

REVIEW PAPER

The Difference between Male and Female Sport Participation in Turkey: “Determination Always Finds a Way”

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Abstract

The fight for gender equality throughout the world should be acknowledged and properly represented in society. This is all the more important in the sporting world with a further emphasis on the everyday Turkish woman. The rapid rise in female participation in sport in Turkey over the last ten years indicates a rise in the status of women in sport as well as several other areas. However, it should be acknowledged that there is a clear gap with regards to how men and women participate in sport. The varying physical composition of women in comparison to their male counterparts and also the varying level of expectations society places on both male and female participation in sport limits the level of success women derive from actively participating in sport activities. This paper will examine the origin, concepts, and historical background of women in sport in Turkey. At the same time, it will evaluate the current situation while also taking into consideration future developments relating to female participation, leadership, and sport media.

Keywords: *sport, women, female athletes, gender discrimination*

Introduction

With the evolution of technology worldwide, the phrase “the world is a global village” seems to be casually mentioned quite often. Just like different work environments, the areas of sport and physical education have become an international phenomenon. There seems to be an interaction between people from different walks of life, ethnicities, religions, cultures, and lifestyles to mention a few factors (Edginton, Chin, Gadelmann, & Ahrabi-Fard). As a result of the rising number of different working environments, there is a need for sport professionals and physical education experts to comprehend and assimilate how social and cultural factors of varying groups and nationalities influence the physical activities of participants. Several schools of thought have carried out studies about the reasons that promote female involvement in

sport and physical activities in several groups, although there is scant literature that has discussed the problems that influence female involvement in sporting activities. This paper will examine the challenges and opportunities for female participation in sport in Turkey.

In times past, sport was mainly a male-dominated world, and women were considered outsiders to it. Initially, women were perceived to be the other sex; they were not the main insiders and were mainly considered to be latecomers or “newbies” who were only given permission to participate in friendly games or sports. This belief that women were only suitable to partake in certain kinds of sport was prevalent for several years, while men were allowed to take part in specific games and sports. For instance, it has always been perceived that women are more suited to gymnastics and dancing while



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men were footballers. This assumption has held sway from the early 19th century and was based not only on gender differences and convictions but also on scientific knowledge. Famous philosopher Buytendijk in 1953 discussed female football, referencing it as “a game is essentially a demonstration of masculinity as we understand it from our traditional view of things and as produced in part by our physical constitution (through hormonal irritation). No one has ever been successful in getting women to play football” (Pfister, 2006).

The situation in Turkey is almost the same. Therefore, this paper tries to present the initial zoning of women in Turkey according to their involvement in sport. Turkey possesses a special position with regards to geography; this is all the more evident as it shares a common history with some Islamic countries. Its distinct features include its modernisation movement and also its secular system, especially with regards to the development of women’s liberation. The evolving roles of women, their behavioural pattern, and activities has provided Turkish women with new opportunities and also plays a significant role in female representation in Turkey.

As a result, the involvement of women in public life, in addition to their involvement in sport, reflects the evolution of the young country. The goal of this research is to examine the different roles women have to play in reforming the Turkish government, with emphasis on explaining the relationship between sport and politics as a means of modernization. Conversely, if one does not fully grasp the socio-cultural composition of Turkey, one will not be able to comprehensively grasp the factors that are in play with regards to female representation in sport in Turkey.

The Involvement of Women in Turkish sport

The Turkish National Physical Education Curriculum has been applied in schools since 2007; the programme is standard for all free and tuition-based schools. This new educational plan changed the concentration from customary sport-based exercises (e.g., gymnastics, Olympic-style events, and wrestling), to physical exercises that improve everyday health (e.g. dance, games and open-air activities). It has two fundamental learning zones: development information and abilities.

The previous physical training project is, by and large, still utilised in numerous schools. Indeed, even as the national PE rules are standard for all schools, there are significant deviations related to the execution of these rules. Physical instruction is obligatory in all schools from ages 6-18 years; primary schools are relied upon to seek to give one-hour physical training every week for the grades and two hours for sixth grades. There are no distinctions for young girls and boys as far as physical instruction exercises and condition. As per the principle of Turkish Secularism, coeducation in PE is a standard for all evaluations. Be that as it may, in many, particularly in non-public schools, boys and girls are separated in 6-8 grade. The most popular sports all through school for boys are soccer, basketball, and wrestling; for the girls, they are volleyball, aerobics, and badminton. Schools are the key institute in giving physical instruction to every single child with the extra chances to take part in extra-curricular exercises. Moreover, girl’s physical activities investment levels all through school are lower than boys (girls had a mean of 50 METs, and young men had a mean of 66), which results in more negative dispositions in girls toward physical sports and

game in contrast with men. This prompts a lack of interest and moral support for girls.

Interest in Women Global Sport

In Turkey, as a mainstream Muslim nation, women have a cutting edge, contemporary way of life but, in contrast, are attached to their conventions and traditions. Despite the fact that the sport world in Turkey is empowered and upheld by the state through the Directorate General of Youth and Sports (DGYS), the Turkish Football Federation, and sport clubs, the gap between the offices and number of sports accommodating male and female athletes is entirely apparent. This is because women and girls have to accept the invisible and unwritten rules of the society which separates them off from men whose level of education and socioeconomic status are different. The families’ perspective is also a significant factor influencing girls’ sports. In the previous two decades, there has been an expansion in interest among women and girls in competitive and recreational sports.

