

Types of Data and Data Collection Tools

In this study, data collection involved both closed and open-ended questionnaires and face-to-face interviews, focusing on female students' self-efficacy aspects such as sports discipline, psychological, professional and personality efficacy on sports engagement. The researcher obtained consent from university to participate in a study, with anonymity and voluntary participation. Authorization was obtained from these institutions, and coaches were contacted and requested to coordinate the data collection process. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected through questionnaires and interview guide. Both thematic analysis and multiple regression analysis were performed to analyze the data. Also, qualitative data were analysed using procedures described by Tarquil, (2016) generate the likely themes. The resultant themes were cross-examined to establish an agreed set of themes that were thought to appropriately represent participants' views

To examine the female students' self-efficacy level, the study adopted the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) developed by Schwarzer, & Jerusalem (1995) whereas, the Sport Engagement Scale (SEQ) developed by Guillén, et al. (2012) was used to assess four sports factors namely; engagement confidence, dedication, enthusiasm, and vigor was used to gauge students' engagement in soccer whereas t-test was applied in order to see the differences in self-efficacy of females. With the sample of female students, the items were modified to be related to soccer (e.g., vigor item: "I feel energized when I play football"). The 3-factor structure of the GSE was confirmed with a confirmation factor analysis. The specific Cronbach's alpha values were as follows: confidence (alpha = 0.72), dedication (alpha = 0.74), enthusiasm (alpha = 0.74) and vigor (alpha = 0.69). In assessing the extent of engagement in soccer among female students, all alpha values ranged from 0.76 to 0.79 indicating a good internal consistency for all components. The overall Cronbach's alpha for the remaining items under sports engagement were above 0.83, which were considered acceptable, and indicating that the scale provided a reliable and valid measure of the participants' sports engagement. (Tarquil, 2016).

Findings

Demographic Information

The study adopted a descriptive statistics of age, educational level, and experience in soccer engagement are illustrated in Table 1 below. As indicated, the study found that that majority of female students (70%) were aged between 21-24 years indicating the high number of adolescents and young adults who regularly practice sports in HLIs. On the other side, 58% were in bachelor degree followed by 32% of respondents who were in diploma level, indicating that most lower level female students have limited attention toward sports activities. Regarding soccer experience, majority of respondents (53%) had soccer experience of 1 to 3 years indicating less engagement of female students in soccer during the per-tertiary education.

Table 1: Demographic Information

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
21-24 Years	78	70.27
25-27 Years	30	27.02
28 Years and above	03	2.70
Total	111	100.0
Educational Level		
Certificate	11	9.91
Diploma	36	32.43
Bachelor degree	64	57.65
Total	111	100.0
Involvement in Soccer experience		
1-3 Years	65	52.6
4-6 Years	40	31.5
7 Years and above	06	15.9
Total	111	100.0

Source: Research Construct, (2023).

Motivational Factors for Female Students Participation in Soccer

In this objective, female students listed in order of priority the factors that motivates them to engage in soccer. From the findings presented in Table 2, the greatest reason for soccer engagement was related to physical fitness motive (30%), followed by 23% with recreational and leisure motive. A little less than one third of the participants (16%) engaged themselves in soccer as a stress management strategy whereas, 13% were inspired by the fact that engaging in soccer could help them fight against gender stereotypes prevalent in HLIs. Only 10% of participants engaged in soccer to develop sport skills, whereas 9% were motivated with the possibility of learning new skills. The rest (6%) indicated their expectations to earn money out of soccer. This implied that being involved in soccer sports appears to be a critical predictor of girls' self efficacy which appeared to

positively impact their feelings of empowerment, consequently improving their quality of life. Crucially, the results reinforce the importance of engagement in soccer among female students as well as in the Tanzanian context, as advocated by the World Health Organization, due to the positive impact of sports on the quality of life for women and girls. (WHO, 2016).

This finding broadly supports the work of other studies on women participation in soccer games. For example, a study by Furukawa, (2023); Brace et al., (2023); and Berker et al, (2020) indicated a positive relationship between frequent self-efficacy and soccer engagement among female athletes. Furthermore, the same studies indicated that in soccer sports, regular training sessions and practice opportunities provided to help girls refine their football skills where by expert coaching and guidance significantly bolster their technical prowess and tactical comprehension. The result can be interpreted in line with Duarte and Cadozo, (2021) who indicated that, majority of female students in the United Kingdom perceived themselves as 'too fat' hence decided to engage themselves in a regular physical activity to stay fit.

