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Gender, Professionalization, and Economic Agency in China's Contemporary Equestrian Industry

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Abstract

Equestrian sport occupies a unique position within global athletic culture as one of the few disciplines in which men and women compete directly under identical rules. In China, the rapid professionalization of equestrian sport has created new opportunities for female participation, leadership, and economic agency within a historically male-dominated agricultural and sporting domain. This study examines the gendered dimensions of China's emerging equestrian industry through a socio-economic and institutional lens.

Using a case-based analysis of elite equestrian training systems, the research explores how professionalization has reshaped gender participation in coaching, management, and athlete representation. It evaluates how equestrian institutions intersect with broader patterns of rural modernization, sports industrialization, and female empowerment within urban middle-class contexts. The study also integrates sustainability considerations, analyzing how resource management practices and long-term economic strategies influence the structural accessibility of the sport.

Findings suggest that equestrian professionalization creates new forms of gender-neutral competitive space while simultaneously reinforcing class and resource barriers. Sustainable industry governance, transparency in institutional structures, and inclusive training policies are essential to ensuring equitable access and long-term resilience. By situating equestrian development within gender studies discourse, this research contributes to conversations about women's agency in emerging sports economies and challenges traditional assumptions about gendered labor within agricultural-performance systems.

Keywords: Women in Sports, Equestrian Industry, Agricultural Economics, Socio-Economic Transformation