



Cosmopolitan Feminism Movement in Addressing Social Issues: A Holistic Approach of Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) Social Justice Council

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Abstrak

This research analyzes the role of the cosmopolitan feminist movement in addressing social issues through a holistic approach with the WNBA Social Justice Council as a case study. The issue at hand is the complexity of global social challenges, raising the question of the extent to which a holistic approach is able to address these dynamics. Through an in-depth analysis of the policies, programs and activities implemented by the WNBA Social Justice Council, this research aims to identify effective strategies in responding to and addressing various social challenges. The research method uses a qualitative approach by analyzing the policies and activities of the WNBA Social Justice Council. The concepts of cosmopolitan feminism and global justice serve as theoretical frameworks to guide the exploration of cross-border solidarity in response to social issues. The research findings show that this movement successfully integrates a holistic approach through advocacy, education, and community support. In summary, this research confirms that the cosmopolitan feminist movement can effectively respond to and bring positive change in addressing social issues as a whole.

1. Introduction

The WNBA Social Justice Council (SJC) was founded in 2020 to serve as a platform within the international women's basketball community. Its main purpose is to create space for dialogue and raise awareness about critical social issues, including LGBTQ rights, race, gender equality, human rights, voting rights, and gun

violence. The council seeks to amplify voices and spark meaningful conversations surrounding these important topics, aiming to foster positive change both within and beyond the basketball world. This initiative aligns with the WNBA's commitment to social justice and advocacy for marginalized communities. In addition to raising awareness, the WNBA SJC approaches these issues through a holistic and inclusive lens. By thoroughly examining the roots of these societal challenges, the council ensures that its actions are well-informed and comprehensive. It delves into the complexities of each issue to better understand the broader social and political contexts, allowing for more effective advocacy. The council's approach goes beyond surface-level solutions, aiming to make lasting impacts through thoughtful and strategic interventions. The WNBA SJC's role extends beyond the basketball court, acting as a key international organization in advocating for human rights and equality. It works to fulfill its advocacy function by collaborating with other global movements and using its platform to amplify underrepresented voices. This interconnected approach helps the SJC remain relevant and influential in advancing social justice across a range of issues, demonstrating the power of sports organizations in driving societal change. Through its continued efforts, the council strives to contribute to a more just and equitable world.

Historically, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement was created to address social and racial injustices that marginalized communities, particularly Black people, have faced. The movement gained significant momentum in response to police violence and systemic racism, which were brought to global attention following the tragic deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in the United States. These incidents sparked protests not only in the U.S. but also across the world, calling for justice and greater accountability. The movement aimed to highlight the need for reform in law enforcement and challenge the racial disparities that persist in society (Harsa, 2020). In the world of sports, the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) Social Justice Council has taken an active role in supporting the BLM movement and advocating for social change. Through their efforts, the WNBA players have used their platform to promote awareness of issues like racial inequality and police brutality. Some of their notable actions include wearing shirts with the phrase "Say Her Name" to honor Breonna Taylor, displaying protest slogans on the court, and supporting the rights of transgender and LGBTQ+ individuals (Reuters, 2020). The WNBA's initiatives have set a powerful example for other sports leagues, encouraging them to take action and use their visibility to address social and racial injustices within their own communities.

In pursuing its mission, the WNBA SJC is primarily focused on advocating for gender equality and eliminating discrimination based on gender. This is evidenced by the role of professional women basketball players fighting for equal pay and the same rights as male basketball players, as well as equal opportunities on and off the court. Additionally, the movement addresses issues such as sexual harassment, violence against women, and reproductive rights equality. The dialogue forum initiated by the WNBA SJC also encompasses issues related to social and racial justice, such as the rights of minority groups, including Black women and sexual minorities. The aim is to address wage gaps and other discriminatory treatments against female athletes, who often receive less attention than male athletes.

The steps to achieve these goals are based on three main pillars: 1) the education pillar, which is conducted through social media campaigns, articles, and

other publications; 2) the advocacy pillar, where the movement speaks on behalf of women or groups that do not have a voice and are most vulnerable in the fight for justice; and 3) taking direct action by providing direct assistance to those in need, including financial support and counseling (WNBA Official Basketball, 2020).

