



ISSN: 2456-4419

Impact Factor: (RJIF): 5.18

Yoga 2018; 3(2): 417-422

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www.theyogicjournal.com

Received: 06-05-2018

Accepted: 08-06-2018

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Historical sketch of women's participation in sports: an overview

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Abstract

Women's sport history started back in the 19th century. By the end of the 19th century, horseback riding, archery, golf, tennis, skiing and skating were being enjoyed among women in upper social class. The first time for female athletes to participate in the modern Olympic Games was the second Olympic Games in 1900. Although the level of participation and performance still varies greatly by country and by sport, women's sports are widely accepted throughout the world today. In many sports women usually do not compete on equal terms against men. Although there has been a rise in participation by women in sports, a large disparity still remains. These disparities are prevalent globally and continue to hinder equality in sports. Many institutions and programs still remain conservative and do not contribute to gender equity in sports.

The first international conference on women and sport, which brought together policy and decision makers in sport at both national and international level, took place in Brighton, UK from 5-8 May 1994. The International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG) was established and it is an independent body of key governmental and non-governmental organizations which aims to empower women and improve their roles in sport.

Despite growing participation of women in sport in recent years and increased opportunities for women to participate in domestic and international arenas, increased representation of women in decision making and leadership roles within sport has not followed. Women are significantly under-represented in management, coaching and officiating, particularly at the higher levels. Without women leaders, decision makers and role models within sport, equal opportunities for women and girls will not be achieved. Participation by women in sports increased dramatically after Title IX introduction, amid fears that this new law would jeopardize men's sports programs. Title IX has had a significant impact on athletics at the high school and collegiate level for female students.

Muslim women are less likely to take part in sport than Western non-Muslims. There are many barriers for Muslim women in relation to sports participation. A significant barrier to Muslim women's sports participation is bans on the Islamic headscarf, commonly known as the hijab. At the same time, many Muslim female athletes have achieved significant success in athletic competitions. Black women athletes still are fighting for a change and equality for women athletes.

This paper emphasize on historical participation of women in sports, the Brighton declaration with certain aims and principles so that women can stand at an equal position with males while participating in sports. This paper also highlights women's participation in sports in different countries.

Keywords: Olympic games, women, sports, participation, disparity, discrimination and organizations

Introduction

Women's sport history started back in the 19th century. By the end of the 19th century, horseback riding, archery, golf, tennis, skiing and skating were being enjoyed among women in upper social class. The first time for female athletes to participate in the modern Olympic Games was the second Olympic Games in 1900. Only free male Greek citizens were allowed to participate in the first modern Olympic Games as well as the ancient Olympic Games. According to the IOC (International Olympic Committee), only 12 female athletes participated in the second Olympic Games out of the 1066 athletes from 19 countries. They competed in only two events which were golf and tennis. In the 3rd St. Louis Olympics, archery was the only women's event. In the 4th London Olympics, archery, figure skating, and tennis became women's events, and diving, swimming and tennis in the 5th Stockholm Olympics. The decision of whether women can participate in the event or not was up to men who operated the

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Olympic Games. The events that men considered being a "feminine sport" were recognized as women's sport events. Female participation and popularity in sports increased dramatically in the twentieth century, especially in the last quarter-century, reflecting changes in modern societies that emphasized gender parity. Although the level of participation and performance still varies greatly by country and by sport, women's sports are widely accepted throughout the world today. In a few instances, such as figure skating, female athletes rival or exceed their male counterparts in popularity. In many sports women usually do not compete on equal terms against men. Although there has been a rise in participation by women in sports, a large disparity still remains. These disparities are prevalent globally and continue to hinder equality in sports. Many institutions and programs still remain conservative and do not contribute to gender equity in sports. Recently, we have come across many outstanding performances by female players in soccer and baseball, which used to be considered a sport for only men. A total of 204 countries and regions, the largest number in Olympic history, participated in the Beijing Olympic Games. Among the 25 medals that Japan won, 12 were won by female athletes. It seems that the gap between men and women in sport is getting much smaller when we look at women's sport history. However, there are still definite issues that must be solved concerning women's sport. For example, female athletes who must raise their family and children often face challenges of balancing athletic career and personal life. There is still a low ratio of female coaches and executives in sports organizations. In short, the number of female coaches who have the potential to become leaders has not increased yet. Considering these issues in women's sport, Japanese Center for Research on Women in Sport encourages research to ensure that female athletes can focus on their athletic performance in a better environment.