Table 2: Motivational Factors for Soccer Engagement

Statement	Frequency	Percentage
Physical fitness motive	32	29.52
Recreation and leisure motive	24	22.62
Stress management motive	17	15.87
Fighting gender stereotypes	14	12.54
Developing sports skills	11	9.91
Learning new skills	08	8.88
To earn money	05	5.55
Total	111	100.0

Source: Research Construct, (2023).

Benefits Associated with Female Students Participation in Soccer

To supplement motives for female students' engagement in soccer, the study sought to find out the perceived benefits associated with female students' engagement in soccer as indicated in Table 3 below. The results indicated that most of respondents (40%) indicated the possibility of increasing self-confidence through participation in soccer, whereas 20% believed that engagement in soccer could lead to increased resilience. The results also found that 15% of female students benefits from good academic achievement through soccer, while 10% benefits from improved leadership skills where as 8% benefits from the increased self-discipline. The results supports the assertion that when the activities (soccer sports) are judged to be sex-role inappropriate, self-evaluative or competitive, confidence among females is especially likely to be low (Tarqui, et al, 2017). As noted by Feng et a., (2020), studies of women's experiences of sports participation have suggested that they can contribute to a more generalized feeling of empowerment as it develop a sense of

ownership of their bodies and access the types of activity experiences traditionally enjoyed by boys.

Moreover, the study results are in line with the results from a report of three longitudinal studies which emphasized that 'female students' academic performance was maintained or even enhanced by an increase in a student's level of habitual physical activity, despite a reduction in curriculum or free time for the study of academic material (Hepler et al., 2021). Therefore, a range of evidence suggests that for many girls, sports and physical activities are positive features of their increased self confidence (Nxumalo and Beetgge, 2019) as well as academic aspirations and achievement (Feng et al., 2020).

Table 3: Perceived Benefits of Female Students Engagement in Soccer.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Increased self-confidence	44	39.64
Increased resilience	30	20.03
Good academic achievement	17	15.32
Improved leadership abilities	12	10.81
Increased self-discipline	8	7.21
Total	111	100.0

Source: Research Construct, (2023).

Suggested Ways of Engaging Female Students in Soccer

In this study, female students suggested different ways through which they can be more attracted to soccer sports in their institutions. As indicated in Table 4, more than 35% were in opinion that provision of sports scholarships for female students could make more female students attracted to soccer games, where by 24% believed that the increased funding for women soccer programme could make them feel more attracted to it. More so, the results indicated that, only 11% were in opinion that by hiring professional soccer coaches, female students could be more attached to soccer games, followed by, 8% which indicated that by providing up-to-date sports equipment, there is a higher possibility of female students being attracted by soccer games. The results implies that sport engagement is one of the ideal experiences that respondents could develop through their practice.

The present study also demonstrated that institutions under the study need to put more efforts aimed at stimulating appropriate and safe environments for female students to effectively engage in soccer games. In supporting the findings. Thus, the result can be interpreted in line with Mwinsukha and Rintaugu, (2019), who affirmed that sports scholarships can encourage female students' participation in soccer by providing opportunities to play and compete. Also, with reference to the theory of Planned Behavior, with provision of sports scholarships and other opportunities individuals (female students) are likely to behave positively (actively engage in soccer games) once they realize the positive outcome of it (Glocker, 2018).

Table 4: Suggested Ways of Engaging Female Students in Soccer Games

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Provision of sports scholarships for female students	39	35.14
Increased funding for women soccer	27	24.32
Time to time maintenance of sports facilities	22	19.83
Hiring professional soccer coaches	12	10.81
Provision of up-to-date sports equipment.	9	8.11
Total	111	100.0

Source: Research Construct, (2023).

The perceived self-efficacy levels among female students soccer players in HLLs in Tanzania

The second objective of this study was to find out the perceived self-efficacy levels among female students soccer players in HLLs in Tanzania. In this objective, the means and standard deviations for each item of the questionnaire instrument, that measured self-efficacy, were calculated. The female students' efficacy were grouped in four scales: sports discipline efficacy, psychological efficacy, professional thought efficacy and personality efficacy. Table 5 shows that the level of overall perceived sports discipline efficacy among female students soccer players in was moderate ($M = 2.84$, $SD = .78$). The female students responded most positively to the item that relate to the perceived level of physical fitness required for soccer discipline ($M=3.55$, $SD=1.17$), whereas the results for the perceived level of soccer motor skills, technical skills were moderate. On the other hand, the low score was noted on the item that related to the perceived level of applying individual and team tactics in soccer discipline.