2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative research method aimed at understanding the phenomenon of sport diplomacy of WNBA's movement which concerned to gender issues. The data collection and analysis involved non-numerical data, including words, images, or interviews. According to Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative research is a reflective research method that questions social reality and produces interpretative explanations of social phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This method involves an interactive process between researchers and participants and requires in-depth analysis and self-reflection from the researcher. Furthermore, Creswell states that qualitative research is used to understand social phenomena through the experiences and perspectives of participants (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). This method yields deep descriptive and narrative data, focusing on understanding complex social contexts. In other words, qualitative research is a research method that focuses on gaining a deep understanding of complex social phenomena through the collection and analysis of non-numerical data. This method involves a process of self-reflection and in-depth data interpretation and can help develop a broader understanding of the research subject.

This study used in-depth interview data collection techniques with athletes, coaches, and observers of the WNBA movement to gain first-hand perspectives on gender issues in sports diplomacy. The interviews were designed to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes regarding the WNBA's role in promoting gender equality, as well as its impact on society and sports policy. In addition to interviews, this study also collected data from official documents and publications related to the WNBA movement, such as annual reports, news articles, and social media campaigns related to gender advocacy. These data provide deeper insights into the communication strategies and influence of sports diplomacy in changing views on gender in the world of professional sports. In addition, observations were also conducted to analyze the dynamics of interactions between participants in events or forums held by the WNBA, both in the form of public discussions and community activities. These observations allow researchers to further understand how gender issues are translated into practice, as well as how this sports diplomacy is received by various parties. The data analysis technique was carried out inductively by categorizing and interpreting the collected data based on emerging themes, to build a deeper understanding of the social phenomenon being studied. This process involves deep self-reflection by the researcher to ensure that the resulting understanding can describe the complexity of existing reality.

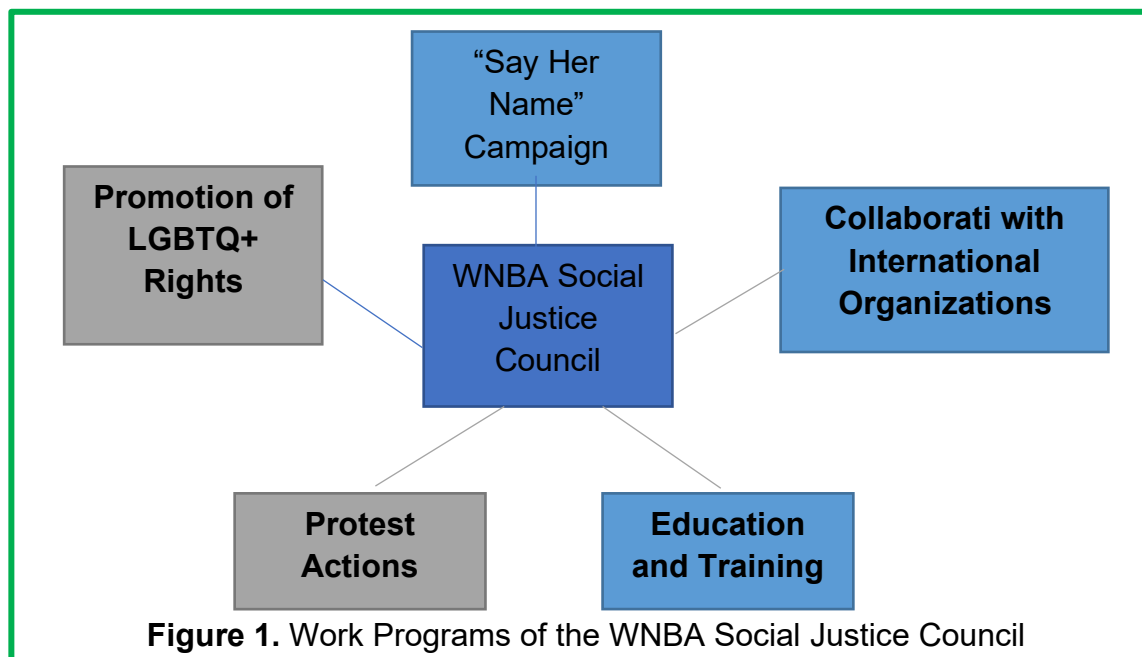
In this research data analysis, the approach used is thematic analysis to explore and understand the patterns that emerge from the data collected through interviews, observations, and related documents. The analysis begins with the stage of transcribing interviews and recording observation results, which are then organized into smaller data units. Each data unit is analyzed to identify key themes related to the WNBA movement's sports diplomacy and gender issues. Some themes that may emerge include the role of the WNBA in raising gender awareness, the challenges faced by female athletes in the world of professional sports, and the

communication strategies used by the WNBA to influence sports policy and society. Once the main themes are found, the researcher conducts a more in-depth analysis to understand how the themes are interconnected and provide insight into the phenomenon being studied. This process also involves self-reflection to consider the influence of the researcher's perspective on data interpretation. By using this qualitative approach, the researcher seeks to describe the broader social context behind the WNBA movement, including public perceptions of gender equality and its impact on global sports policy. This analysis aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of sports diplomacy in advancing gender issues in the world of sport, as well as to identify practical implications that can be drawn from the findings of this study.

