

Olympics: Gender Equality in Sports

Meenakshi Pahuja

Assistant Professor, Physical Education, Lady Shri Ram College For Women, University of Delhi, India

Abstract

The struggle of women in any walk of life cannot be denied. The current paper throws light on the struggle of women from being denied to participate in the first modern Olympics, 1896 to the landmarks achieved by her with each Olympics since 1900. She achieved and paved ways for other women globally. The road travel by women with regard to Olympic participation has been full of struggle, denial disparity & injustice. Where she stands today has not come to her easily. The paper reflects on the retrospective journey of women participation from 1900 to the upcoming Tokyo Olympics. It's long awaited & welcome news that Tokyo 2020 Olympics have been declared as gender balanced Olympics by IOC. The purpose of this paper is to explore the history that surrounds the issues of gender equity in sport specifically around Olympics, what actions have been taken to provide equal opportunity for women in sports, the current issues facing women in sports today, the research surrounding the issues pertaining to gender equity in sport, and also present recommendations for further research in this area.

KEYWORDS: Women, Gender- Balanced, Gender- Equality & Olympics

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality has been an issue in society since the beginning of time. In recorded history, one can find many accounts of where women faced issues of equity in relationships, their career, education, and athletic/ sports opportunities. The struggle of women in any walk of life cannot be denied. **Women's sports**, both amateur and Professional have existed throughout the world for centuries in all varieties of sports.

However, despite a rise in women's participation in sports, a large disparity in participation rates between women and men remains. These disparities are prevalent globally and continue to hinder equality in sports. A girl child faces many challenges like; Child marriage, poverty, **Household Chores, Gender-Based Violence** and period stigma. In current times still women who play sports face many obstacles today, such as lower pay, less media coverage, and different injuries compared to their male counterparts. Many female athletes have engaged in peaceful protests, such as playing strikes, social media campaigns, and even federal lawsuits to address these inequalities.

Like education, sport is also considered as one of the most powerful platforms for promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls globally. The society at large has always discriminated against women, the same reflects in the retrospective journey of modern Olympic as well. The first Olympic games in the modern era, which were in 1896 were not open to women. The beginning itself marks the discrimination between genders. It has been a long road since the Paris 1900 Olympic Games, when the first female athletes competed in five events: tennis, sailing, croquet, equestrian and golf.

Only 22 women took part, constituting a little over 2.2 per cent of the 997 total competitors.

Female participation has increased steadily since then, with women accounting for more than 44 per cent of the participants at the 2012 Games in London compared with 23 per cent at the Games in 1984 in Los Angeles and just over 13 per cent at the 1964 Games in Tokyo.

Interestingly since 1991, any new sports seeking to be included on the Olympic programme have been required to include women's events, while the IOC has also worked closely with the International Sports Federations (IFs) to stimulate women's involvement in sport through more participation opportunities at the Olympic Games.

The London 2012 Olympics was the first Games in which women competed in every sport of the Olympic programme. In Rio 2016 Olympics, approximately 4,700 women—45 per cent of all athletes—represented their countries in 306 events.

TOKYO 2020 FIRST EVER GENDER-BALANCED OLYMPIC GAMES IN HISTORY, RECORD NUMBER OF FEMALE COMPETITORS AT PARALYMPIC GAMES.

As stated by IOC, At the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020:

- Almost 49 per cent of the athletes participating will be women, according to the IOC quota allocation. These will be the first gender-balanced Games in history.
- There will be a ground-breaking competition schedule, ensuring equal visibility between women's and men's events and featuring nine more mixed events than at Rio 2016, raising the overall number to 18.
- For the first time ever, all 206 National Olympic Committees (NOCs) should have at least one female and one male athlete in their respective Olympic teams.
- All 206 NOCs and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team will be encouraged to have their flag carried by one female and one male athlete at the Opening Ceremony.

At the Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020:

- At least 40.5 per cent of all the athletes will be women, according to the IPC Qualification Criteria. This equates to 1,782 athletes, an increase on the 1,671 women who competed at Rio 2016 (38.6 per cent).
- At the Opening Ceremony, all the competing National Paralympic Committees will also be encouraged to have their flag carried by one female and one male athlete.