Regarding psychological efficacy, the overall level of perceived psychological efficacy among female students soccer players was high ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 1.06$). In this study female students responded most positively to the item reflecting high level of self-motivation ($M= 3.83$, $SD 1.20$), high level of team building strategies ($M= 3.78$, $SD 1.22$) and high level of stress coping strategies ($m= 3.65$, $SD 1.40$). Generally, the female students indicated their moderate perceived level of ability to control emotions in soccer sports ($M = 3.3$, $SD 1.30$). As indicated in Table 5 below, the overall levels of the perceived professional thought efficacy was moderate ($M= 3.2$, $SD 1.5$) whereby all the aspects related to protection for personal health ($M= 3.31$, $SD 1.25$), sports devotion ($M= 3.28$, $SD 1.37$), life organization ($M= 3.07$, $SD 1.32$) and self-training ($M= 2.51$, $SD 1.27$) was moderately perceived.

As indicated in Table 5 below, the study father denotes the perceived moderate level of personality efficacy among female students soccer players ($M2.65$, $SD 0.82$) whereby the high response was noted on the aspects related with cooperation and team cohesiveness ($M= 3.56$, $SD 1.18$). Surprisingly, majority of respondents scored low on the items related with limited self confidence in soccer ($M = 2.38$, $SD= 1.30$). The findings implied that the higher possibility of self-motivation among respondents could result from the empowerment and confidence boost they gain from physical activity, the opportunity to

challenge gender stereotypes, the social connection fostered by team sports, and the intrinsic benefits of achieving personal goals through athletic pursuits; leading to a stronger sense of self-worth and agency in their lives (Gao et al., 2022). Furthermore, the high level of psychological efficacy among female students could possibly indicate that their institutions offer conducive environment for strong social support networks, high emphasis on personal growth, and stress coping mechanisms to navigate gender-related challenges among respondents. More so, the moderate level of self-efficacy in soccer engagement among respondents could as well be attributed to the fact that, most female students have a lower personality trait that enables them to exhibit persistence, stability, and consistency in their behavioral tendencies. The findings support the results by Peng and Zhang, (2021) which found that adolescent girls tend to have lower self-esteem and more negative assessments of their physical characteristics and intellectual abilities than boys have. However, the results of the comparative study on gender by Spence, et al., (2010) contradicts the results of this study by indicating that the females exhibited a stronger correlation between physical activity and self-efficacy than men.

Table 5: The Perceived Levels of Self-Efficacy among Female Students Soccer Players

Item	Self-Efficacy Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean
Sports Discipline Efficacy				
1	I have the physical fitness required for soccer discipline	3.55	1.17	High
2	I have the motor skills required for soccer discipline.	3.32	1.38	Moderate
3	I have the technical skills required for soccer discipline	2.57	1.29	Moderate
4	I successfully apply the individual and team tactics during the competition.	2.39	1.30	Low
	Overall	2.84	.78	Moderate
Psychological Efficacy				
5	I always motivate myself.	3.83	1.20	high
6	I always help my teammates to be their motivation.	3.78	1.22	High
7	I always cope with the difficulties that put pressure on me.	3.65	1.40	High
8	I always control my emotions.	3.3	1.30	Moderate
	Overall	3.6	1.06	High

Professional Thought Efficacy				
9	I always take care to protect my health.	3.31	1.25	Moderate
10	I always work devotedly to achieve performance goals	3.28	1.37	Moderate
11	I always organize my life so that it does not affect my performance negatively.	3.07	1.32	Moderate
12	In order to protect my performance, I always train individually in and out of season.	2.51	1.27	Moderate
	Overall	3.02	1.05	Moderate
Personality Efficacy				
13	I always cooperate and work in cohesion with colleagues in the field of soccer	3.56	1.18	High
14	I always act in accordance with fair play	2.62	1.26	Moderate
16	I have high self-confidence.	2.38	1.30	Low
16	I always take responsibility during the competition.	2.61	1.35	Moderate
	Overall	2.65	.82	Moderate

Source: Research Construct, (2023).

The extent to which Self-Efficacy Levels Predicts Female Students' Engagement in Soin HLIs in Tanzania