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1. The Holistic Approach of the Feminist Movement by the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) Social Justice Council

Essentially, the struggle undertaken by the WNBA Social Justice Council (SJC) does not focus on hatred towards men but rather on social issues, and it can be categorized within the fourth wave of feminism, where the development of issues occurs in the social realm. Structurally, the organization comprises WNBA players, team owners, and player union representatives who are responsible for developing strategies and promoting social and racial justice issues using a holistic approach. The holistic approach employed by the WNBA SJC plays a crucial role in addressing social and racial injustices and promoting justice and equality. By utilizing their platform as athletes and community leaders, the WNBA SJC can advocate for social issues and bring about positive change in society. This initiative aims to raise awareness, promote positive change, and advocate for social reform. The work programs that have been implemented include:



First, the WNBA Social Justice Council (SJC) launched the “Say Her Name” campaign to honor Breonna Taylor, with all WNBA players wearing shirts bearing the phrase during games to raise awareness and promote racial justice. Second, the

WNBA SJC collaborates with various social organizations, such as Black Lives Matter, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and When We All Vote, to promote social issues and racial justice. These partnerships provide resources and support to help these organizations achieve their goals. Third, the WNBA SJC offers training and resources to raise awareness and understanding through educational activities and discussions to address social, gender, and racial issues with players and the community. Fourth, the players and the council also demonstrate solidarity through social protest movements by wearing shirts with protest slogans and displaying protest messages on the court. Fifth, the WNBA SJC promotes LGBTQ+ and transgender rights by wearing shirts with slogans like "Love Wins" and "Protect Trans Kids" during WNBA Pride games.

A holistic approach essentially considers that a problem cannot be understood in isolation from its broader context. In this regard, the WNBA Social Justice Council (SJC) uses this approach by focusing on social issues such as gender, racial, and social equality, along with related issues of environment, economy, politics, and even security. This can be analyzed in terms of its influence on integrating holistic approaches and global justice into their work programs, impacting the wider society and the global environment as a whole. Therefore, this approach involves comprehensive thinking, bringing together various perspectives and disciplines, and considering factors that can affect the overall situation (Walters, 2012). For example, the WNBA's initiative to wear special uniforms that critique social issues like racial justice or gender equality is not only seen as a symbolic act but also as part of a holistic effort to address social issues both on and off the court. Additionally, this action involves collaboration among players, coaches, and team management with local organizations and communities to create larger and more long-lasting change.

Furthermore, the implementation of the holistic approach by the WNBA SJC includes: (1) Advocacy and awareness, which involves championing social issues and racial justice by using their platform as athletes and community leaders through social media, public campaigns, and interviews; (2) Education and training, providing education and training to WNBA members, staff, young players, and the community on social issues and racial justice, including the provision of resources; (3) Collaboration and partnership, working with social organizations and political leaders to address social issues and forming partnerships with social organizations to provide support and resources for those in need; (4) Implementation and evaluation, taking concrete actions to address social issues by conducting several social campaigns and initiatives, such as "Take A Seat, Take A Stand" and "Justice Movement," as well as providing financial support and resources for social organizations focused on women's and children's issues.

A holistic approach is often used in various fields such as health, education, environment, and social issues (Walters, 2012). In its application, this approach involves collaboration and engagement from various stakeholders, including individuals, groups, organizations, and government institutions, to achieve a more comprehensive understanding and more effective solutions. This relates to efforts to adopt a holistic approach in responding to cases within sports organizations, especially those related to social issues and justice. Based on this explanation, the holistic approach implemented by this movement consists of three main pillars: education, advocacy, and direct action, aiming to ensure that each case is

addressed with a thorough understanding by considering various factors that influence the WNBA SJC's work program in addressing gender inequality issues.

The holistic approach in the cosmopolitan feminist movement of the WNBA Social Justice Council (SJC) is crucial because it considers that the feminist struggle must account for the various factors that affect women's lives in a comprehensive manner. This approach focuses on equal rights and fair treatment for all women, regardless of ethnic background, religion, sexual orientation, and social status. In line with this perspective, the approach comprehensively addresses the importance of combating discrimination against women in all its forms, including discrimination that may occur due to social class, race, and sexual orientation. Fundamentally, the WNBA SJC recognizes that the feminist struggle is not only related to issues of reproductive rights or equal pay but also involves issues such as sexual violence, equal access to education and healthcare, and labor rights.