Following the appointment of its new President, Hashimoto Seiko, the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee has increased the size of its Executive Board, bringing the percentage of women to 42 per cent. It has also created a Gender Equality Promotion Team under the leadership of its Sports Director, Kotani Mikako, in order to further promote gender and inclusion initiatives during the Games.

“The IOC is committed to gender equality in all areas, from the athletes competing on and off the field of play to leadership roles in sports organisations”, said IOC President Thomas Bach. “With only four months to go until the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, the Olympic Movement is getting ready for a new milestone in its efforts to create a gender-equal sporting world – the first gender-balanced Olympic Games in history.”

“Inclusion is at the core of everything the IPC does,” said IPC President Andrew Parsons. “We are constantly striving with our members to increase female participation at all levels of the Paralympic Movement, from athletes to administrators, from coaches to Board members. Tokyo 2020 is on course to have more female athletes compete than any previous Paralympic Games. In less than a decade, we will have increased the number of women competing at the Paralympics by at least 18.7 per cent compared to London 2012. Despite this progress we will not rest on our laurels, and we will continue to work hard with our members to increase women’s participation at all future Games until we reach gender equality.”

“Tokyo 2020 upholds ‘Unity in Diversity’ as an important concept of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It has been making various efforts for this purpose together with the IOC, IPC, TMG and the Government of Japan. Currently, the Gender Equality Promotion Team is actively working to put together possible further action, including proposals for leaving a lasting legacy after the Games. We resolve to make the Tokyo 2020 Games considered as a turning point in history when looking back many years later,” said Tokyo 2020 President Hashimoto Seiko.

“Tokyo 2020 upholds ‘Unity in Diversity’ as an important concept of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Currently, the Gender Equality Promotion Team is actively working to put together possible further action, including proposals for leaving a lasting legacy after the Games. Post pandemic covid-19 hopefully Tokyo 2020 Games will always be considered as a turning point in history when looking back many years later,”. In many ways Tokyo games will be bringing public’s awareness towards human rights, promote women’s active participation in society. Tokyo games legacy will help build a better future based on it.

Method

The presenter has widely researched on available literature through documents, books and search of related websites. The search terms included Indian athletes case, women sport participation, discrimination, gender, gender inequality, gender balanced, Olympics, International Olympics committee (IOC). We retrieved few papers discussing drug abuse in athletes nationally & internationally. We reviewed the findings of each article, and

reviewed the references of each paper for additional papers that had been missed in the initial search and that might include findings relevant to the scope of our review.

Conclusion

Gender equality has been an issue in society since the beginning of time. In recorded history, one can find many accounts of where women faced issues of equity in relationships, their career, education, and athletic/ sports opportunities. The struggle of women in any walk of life cannot be denied. Taking note of the retrospective journey of women's struggle & challenges, disparities are prevalent globally and continue to hinder equality in sports. **Like education, sport is also considered as one of the most powerful platforms for promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls globally.** The society at large has always discriminated against women, the same reflects in the retrospective journey of modern Olympic as well. The first Olympic games in the modern era, which were in 1896 were not open to women. The beginning itself marks the discrimination between genders. It has been a long road since the Paris 1900 Olympic Games, when the first female athletes competed in five events: tennis, sailing, croquet, equestrian and golf. Only 22 women took part, constituting an eager 2.2 per cent of the 997 total competitors. The London 2012 Olympics was the first Games in which women competed in every sport of the Olympic programme. In Rio 2016 Olympics, approximately 4,700 women—45 per cent of all athletes—represented their countries in 306 events.

Finally, post pandemic covid-19, Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, the Olympic Movement is getting ready for a new milestone in its efforts to create a gender-equal sporting world – the first gender-balanced Olympic Games in history. All are hoping that Tokyo games will give an opportunity to develop a harmonious and inclusive society. Certainly, Tokyo games legacy will help build a better future based on it

Recommendations

It is important to give women equal opportunity in Sports participation & especially in sport governance. Further, in order for women to have true equality in sport, the media will need to begin to recognize women for their athletic ability and not their looks or personal life alone, but also, society will need to move away from the social conditioning of women into gender stereotyped roles and allow for young girls to choose their own path, especially if that includes an interest in sports. Society at large must begin to see women as equals before women can truly be equals.

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