

Women, gender equality and sport

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Abstract

Women's participation in sport has a long history. This study focused onto identify the capacity of sport to empower women in the world context. It is a history marked by division and discrimination but also one filled with major accomplishments by female athletes and important advances for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It proved by literature. Women's sports include amateur and professional competitions in virtually all sports. Female participation in sports rose dramatically in the twentieth century, especially in the last quarter, reflecting changes in modern societies that emphasized gender parity. To achieve the above objective used qualitative content analysis by using strong literature. Olympic Solidarity offers a series of assistance programmes for athletes, young hopefuls, coaches and sports managers, and these benefit a growing number of women. Furthermore, a special "Women and Sport" programme was created to help more particularly the National Olympic Committees (NOC) of developing countries to put in place other types of projects in the field of women and sport, such as research, national seminars or participation in meetings. The level of participation and performance still varies greatly by country and by sport, women's sports have broad acceptance throughout the world, and in a few instances, such as figure skating, rival or exceed their male counterparts in popularity. May be argued that women still do not compete on equal terms with men in many sports, but this is really a matter of performance rather than opportunity. This is

traceable not to lack of application or unsuitability, but to physiological differences.

Key words: - women, sports, gender, equality, performance

Introduction

In recent years, sport and physical activity as a strategy for the empowerment of girls and women has been gaining recognition worldwide. Women Win is the first international organization with a sole focus of providing support for innovative sport and physical activity programmes for empowerment and creating a social movement around sport for the advancement of women's rights.

Gender equality is the measurable equal representation of women and men. Gender equality does not imply that women and men are the same, but that they have equal value and should be accorded equal treatment. "Equality is the cornerstone of every democratic society that aspires to social justice and human rights." (The United Nations, 2002)

Brief history of women in sport

Before each ancient Olympic Games there was a separate women's athletic event, the Heraean Games, dedicated to the goddess Hera and held at the same stadium at Olympia. Myth held that the Heraea was founded by Hippodameia the wife of the king who founded the Olympics. (Scanlon, 2006)

The educational committees of the French Revolution in 1789 included intellectual, moral, and physical education for girls and boys alike. 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 GutsMuths in 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. (Krüger, 2003) When the Sportive Féminine International was formed as an all women's international organization it had a German male vice-president, and German international success in elite sports.

In 1972 women's sports in the United States got a boost when the Congress passed the Title IX legislation. The United States Congress passed this law as a part of the additional Amendment Act to the 1964 Civil Rights Act. (Steiner, 1995) Title IX states that: "no person shall on the basis of sex, be excluded from participating in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance..." (Greenburg, 1997) in other words, Title IX prohibits gender discrimination in schools that receive federal funds through grants, scholarships, or other support for students. The law states that federal funds can be withdrawn from a school engaging in intentional gender discrimination in the provision of curriculum, counseling, academic support, or general educational opportunities; this includes interscholastic or varsity sports. (Coakley, 2007) This law from the Education Act requires that both male and female athletes have equal facilities, equal benefits. The equal benefits are the necessities such as equal equipment, uniforms, supplies, training, practice, quality in coaches and opponents, awards, and cheerleaders and bands at the game. (Greenburg, 1997) In practice, the difficulty with Title IX is making sure schools are compliant with the law. In 1979, there was a policy interpretation that offered three ways in which schools could be compliant with Title IX; it became known as the "three-part test".

1. Providing athletic participation opportunities that are substantially proportionate to the student enrollment. This prong of the test is satisfied when participation

- opportunities for men and women are "substantially proportionate" to their respective undergraduate enrollment.
2. Demonstrating a continual expansion of athletic opportunities for the underrepresented sex. This prong of the test is satisfied when an institution has a history and continuing practice of program expansion that is responsive to the developing interests and abilities of the underrepresented sex (typically female).
 3. Accommodating the interest and ability of underrepresented sex. This prong of the test is satisfied when an institution is meeting the interests and abilities of its female students even where there are disproportionately fewer females than males participating in sports.