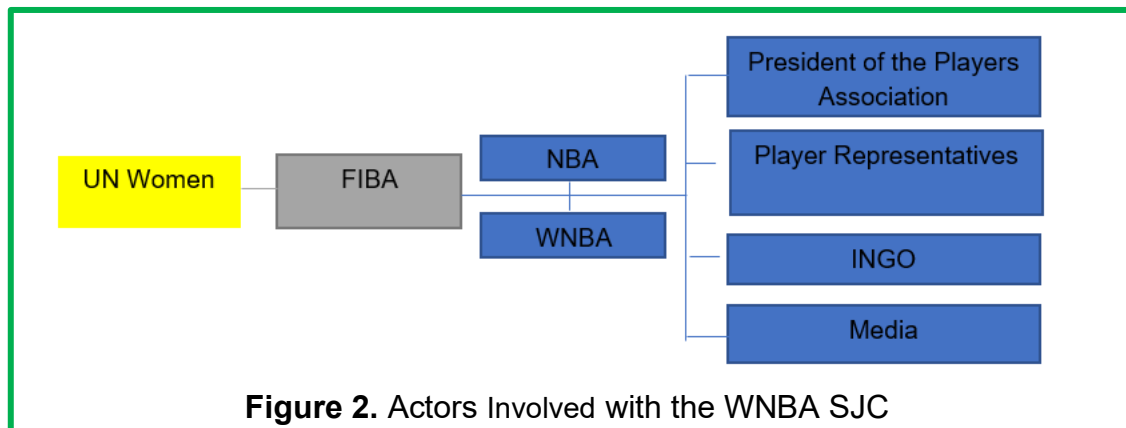
Moreover, the holistic approach also considers the relationship between the feminist struggle and the broader fight for social justice, including the struggle for immigrant rights, LGBT rights, and the rights of other minority groups. The holistic approach in the cosmopolitan feminist movement of the WNBA SJC also emphasizes the importance of collaboration and solidarity among women from diverse backgrounds and identities. This enables women to support each other in their struggles and strengthens the feminist movement as a whole. In other words, the holistic approach in the WNBA SJC is relevant in helping to examine the various factors affecting women's lives. Through this approach, the cosmopolitan feminist movement of the WNBA SJC can create sustainable positive change in society and advocate for justice for all women.

3.2 Implementation of the Cosmopolitan Feminism Movement by the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) Social Justice Council

As a cosmopolitan feminist movement, the WNBA Social Justice Council (SJC) represents a movement focused on the belief that women should be granted equal rights with men in all aspects of life, including political, economic, social, and cultural spheres. In this context, the cosmopolitan feminist movement emphasizes the importance of solidarity among women from diverse backgrounds and interests to achieve common goals in the pursuit of equality and social justice. In the actions of the WNBA SJC, female athletes from various ethnicities and backgrounds build solidarity and unite in the shared pursuit of equality and social justice in society. In the process, the WNBA movement has helped raise public awareness worldwide about issues such as racism, violence against women, and gender equality through partnerships and media, paving the way for other women's basketball organizations to promote social issues through sports.

Furthermore, the tangible implementation of the WNBA SJC's primary goals was realized through the increase in the minimum salary for female athletes in 2020 to \$57,000, marking a 30% increase from the previous year (Hill & Brown, 2020). In addition, athletes also received better health insurance and other benefits, and in 2020, both the WNBA and the Women's National Basketball Players Association (WNBPA) agreed to a new collective bargaining agreement that provided female athletes with opportunities for higher salaries, as well as improved benefits and protections. However, the efforts and initiatives of the WNBA SJC would not be able

to function optimally without the support or involvement of several key actors, including:



The figure illustrates that efforts to advocate for social justice and police reform involve actors from various elements and media platforms. Furthermore, as the highest entity, UN Women, as part of the United Nations organization, plays several significant roles, namely: 1) Providing resource support and guidance to the WNBA on how to promote gender equality and combat discrimination through women empowerment programs and promoting gender equality values using educational aspects; 2) Launching the HeForShe Campaign, which emphasizes the role of men in collaborating to achieve gender equality; 3) OrangeTheWorld Campaign aims to raise awareness and advocate through technological innovation and to stop violence against women, which began on November 25, 1991 (Brouwer & Mansfield, 2021). This campaign is conducted online to address illegal activities such as online harassment, illegal content, hacking, and privacy violations, as seen in cases like revenge porn; 4) Advocating for human rights, partnering in women's empowerment on a global scale, and providing a platform to be a mediator to raise public awareness about key issues in the WNBA SJC movement.