The study further examined the extent to which self-efficacy predicts female students' engagement in soccer in HLIs in Tanzania. To achieve this objective, Pearson product moment correlation and simple linear regression analysis were performed. As indicated in Table 6, the Pearson's correlation coefficient in all self- efficacy variables varied between $r = 0.34$ to 0.35 $p < 0.05$, indicating a statistical significant positive relationship between the overall score of self-efficacy and sports engagement among female students in HLIs in Tanzania. These results can probably denote that as self-efficacy levels of female students increase, their levels of engagement in soccer games will also increase. Nonetheless, the notion that football is a game of contact, strength, and physicality is the major concern of female students and has influenced their disposition toward participation (Luo & He, 2021). Literature confirms that sport practitioners and researchers have realized a need to concentrate on various strategies aiming at effectively engaging women in sports profession to improve their overall well-being and quality of life. Therefore, as sports industry has changed swiftly, management of HLIs should attempt to adopt different sport practices that raises self-efficacy and increase sports engagement levels among female students (Luo & He, 2021). Non the less, with reference to the study by Peters et al., (2022), the results imply the universality of soccer sport which offers an opportunity to challenge

social and cultural norms on a large scale and narrow the gender gap. Supporting the results, several previous studies (Peng & Zhang, 2021) indicated that athletes who possess strong self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to excel in their chosen sports.

In similar way, Watt and Morris, (2020) emphasizes that since soccer is a phenomenon that was designed by and for men, girls feel “invited” to participate in a field that does not belong to them, and which represents a handicap when it comes to establishing stable and deep ties with the activity. Therefore, by making female soccer success more visible, girls and their parents can aspire for them to be professional football players or simply to take part in whatever physical activity they enjoy. Further, a greater audience for women's professional sport could mean more investment in grassroots and crucially, visibility of women at all sporting levels (Tirmzai et al., 2020).

Table 6: Overall Correlation Matrix Between Self-Efficacy and Soccer Engagement

Variable (Self-Efficacy)	Soccer Engagement
Sports discipline efficacy	0.345**
Psychological efficacy	0.35**
Professional thought efficacy	0.36**
Personality efficacy	0.34**

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Research Construct, (2023).

The study also utilized multiple linear regression model to measure the influence of self-efficacy variables on soccer engagement among female students in HLIs in Tanzania. As indicated in Table 7 below, the linear regression analysis highlights a subtle but significant influence of self-efficacy on soccer engagement in both variables (overall coefficient = 2.067; Standard Error = .0143; $t = 13.362$, $p < .0001$). The regression results further revealed that personality efficacy (Coefficient = .205 Standard Error = .042, $t = 5.046$ $p < .0000$ scored higher than other variables, slightly followed by professional thought efficacy (Coefficient = .137 Standard Error = .050, $t = 2.678$ $p < .0008$). Notably, among the four self-efficacy variables, the regression results indicated the slight lower scores on soccer discipline efficacy (Coefficient = .127 Standard Error = .044, $t = 2.831$ $p < .0005$) probably suggesting a perceived deficiency in how female soccer players approach the soccer game in terms of discipline and effectiveness. As denoted by Luo and He (2021) female soccer players may run less and play slower affecting their ability to react to shots and make saves which could be perceived as less discipline and a lack of intensity compared to male players. This finding broadly supports the work of other studies on different perceptions with regard to female athletes' abilities and capabilities. For example, a study by Gathold and Steven, (2019) confirms that the perception of a lack of discipline and efficacy in female soccer players is likely a complex issue influenced by a combination of physiological differences, bio mechanical factors, societal perceptions, training practices, and media coverage.

Table 7: Multiple Linear Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.067	.143		13.362	.000
	Soccer discipline efficacy	.127	.044	.533	2.831	.005
	Psychological efficacy	.048	.041	.327	1.091	.276
	Professional thought efficacy	.137	.050	.370	2.678	.008
	Personality efficacy	.205	.042	.662	5.046	.000
						i. Dependent Variable: Engagement in Soccer i. Predictors: (Constant), Soccer discipline efficacy, Psychological efficacy, Professional thought efficacy, Personality Efficacy.

Source: Research Construct, (2023).

Qualitative Results

The study carried out a qualitative survey from ten football coaches and they presented their different opinions regarding the study focus. The themes that emerged from those interviews were coded and grouped into four major themes as follows:

Strengths and potentials associated with female students soccer players

This theme intended to gather the information regarding the sports potentials possessed by female students' soccer players. The comments indicated that majority of respondents appraised their female teams as possessing unique skills and attributes which could make them excel higher in soccer levels as noted below:

"Female's football players in my team showcase exceptional skill, technique, and teamwork, focusing on precision passing, tactical awareness, and teamwork, often surpassing their male counterparts in certain aspects",

This indicates that, with appropriate support mechanisms, these players could become potential football players who could excel and break the prevailing prejudices limiting women empowerment.

Barriers limiting female students' participation in football

In this theme, the study wanted to get the general opinions from sport coaches regarding less involvement of female students in soccer sports in their institutions. Most of the comments raised were grouped into three main themes as indicated below.