Women's professional team sports achieved popularity for the first time in the 1990s, particularly in basketball and football (soccer). This popularity has been asymmetric, being strongest in the U.S., certain European countries and former Communist states. Thus, women's soccer was originally dominated by the U.S., China, and Norway, who have historically fielded weak men's national teams. However, several nations with strong and even dominant men's national teams, such as Germany, Sweden, and Brazil, have established themselves as women's powers. Despite this increase in popularity, women's professional sports leagues continue to struggle financially.

Modern sports have seen the development of a higher profile for female athletes in other historically male sports, such as golf, marathons or ice hockey. These significant participation rise, has allowed more women to participate in traditionally male dominated sports and increased the sports popularity globally. As of 2013, the only sports that men, but not women play professionally in the United States are football, baseball, and Ultimate Frisbee. Although basketball, soccer and hockey have female sports leagues, they are far behind in terms of exposure and funding compared to the men's teams. Recently there has been much more crossover as to which sports males and females participate in, although there are still some differences. For example, at the 1992 Winter Olympics, both genders were allowed to participate in the sport of figure skating, previously a female-only sporting event. However, the programs for the event required men to perform three triple jumps, and women only one.

History of Women's Participation in Sports

Ancient civilizations

Before each ancient Olympic Games there was a separate women's athletic event held at the same stadium in Olympia, the Heraean Games, dedicated to the goddess Hera. Myth held that the Heraea was founded by Hippodameia, the wife of the king who founded the Olympics. According to E. Norman Gardiner: "At the festival there were races for maidens of various ages. Their course was 500 feet, or one-sixth less than the men's stadium. The maidens ran with their hair down their backs, a short tunic reaching just below the knee, and their right shoulder bare to the breast. The victors received crowns of olive and a share of the heifer sacrificed to Hera. They had, too, the right of setting up their statues in the Heraeum."

Although married women were excluded from the Olympics even as spectators, Cynisca won an Olympic game as owner of a chariot (champions of chariot races were owners not riders), as did Euryleonis, Belistiche, Zeuxo, Encrateia and Hermione, Timareta, Theodota and Cassia.

After the classical period, there was some participation by women in men's athletic festivals. Women in Sparta began to practice the same athletic exercises that men did, exhibiting the qualities of Spartan soldiers. Plato even supported women in sports by advocating running and sword-fighting for women. Notably, cultural representations of a pronounced female physicality were not limited to sport in Ancient Greece and can also be found in representations of a group of warrioresses known as the Amazons.

Early modern

The first Olympic Games in the modern era, which were in 1896, were not open to women, but since then the number of women who have participated in the Olympic Games have increased dramatically.

19th and early 20th centuries

The educational committees of the French Revolution (1789) included intellectual, moral, and physical education for both girls and boys. With the victory of Napoleon less than twenty years later, physical education was reduced to military preparedness for boys and men. In Germany, the physical education of Guts Muths (1793) included girl's education. This included the measurement of performances of girls. This led to women's sport being more actively pursued in Germany than in most other countries. Women's sports in the late 1800s focused on correct posture, facial and bodily beauty, muscles, and health.

Prior to 1870, activities for women were recreational rather than sport-specific in nature. They were noncompetitive, informal, rule-less; they emphasized physical activity rather than competition. Sports for women before the 20th century placed more emphasis on fitness rather than the competitive aspects.

In 1916 the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) held its first national championship for women (in swimming). In 1923 the AAU also sponsored the First American Track and Field championships for women. Earlier that year the Women's Amateur Athletic Association (WAAA) held the first WAAA Championships. Few women competed in sports in Europe and North America before the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as social changes favored increased female participation in society as equals with men. Although women were technically permitted to participate in many sports, relatively few did. There was often disapproval of those who did.

"Bicycling has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world." Susan B. Anthony said "I stand and rejoice every time I see a woman ride on a wheel. It gives women a feeling of freedom and self-reliance."

The modern Olympics had female competitors from 1900 onward, though women at first participated in considerably fewer events than men. Women first made their appearance in the Olympic Games in Paris in 1900. That year, 22 women competed in tennis, sailing, croquet, equestrian, and golf. As of the IOC-Congress in Paris 1914 a woman's medal had formally the same weight as a man's in the official medal table. This left the decisions about women's participation to the individual international sports federations. Concern over the physical strength and stamina of women led to the discouragement of female participation in more physically intensive sports, and in some cases led to less physically demanding female versions of male sports. Thus netball was developed out of basketball and softball out of baseball.

