



An Investigation Into The Gender Imbalance In Formula One: Identifying The Barriers That impede Women From Entering The industry

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Background

Formula One (F1) is a sporting organisation primarily concerned with the hosting of Grand Prix motorsport races, classified as mega events, around the world [2].

Research suggests there is a gender imbalance within F1 with the majority of roles taken up by men [3]. This investigation attempts to understand whether barriers to F1 are the same across role types.



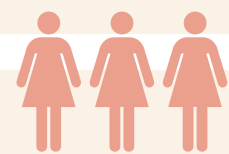
Research Aim

To critically investigate current barriers which may prevent women from entering F1's workforces across hard and soft roles.

Research Objectives

1. Critically review the literature to highlight previously identified barriers impeding women from working in F1.
2. Review and critically analyse whether these barriers are the same across hard or soft roles.
3. Identify current barriers impacting women through primary research.
4. Evaluate from the primary research findings whether there are any limitations currently preventing an equal split of men and women across F1's workforce.
5. Provide a tool for future research through the creation of a conceptual framework specific to F1 illustrating potential barriers and ways of support.

Methodology



- 3 female participants who currently work in F1 took part in semi-structured online interviews.
- Structured using the pre-determined conceptual framework (CF) devised from the literature review.
- Taking an interpretivist approach purposive sampling was utilised to select the participants who would best answer the research question [4].
- Through an abductive approach, thematic analysis guided the analysis of the results determining relationships between factors and participants' journeys into F1.

Key Findings

The finalised CF demonstrates the symbiosis between the theorised support needed and the current barriers that impede women from achieving careers in F1's general workforces.

Three key areas are highlighted during participants' lives of Early Life, Development, & Career that have determining levels of influence on their likelihood of entering F1.

Additionally, two limitations were highlighted that may prevent an equal gender split in F1 in the near future.

- Low visibility of women in *hard* roles.
- The young age of women being impacted by current gender driven initiatives.

Early Life

Barriers:

- 'Hard' Subjects required by top universities
- University level needed for role
- Cost

Support:

- Parental support and mentorship
- Sporting Background
- Higher socio-economic background
- Role model in sport

Development

Barriers:

- Predetermined Societal Norms of Roles Appropriate for Women in F1
- Low Visibility of Women in F1
- Lack of Female-Led Mentorship Programs

Support:

- Individual Clarity and Conviction on Future Career Founded in Early Life
- Empowerment programs
- Safe Spaces for Shared Activities Between Women
- Female role model

Career

Barriers:

- Unconscious Bias
- Experience Imbalance due to Motherhood
- Lack of Female-Focused Leadership Programs

Support:

- Development programs that focus on women as leaders
- Company culture actively support female development
- Support During Motherhood

Finalised Conceptual Framework

Conclusion

The CF provides a visual tool for those within the industry of what women may be facing and what support they may need to help overcome these barriers and enter F1.

However, the research question was only partially answered as solely women in *hard* roles took part in the research.

A recommendation for future research would therefore be; to replicate this research with a minimum of three participants in soft roles in F1 to understand whether barriers and potential support differ across role types.

References

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- [2] Gezici, F. and Er, S. (2014), "What has been left after hosting the Formula 1 Grand Prix in Istanbul?", *Cities*, Vol. 41, pp. 44-53.
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- [4] Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019) *Research Methods For Business Students*, 8th edn, Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