Table 1:- Women Sport discipline

YEAR	SPORTS / DISCIPLINES
1900	Tennis, Golf
1904	Archery
1908	Tennis, Figure skating
1912	Swimming
1924	Fencing
1928	Athletics, Gymnastics
1936	Alpine Skiing
1948	Canoeing
1952	Equestrian sports
1960	Speed skating
1964	Volleyball, Luge
1976	Rowing, Basketball, Handball
1980	Field Hockey
1984	Shooting, Cycling
1988	Tennis, Table Tennis, Sailing
1992	Badminton, Judo, Biathlon
1996	Football, Softball
1998	Curling, Ice Hockey
2000	Weightlifting, Pentathlon, Taekwondo, Triathlon
2002	Bobsleigh
2004	Wrestling
2008	BMX
2012	Boxing
2014	Ski Jumping

UNESCO International Charter- of Physical Education and Sport, article 1

A rights-based understanding of sport and physical activity has been present since the founding of the United Nations. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights set out a framework of rights and duties and recognized that “Everyone has the right to rest and leisure . . .” (article 24); “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality . . .” (article 26); and “Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community . . .” (article 27).(United Nations General Assembly, 1948)

Sport and physical activity were first specifically recognized as a human right in the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, adopted in 1978 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (UNESCO, 1978)

Sport and Millennium Development Goals

The Task Force report Sport as a tool for development and peace: Towards achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals provides an overview of the growing role that sport activities play in many United Nations policies and programmes and summarizes the lessons learned. The report concludes that sport programmes must be based on the “sport for all” model, ensuring that all groups are given the opportunity to participate, particularly those who gain additional benefits, such as women, persons with disabilities and young people.(United Nations Inter-Agency Task, 2003)

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Providing development opportunities will help fight poverty. The sport industry, as well as the organization of large sporting events,

creates opportunities for employment. Sport provides life skills essential for a productive life in society. The opportunity to acquire such skills is often more limited for women, making their access to sport of critical importance.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education. Sport and physical education are an essential element of quality education. They promote positive values and skills that have an immediate and lasting impact on young people. Sport activities and physical education generally make school more attractive and improve attendance.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women. Increasing access for women and girls to physical education and sport helps build confidence and promotes stronger social integration. Involving girls in sport activities alongside boys can help overcome prejudice that often contributes to social vulnerability of women and girls.

Goals 4 and 5: Reduce child mortality and improve maternal health. Sport can be an effective means to provide women with a healthy lifestyle as well as to convey important messages on a wide range of health issues.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Sport can help engage otherwise difficult-to-reach populations and provide positive role models delivering prevention messages. The most vulnerable populations, including women and girls, are highly responsive to sport-targeted programmes. Sport can also effectively assist in overcoming prejudice, stigma and discrimination.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability. Sport is ideal for raising awareness about the need to preserve the environment. The interdependency between the regular practice of outdoor sports and the protection of the environment is clear.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development. Sport offers diverse opportunities for innovative partnerships for development and can be used as a tool to build and foster partnerships between developed and developing nations to work towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.(International Year of Sport and Physical Education, 2005)

Role of International Olympic Committee to increase gender equality

The Olympic Games have provided a global stage for female athletes to defy gender stereotypes ever since women first participated in 1900. The London 2012 Olympic Games demonstrated the progress that continues to be made towards the goal of gender equality in sport, with the inclusion of women's boxing on the Olympic programme meaning that women competed in every Olympic sport for the first time. While female Olympians serve as powerful role models for young girls around the world, the IOC also highlights the work of others who have made major contributions to women's participation in sport and sport administration by presenting the Women and Sport Awards each year.(Sport, 2013)

The International Olympic Committee's Women and Sport Trophy, introduced in 2000, is awarded annually to promote the

advancement of women in sport and recognize outstanding achievement and contributions made to develop encourage and strengthen the participation of women and girls at all levels in the sports world.(Women, 2007)