In response to the lack of support for women's international sport the Fédération Sportive Féminine Internationale was founded in France by Alice Milliat. This organization initiated the Women's Olympiad (held 1921, 1922 and 1923) and the Women's World Games, which attracted participation of nearly 20 countries and was held four times (1922, 1926, 1930 and 1934). In 1924 Women's Olympiad was held at Stamford Bridge in London. The International Olympic Committee began to incorporate greater participation of women at the Olympics in response. The number of Olympic women athletes increased over five-fold in the period, going from 65 at the 1920 Summer Olympics to 331 at the 1936 Summer Olympics.

Amateur competitions became the primary venue for women's sports. Throughout the mid-twentieth century, Communist countries dominated many Olympic sports, including women's sports, due to state-sponsored athletic programs that were technically regarded as amateur. The legacy of these programs endured, as former Communist countries continue to produce many of the top female athletes. Germany and Scandinavia also developed strong women's athletic programs in this period. Edith Cummings was the first woman athlete to appear on the cover of Time magazine, a major step in women's athletic history.

Women's Sport in the International Conferences

The Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport: Women Sport and the Challenge of Change

The first international conference on women and sport, which brought together policy and decision makers in sport at both national and international level, took place in Brighton, UK from 5-8 May 1994. The International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG) was established. IWG is an independent body of key governmental and non-governmental organizations which aims to empower women and improve their roles in sport. IWG hosts an international conference on women and sport every 4 years. It was organised by the British Sports Council and supported by the International Olympic Committee. The conference specifically addressed the issue of how to accelerate the process of change that would redress the imbalances women face in their participation and involvement in sport. The 280 delegates from 82 countries representing governmental and non-governmental organisations, national Olympic committees, international and national sport federations and educational and research institutions, endorsed the following Declaration. The Declaration provides the principles that should guide

action intended to increase the involvement of women in sport at all levels and in all functions and roles.

The IWG hosted further world conferences every four years, with the result of the Windfoek Call for Action (1998), Montreal Tool Kit (2002) and Brighton plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration (2014). The conferences pretend to "develop a sporting culture that enables and values the full involvement of women in every aspect of sport and physical activity", by "increasing the involvement of women in sport at all levels and in all functions and roles".

Also, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), founded by Pierre, Baron de Coubertin in 1894, organizes an international conference on women and sport every 4 years in the same year of the summer Olympic Games.

Despite growing participation of women in sport in recent years and increased opportunities for women to participate in domestic and international arenas, increased representation of women in decision making and leadership roles within sport has not followed. Women are significantly under-represented in management, coaching and officiating, particularly at the higher levels. Without women leaders, decision makers and role models within sport, equal opportunities for women and girls will not be achieved. Women's experiences, values and attitudes can enrich, enhance and develop sport. Similarly, participation in sport can enrich, enhance and develop women's lives.

The overriding aim is to develop a sporting culture that enables and values the full involvement of women in every aspect of sport. Following are the main aims of the Brighton Declaration:

- ensure that all women and girls have opportunity to participate in sport in a safe and supportive environment which preserves the rights, dignity and respect of the individual;
- increase the involvement of women in sport at all levels and in all functions and roles;
- ensure that the knowledge, experiences and values of women contribute to the development of sport;
- promote the recognition of women's involvement in sport as a contribution to public life, community development and in building a healthy nation;
- Promote the recognition by women of the intrinsic value of sport and its contribution to personal development and healthy lifestyle.

The main Principles of the Declaration were:

- Every effort should be made by state and government machineries to ensure that institutions and organisations responsible for sport comply with the equality provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- Women's participation in sport is influenced by the extent variety and accessibility of facilities. The planning, design and management of these should appropriately and equitably meet the particular needs of women in the community, with special attention given to the need for child care provision and safety.
- Research demonstrates that girls and boys approach sport from markedly different perspectives. Those responsible for sport, education, recreation and physical education of young people should ensure that an equitable range of opportunities and learning experience, which accommodate the values, attitudes and aspirations of

girls, is incorporated in programmes to develop physical fitness and basic sport skills of young people.