Moreover, FIBA also plays a role, albeit indirectly, by providing guidance and establishing regulations through the formation of the Diversity and Inclusion Commission. This commission aims to encourage inclusivity across all lines of international basketball, focusing on gender, cultural diversity, and racial equality, which are central to the WNBA SJC (Hums & Walker, 2021). The third actors are the NBA (National Basketball Association) and WNBA, both of which synergize by supporting all programs of the Social Justice Council movement through the provision of resources, including legal advisors, influencers, and media platforms, to expand networks and build partnerships with other actors and organizations.

The influence of the collaborative initiatives between the NBA and WNBA has inspired and raised awareness among other sports organizations to take similar actions. Some examples include the NBA launching a social justice movement initiative in the form of the "NBA Together" campaign, which aims to advocate for equality and social justice (Bednarek & Seweryniak, 2020). The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) launched initiatives such as the "NCAA Inclusion Forum" and "NCAA Common Ground," which aim to promote inclusion and combat discrimination in sports. The NCAA also collaborates with the WNBA SJC to hold discussions and events addressing gender equality in sports (Hums & Walker, 2021). Euroleague Basketball launched the "One Team" campaign to promote

inclusion and combat social discrimination in sports and collaborate with other organizations, including the WNBA SJC, to enhance gender equality in sports. Major League Baseball (MLB) and the WNBA SJC have policies that allow athletes to wear uniforms and equipment that match their gender identity. Additionally, MLB observes Pride Month, celebrated every June, as a step towards advocating for gender freedom and LGBTQ+ rights (Bryant, 2020).

The National Football League (NFL) has hosted several discussion forums, such as: a) "Inspiring Change" in 2019, which involved former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, former WNBA President Lisa Borders, and NFL coach Jim Caldwell; b) the virtual forum "Voices" in 2020, addressing issues of gender, women's rights, and LGBTQ+ rights; c) the Black History Month celebration named "Lift Every Voice and Sing" held in 2021, featuring artistic performances from WNBA and NFL players and focusing on social justice issues (Bednarek & Seweryniak, 2020). Euroleague Women launched a campaign called #EuroleagueWomenUnited, which aims to promote gender equality in sports and combat discrimination (Kian, 2021). The Women's National Basketball Players Association (WNBPA) created a program called "The Justice Movement" to discuss and use the #PowerItWomen platform to advocate for female athletes' struggles (Pierce & Yellin, 2020). The Women's Sports Foundation promotes sports for women through campaigns and programs related to increasing women's participation in sports (Brown & Krempley, 2020). The FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup adopted initiatives like "Time Out for Women" to raise awareness about current social issues in women's basketball (Hums & Walker, 2021).

Furthermore, the participants supporting the Social Justice Council include 12 WNBA teams, which have taken structured and targeted steps and initiatives to: 1) display messages such as Black Lives Matter and Justice Now on billboards during games since the WNBA league season 2019-2020 began on July 30, 2020. The NBA, represented by several players like LeBron James and Sterling Brown, and the National Basketball Players Association officially allowed advertisements in tournament arenas at Walt Disney World Resort Orlando; 2) wearing #SayHerName shirts, which began at the opening game at IMG Academy in Bradenton, Florida; 3) hosting webinars related to gender equality issues, such as the Women's History Month Panel in March 2021, focusing on women's roles, Gender Pay Equality in Sports in April 2021, discussing the pay gap between male and female athletes, Athlete Activism and Gender Equity in September 2021, addressing steps to combat gender discrimination through sports; 4) conducting the Leadership Development Program to train leadership skills, career development, and advocacy efforts for gender equality, as well as mentoring programs and professional skills training in technical, managerial, and communication abilities (Mathewson & Asmelash, 2020).

In a professional or expert context, the actors involved in this movement include Nneka Ogwumike, the President of the WNBA Players Association and a member of the Los Angeles Sparks team. On the player side, several representatives advocate for gender equality issues, such as Layshia Clarendon (New York Liberty), Sydney Colson (Chicago Sky), Tierra Ruffin-Pratt (Los Angeles Sparks), A'ja Wilson (Las Vegas Aces), Carolyn Swords (Chicago Sky), Elizabeth Williams (Atlanta Dream), and Satou Sabally (Dallas Wings) (WNBA Official Twitter, 2020). Beyond basketball, media also play an essential role in advocacy efforts to achieve gender equality,

eliminate violence against women, and promote LGBTQ+ rights on the field through various platforms such as television, newspapers, magazines, and social media.