Sport as a vehicle for gender equality

The relationship between gender equality and sport is not solely about achieving equality in women's participation and treatment within sports, but it is also about promoting "sport for gender equality", or harnessing the potential of sport for social empowerment of women and girls. Sport offers a valuable channel to strengthen women's and girls' capabilities and provide information on important social issues, such as health, HIV/AIDS and women's rights. Women's and girls' participation in sport can also challenge gender stereotypes and break down entrenched discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. Myriam Lamare, a World Boxing Association champion from France, has said that the punches she lands shake the foundations of society. (Lacey, 2006)

Sport can be an important tool for social empowerment through the skills and values learned, such as teamwork, negotiation, leadership, communication and respect for others. The social benefits of participation in sport are thought to be especially important for girls, given that many girls, particularly in adolescence, have fewer opportunities than boys for social interaction outside the home and beyond family structures. Women and girls acquire new interpersonal networks, develop a sense of identity and access new opportunities, allowing them to become more engaged in school and community life.(United Nations Inter-Agency Task, 2003)

Sport and women with disabilities

Participation of disabled women and girls in physical education and sport has increased in recent years but nevertheless remains lower than participation by non-disabled women and girls. Limited access to resources and activities leads in many countries to significant health disparities between women and girls with disabilities and those without. A recent study in the United States indicates that 93 per cent of women with physical disabilities report engaging in no physical activity, compared with 43 per cent of women without disabilities. The study also reported that the prevalence of chronic health conditions such as arthritis, diabetes and high blood pressure was 3 to 4 times higher in people with disabilities. (United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001)

Recreational sport not only has a positive effect on disabled women's and girls' overall physical activity, but also contributes positively to their empowerment. Participation of women and girls with disabilities in sport not only challenges gender stereotypes but can also challenge prejudices about disabilities and impairments. The International Paralympic Committee's Sport Technical Department promoted women's participation in the 2000 Paralympic Games in Sydney focusing on women in the allocation of sport wildcards, adding more events and disciplines for women, and raising awareness of issues related to women and sport among the leadership of national Paralympic committees. (International Paralympic Committee, 2006)

Externally funded sport projects for disabled persons in developing countries do not always reach disabled women and girls. There is seldom sufficient attention to gender perspectives in projects and,

as a result, disabled men and boys benefit to a greater extent than women and girls. Sport development programmes in developing countries should incorporate specific attention to gender perspectives and disability in order to ensure that they reach disabled women and girls.(Coakley, 2007)

The benefits for women from sports

Although many of the clinical trials and epidemiological studies in health research have excluded women, the data available suggest that women derive many health benefits from an active lifestyle. The health benefits of women's participation in physical activity and sport are now well established. Participation in sport and physical activity can prevent a myriad of non-communicable diseases which account for over 60 per cent of global deaths, 66 per cent of which occur in developing countries. For girls, it can have a positive impact on childhood health, as well as reduce the risk of chronic diseases in later life.

In addition to benefits for women and girls themselves, women's increased involvement can promote positive development in sport by providing alternative norms, values, attitudes, knowledge, capabilities and experiences. The contributions of women, particularly in leadership positions, can bring diversity and alternative approaches and expand the talent base in areas such as management, coaching and sport journalism. For older women, it can contribute to the prevention of cardiovascular diseases, which account for one third of deaths among women around the world and half of all deaths among women over 50 in developing countries. (WHO, 2007)

The participation of women and girls in sport challenges gender stereotypes and discrimination, and can therefore be a vehicle to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In particular, women in sport leadership can shape attitudes towards women's capabilities as leaders and decision-makers, especially in traditional male domains. Women's involvement in sport can make a significant contribution to public life and community development.

Conclusion

May be argued that women still do not compete on equal terms with men in many sports, but this is really a matter of performance rather than opportunity. This is traceable not to lack of application or unsuitability, but to physiological differences. We need to take into account that women in many sports are following rules originally designed by men to test male skills. It may be that some sports would see women emerge as more successful than men if they were played within a regulatory framework which was adapted to female strengths.

The International Year of Sport and Physical Education in 2005 generated considerable attention to the issue of sport and development throughout the world. Now is the time to harness the momentum created by the International Year and ensure the systematic and effective integration of a gender perspective in all areas and at all levels of sport.

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