- Women's participation in sport is influenced by the range of activities available. Those responsible for delivering sporting opportunities and programmes should provide and promote activities which meet women's needs and aspirations.
- Governments and sports organisations should provide equal opportunities to women to reach their sports performance potential by ensuring that all activities and programmes relating to performance improvements take account of the specific needs of female athletes.
- Those supporting elite and/or professional athletes should ensure that competition opportunities, rewards, incentives, recognition, sponsorship, promotion and other forms of support are provided fairly and equitably to both women and men.
- Women are under-represented in the leadership and decision making of all sport and sport-related organisations. Those responsible for these areas should develop policies and programmes and design structures which increase the number of women coaches, advisers, decision makers, officials, administrators and sports personnel at all levels with special attention given to recruitment, development and retention.
- Those responsible for the education, training and development of coaches and other sports personnel should ensure that education processes and experiences address issues relating to gender equity and the needs of female athletes, equitably reflect women's role in sport and take account of women's leadership experiences, values and attitudes.
- Those responsible for the allocation of resources should ensure that support is available for sportswomen, women's programmes and special measures to advance this Declaration of Principles.
- Government and non-government organisations should incorporate the promotion of issues of gender equity and the sharing of examples of good practice in women and sport policies and programmes in their associations with other organisations, within both domestic and international arenas.

Women Sports in United States

Women's sport is given very high priority in U.S. from school itself. In 1972, the United States government implemented Title IX, a law stating that any federally funded program cannot discriminate anyone based on their sex. Participation by women in sports increased dramatically after its introduction, amid fears that this new law would jeopardize men's sports programs. Title IX has had a significant impact on athletics at the high school and collegiate level for female students. "In 1971, fewer than 295,000 girls participated in high school varsity athletics, accounting for just 7 percent of all varsity athletes; in 2001, that number leaped to 2.8 million, or 41.5 percent of all varsity athletes, according to the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education. In 1966, 16,000 females competed in intercollegiate athletics. By 2001, that number jumped to more than 150,000, accounting for 43 percent of all college athletes. In addition, a 2008 study of intercollegiate athletics showed that women's collegiate sports had grown to 9,101 teams or 8.65 per school". Despite the implementation of Title IX, many high schools and colleges still have huge gender disparities based on sports. According to research

done by National Women's Law Center in 2011, 4500 public high schools across the nation have extremely high gender inequality and are violating the Title IX laws. According to further research done by the Women's Law Center, schools with high number of minority students and a greater number of people of color mainly in southern states had a much higher rate of gender disparity. There is also a huge disparity regarding sport related scholarships for men and women, with men getting 190 million more in funding than women. This pattern has persisted over a long period of time as; most colleges focus on their male athletics team and plow more money into them. This disparity shows the link between race and gender, and how it plays a significant role in the hierarchy of sports.

Women sports in Canada

Sports are a high priority in Canadian culture, but women were long relegated to second-class status. There were also regional differences, with the eastern provinces emphasizing a more feminine "girls rule" game of basketball, while the Western provinces preferred identical rules. Girls' and women's sport have traditionally been slowed down by a series of factors: both historically have low levels of interest and participation. There were very few women in leadership positions in academic administration, student affairs or athletics and not many female coaches. The media strongly emphasized men's sports as a demonstration of masculinity, suggesting that women seriously interested in sports were crossing gender lines with the male sports establishment actively hostile. Staunch feminists dismissed sports and thought of them as unworthy of their support. Women's progress was uphill; they first had to counter the common notion that women's bodies were restricted and delicate and that vigorous physical activity was dangerous. These notions were first challenged by the "new women" around 1900. These women started with bicycling; they rode into new gender spaces in education, work, and suffrage. The 1920s marked a breakthrough for women, including working-class young women in addition to the pioneering middle class sportswomen.

Women sports in United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has produced a range of major international sports including: association football, rugby (union and league), cricket, netball, darts, golf, tennis, table tennis, badminton, squash, bowls, modern rowing, hockey, boxing, snooker, billiards, and curling. In the 19th century, women primarily participated in the "new games" which included golf, lawn tennis, cycling, and hockey. Now, women also participate at a professional/international level in football, rugby, cricket, and netball. Since the late 1980s, Women in Sport, a non-profit organization, has hoped to transform sport for the benefit of women and girls in the UK. Based in London, the organization's mission is to "champion the right of every woman and girl in the UK to take part in, and benefit from, sport: from the field of play to the boardroom, from early years and throughout her life".