Moreover, the media is utilized to help WNBA players communicate their messages to a broader audience, expanding the impact of the social movement. Some of the media involved include ESPN, which has consistently aired interviews with WNBA players and reported on their actions related to this movement since 2020. The *Undeclared* highlights sports issues with a holistic approach, examining the context behind the Social Justice Council movement. The *New York Times* also reported on the formation of WNBA SJC in 2020, while social media platform Twitter actively spreads hashtags related to WNBA SJC and gender equality issues. These hashtags include #CountIt, #PowerOfWomen, and #MakeWayMakeChange, reflecting the tangible actions of players and the WNBA SJC movement in advocating against gender-based violence (WNBA Official Twitter, 2021). The hashtag #TransAwarenessWeek also manifests the WNBA SJC's collaboration with gender-based non-governmental organizations, represented by Raquel Willis, a Black transgender activist working to build leadership opportunities for Black transgender women and broaden the community's identity to avoid the repressive actions often directed at the transgender community (WNBA Official Twitter, 2020).

Furthermore, the WNBA SJC actively collaborates with national and international organizations, such as the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, which aims to provide financial assistance and counseling to victims of racial discrimination (Bryant, 2020). The Bail Project synergizes with WNBA SJC in legal guarantees, where most WNBA players from each team donate their earnings to this nonprofit organization to promote messages that showcase sports as a means to advocate for social justice, gender equality, human rights, and issues with social, economic, political, and security backgrounds (Snyder, 2021). In summary, the WNBA SJC positively strengthens women's roles in society, particularly in sports, often dominated by men. Through this movement, the WNBA seeks to address discrimination and reinforce the position of female athletes in sports.

In the context of cosmopolitan feminism and a holistic approach, the tangible actions of the WNBA SJC emphasize the importance of addressing global inequalities and discrimination and promoting equality and social justice worldwide. In practice, the implementation of cosmopolitan feminism can significantly expand the scope of social justice issues, allowing the movement to address broader and more complex issues and promote global experiences and perspectives that foster moral values in appreciating differences and diversity in societal experiences and perspectives, thereby strengthening efforts to build equality and social justice worldwide. However, there is also some criticism of implementing cosmopolitan feminism within the WNBA SJC movement, such as neglecting local issues and diversity due to the global focus of the movement. Therefore, implementing cosmopolitan feminism within the WNBA SJC movement should be done cautiously, always considering the local context in advocating for comprehensive social justice.

4. Conclusion

The WNBA SJC has set an example for other sports leagues in addressing social and racial injustices. This movement has raised awareness and promoted positive societal change by leveraging the platform of sports organizations to champion social issues and racial justice, ultimately driving decision-making among

political leaders and communities to take similar actions. Furthermore, the development of the WNBA SJC continues to progress and produces positive impacts on society. The initiatives and activities they undertake play a significant role in addressing social injustice and gender inequality. In short, a cosmopolitan feminist movement with a holistic approach can help address social issues more effectively.

This approach involves education, advocacy, and direct action to achieve equality and social justice and address gender-related issues in the global sports world. First, the holistic approach is not only used as a tool to view this phenomenon based on economic, security, and political aspects, but it can also be utilized in building partnerships with both international and national organizations, as well as with UN bodies like UN Women, to integrate social messages both in marketing and competitions through the moral messages conveyed by the WNBA SJC. Second, the positive goals of this movement have led to salary increases, marking the initial steps toward realizing gender equality in basketball, which can be implemented significantly.

Third, the WNBA SJC has been able to influence and encourage other basketball organizations to implement policies related to gender equality and the elimination of racial discrimination. The WNBA SJC movement is an example of a movement that practices this holistic approach in addressing social and political issues related to gender justice and human rights through tangible actions such as raising female athletes' salaries and increasing initiatives by sports organizations other than the WNBA to combat violence against women, social injustice, and gender and racial discrimination. In other words, the WNBA SJC takes a holistic approach by considering various factors that influence the social issues they face through education, collaboration, and work programs to create positive societal change. By collaborating with stakeholders, media, and related national and international organizations, they aim to achieve more comprehensive and sustainable solutions.

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