Less priority for sports over academic achievement

The theme 'limited priority for sports' described the extent in which female students prioritized their academic activities over sport excellence. Comments illustrated that female students gave high credit to their studies and less focus on sports activities since they were very much pressured to do well in their studies and not seeing a clear career pathway into the sport. One of the comment indicated that *'More than one hundreds of girls in my institution have had to give up football, despite wanting to carry on due to tight schedule in their academics.. While the surge in girls wanting to play the game is really encouraging, we cannot make girls feel welcome on the pitch and keep them playing, with no affirmative actions to prioritize girls sports''*

Also, the comments indicated that even the university studying timetable was too demanding, limiting the students to have enough time to engage in sports.

Patriarch social structure

In this theme, participants expressed the opinions limiting female students participation in soccer; *'The perspective that prevented female students from participating in soccer sports fed on the mindset that they lacked physical skills and that their fundamental social duties does not allow such activities''*. Since soccer sport is defined by high levels of performance, superior physical attributes, talent, success, ambition, they fail to at the center of it culturally and numerically

Limited Institutional support

In this theme, participants expressed their concerns regarding the support required to promote soccer sports among female students in their institutions.

'The difficulties coaches encounter in securing necessary resources, such as equipment, facilities, and funding for sport traveling and training is unimaginable. This limits how coaches try to build a strong team and promote a positive team culture among soccer teams' In this theme, majority of respondents commented about limited financial support for female students soccer, since the budget allocated for sport activities was very minimum. In their opinion, this limited the frequency and extent of exercise as well as organization of different soccer matches as well as their safety.

The present findings provide preliminary support for the TPB (Ajzen, 1991) by showing how temperamental traits interact with specific sport discipline and cognitive characteristics of female students, leading to success in the soccer domain. In this way, motivational and cognitive systems are related to each other, contributing to either success or bad performance in everyday life, as well as in physical activity and soccer sports competitions.

Conclusion

Self-efficacy (SE) is crucial for comprehending the dynamics and performance of female students as it affects their decision-making, motivation, participation as well as their collective performance and responses to setbacks in soccer. Findings from the present study lend support to findings from previous research that demonstrate self-efficacy influences on female soccer player's belief in their ability to perform well, handle pressure, and work hard to improve their skills. In the same vein, the study insists that are many talented Tanzanian girls who could become great football players, coaches, referees, and sports administrators. However, only a few of them get a chance to participate in football due to a lack of organization and infrastructure to encourage them, along with cultural barriers and taboos that hold them back.

This study concludes that, the majority of respondents engaged in soccer were teenage girls, whom their active participation in soccer was highly influenced by increased self-confidence, and provision of sports (soccer) scholarships. Furthermore, the study concludes that there is a positive association between self-efficacy and engagement in soccer among female students in HLIs in Tanzania. The findings of this study can be used by coach and sports psychologists to work on self-efficacy, among female students to increase their chance for success in sports competitions. Also, Human Resource Managers can benefit from the findings of this study by understanding the motivational factors that determine employee engagement in organizations.

Recommendations

In order to encourage more female students' engagement in soccer, the study recommend the follow:

1. HLIs can enhance women's sports by allocating more funding and resources to female teams, promoting gender equity among coaching personnel, providing services specifically for female athletes, and offering flexible schedules for academics.
2. Government policies aimed at supporting women's sports can include the promotion of role models, increased media exposure, and the provision of equal opportunities.
3. Sports coaches should promote female sports by developing strong relationships, offering support, and fostering an inclusive atmosphere.

4. Female soccer players can motivate their peers to engage in sports by being positive examples, encouraging others to participate, emphasizing the enjoyable and social elements of sports, celebrating collective achievements, and advocating for welcoming environments within their university team to ensure everyone feels included and comfortable.

Limitations and Direction for Future Research

According to Tarquil, (2016) there is no a research study which is completely perfect, and limitations are an inherent part of any research design. One of the study's limitations include a small sample size of female soccer players, posing caution in drawing conclusions and generalizing the results. In the future, the study should consider increasing the sample size to to enhance the accuracy, reliability, and generalization of findings, while also reducing the likelihood of errors. Secondly, the study's data was based on self-reported self-efficacy surveys, which may not fully capture students' responses and may be susceptible to response bias, especially in social desirability. Future soccer studies would consider observing the student's behavior in real-time or in controlled sports environments, rather than relying on their self reports. Finally, the study sample was drawn from HLIs female soccer teams and therefore participation was voluntary, and some female students decided not to participate. Therefore, they represented a sub population that was not included in this investigation. Future research could involve more students recruited from a more diverse sport teams in HLIs and tertiary colleges and comparing results between in these institutions in different sport categories.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that there is no any conflict of interest associated with this paper.

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