Women in Sport hopes that by creating equal opportunities for women and girls and by increasing visibility for women's sport, in the media, and in everyday life, we will inspire people to play their part at every level. In order to kick start this transition, the organization breaks down their efforts into three sectors: Insight, Campaigning, and Partnerships. Insight describes the company's 30 years of in-house and commissioned research that is dedicated to practical

application. Campaigning revolved around the nation taken to get more women and girls involved in sport, and Partnerships relates to collaboration with sport funders, businesses, and the government to create opportunities for women in all aspects of sport.

Women's sport in Japan

In Japan, students of higher girls' school started to play tennis and swimming in the 1920's. Around 1924, competitions among girl's schools and regional conferences started, and track and field, swimming, baseball, tennis, volleyball and basketball were eventually included at the national level of competitions. In 1926, "Japan Women's Sport Federation" was established as an organization to send female athletes to the international competitions. As for school education, boys and girls used to attend separate physical education classes. This trend was changed by the Revisions of the Courses of Study issued by the government in 1989 which enabled students to participate in the same physical education class.

Muslim Women in Sports

Muslim women are less likely to take part in sport than Western non-Muslims. This is particularly so for women in Arab societies. The traditions of Islamic modesty in dress and requirements for women's sport to take place in a single-sex environment make sports participation more difficult for devout female adherents. The lack of availability of suitably modest sports clothing and sports facilities that allow women to play in private contributes to the lack of participation. Cultural norms of women's roles and responsibilities towards the family may also be a source of discouragement from time-consuming sports practice.

However, Islamic tenets and religious texts suggest that women's sports in general should be promoted and are not against the values of the religion. The Quranic statements that followers of Islam should be healthy, fit and make time for leisure are not sex-specific. The prophet Muhammad is said to have raced his wife Aisha on several occasions, with Aisha beating him the first couple of times. Correspondingly, some scholars have proposed that Muslim women's lack of engagement with sport is due to cultural or societal reasons, rather than strictly religious ones.

However, besides religious testaments, there are many barriers for Muslim women in relation to sports participation. A significant barrier to Muslim women's sports participation is bans on the Islamic headscarf, commonly known as the hijab. FIFA instituted such a ban in 2011, preventing the Iranian women's national football team from competing. They have since repealed the ban, but other organizations, including FIBA, maintain such regulations. At the same time, many Muslim female athletes have achieved significant success in athletic competitions. Some have also used sports towards their own empowerment, working for women's rights, education, and health and wellbeing.

Iranian women were banned from attending a volleyball game and an Iranian girl was arrested for attending a match. Iran was given the right to host the International Beach Volleyball tournament, and many Iranian women were looking forward to attending the event. However, when the women tried to attend the event, they were disallowed, and told it was forbidden to attend by the FIVB. The women took to social media to share their outrage; however the Federation of International Beach volleyball refuted the accusations, saying it was a misunderstanding. This is one of the instances of unfair treatment of women, trying to participate in supporting their teams in Iran.

Black Women in Sports

Black women athletes are fighting for a change and equality for women athletes. There are Olympians like Simone Biles, Genzebe Diababa and Shelly-Ann Fraser-Price who are breaking records that people cannot believe. There is work to break the inequality due to sexism. The research also shows the way women are differentiated by gender marking, both in terms of naming the sport itself (Wimbledon *ladies'* singles) and the athletes participating (*woman* golfer). Men's sport is typically considered the default as it does not require gender marking.

Conclusions

Female participation and popularity in sports increased dramatically in the twentieth century, especially in the last quarter-century, reflecting changes in modern societies that emphasized gender parity. Although the level of participation and performance still varies greatly by country and by sport, women's sports are widely accepted throughout the world today. In many sports women usually do not compete on equal terms against men. Although there has been a rise in participation by women in sports, a large disparity still remains. These disparities are prevalent globally and continue to hinder equality in sports. Many institutions and programs still remain conservative and do not contribute to gender equity in sports. There are many outstanding performances by female players in soccer and baseball, which used to be considered a sport for only men. It seems that the gap between men and women in sport is getting much smaller when we look at women's sport history. However, there are still definite issues that must be solved concerning women's sport. There is still a low ratio of female coaches and executives in sports organizations. In short, the number of female coaches who have the potential to become leaders has not increased yet.

Modern sports have seen the development of a higher profile for female athletes in other historically male sports, such as golf, marathons or ice hockey. These significant participation rise, has allowed more women to participate in traditionally male dominated sports and increased the sport's popularity globally. Recently there has been much more crossover as to which sports males and females participate in, although there are still some differences.

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