As indicated by the Turkish Civil Law that was first given in 1926 soon after the Turkish Republic was established, “people [have] equivalent rights in all parts of life” (The Constitution of Republic of Turkey, 2010). Subsequently, women had equal opportunities as men in education, in the workplace, and in family life, and they additionally had similar rights regarding their children and their training. In 2001, a few changes were made to the Turkish Civil Law to give better security to women and children. As indicated by these changes, the head of the family is not the father (as determined previously), but rather both father and mother have equivalent rights to settle on family issues.

Despite the fact that this has been written in the law, the patriarchal way of life still dominates in the eastern and rural parts of the nation, where the training level is lower. In specific locales, men still settle on the choices with respect to family issues independent from anyone else, since they hold the power, and the women do their job of dealing with the family unit and children. This originates from conventions and traditions that we accept could be decreased as the instruction level of the two sexes increments. A similar circumstance can be found in sport opportunities for women, which are not at all homogeneous in all parts of the country either. Furthermore, social and religious desires may urge women and girls to practice sport with a scarf covering the hair and with specific types of clothing rather than customary sport uniforms, especially in the schools and in the legislative zones open to the general population. Be that as it may, private focuses, clubs, and open regions now and again enable women to practice sport in any way they wish. These distinctions are related to the social variety of the nation. The study of Hosper, Nierkens, van Valkengoed, and Stronks (2008) with respect to the impact of cultural assimilation on game interest among youthful Turkish and Moroccan women in the Netherlands revealed that cultural assimilation had a positive impact among Turkish women, yet not among Moroccan women. Their discoveries suggest that socially explicit attitudes among Turkish women were powerful at expanding their cooperation in sport. We accept that the relation between socially explicit mentalities or convictions and the participation in physical exercise and sport among Turkish women living in the Western world is additionally influenced by the solid influence of their experience in Turkey.

Turkey in the 2012 Olympics

Although Turkey has been competing in the Olympics since 1932, the iconic appearance at the Olympics was made in 2012 when 50% of the participants of the Olympics were women. Held in the London, England from 27 July to 12 August, the Olympic Games welcomed the participation of 204 nations. Contending in 16 branches with 114 athletes, Turkey won two gold, two silver, and one bronze medal. Turkey's first gold decoration was granted to Servet Tazegul in men's Taekwondo and the second gold award was granted to Asli Cakir Alptekin—a female mid-distance runner for the 1500 metre-run which is Turkey's first track & field gold medal in its Olympics history. Within the extent of "Sakip Sabanci Sports Awards", Asli Cakir Alptekin and Servet Tazegul got what might be compared to 40 Turkish Republic gold coins from Guler Sabanci, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Sabanci Foundation on September 4, 2012, at of a function held at Sabanci Centre.

Sports Have Sex-based Characteristics

From the 1950s onwards, sportswomen in Turkey have gained access to different sporting events and activities that were previously dominated by men. The question now is whether this evolution has had any effect on the sport. The human body and physical attributes are the forefronts of sporting activities as sport largely depends and ranks are based on one's physical performance. Sport, to a large extent, is a system that involves competition and elite forms, and it is a widely accepted form of gender segregation that is rarely found in other areas of society. This has led to the standard practice of separating sporting activities based on sex, and females are not permitted to participate in male events and vice versa.

There are many publications that discuss gender composition. Taking a constructivist perspective, gender represents a structural class as well as an individual routine carried out in interaction. This approach places emphasis on our actions and not on attributes we possess. Actions are made up of gendered images and identities and gender representation in social circles, where we have to identify with (out) gender, either male or female. Therefore, sport is a typical example of this.

Gender is not only a societal issue. According to Butler's proposal in 1990, we should view gender as a process; however, actions and discussion have gained many reviews in various media. Discussions on inter-, trans-, and homosexuality raise questions regarding the model of two genders; phenomena such as gender-bending and gender play also show how gender is created and represented (Pfister, 2010). Playing around with different gender characteristics is now a global trend, and this is more evident in global sporting icons like David Beckham and his constant experimentation with different hairstyles and looks. He is perceived to be the idol of both heterosexuals and homosexuals and is the pacesetter of the "metrosexual" trend.

Signs that seems to be different in views as regards to the public perception of gender can be found in the men's health concepts that portray men as the stronger sex. For example, Natalie Angier's book titled "Woman: An Intimate Geography" portrays women as the exact opposite of the weaker sex. The constructivist perspective also emphasises the demand for women to be included in "men's sport" and vice versa. These demands that tend to raise the issues of dismantling the gender bias in sport is leading to a new gender direction.

Comparisons across different cultures, either when comparing different sport traditions in recent times, or when look-

ing at previous generations show that it is more of the meaning attached to sport together with the social compositions of masculinity and femininity. So, this leads to defining sport activities as either female or male activities.

How is this important for the analysis of gender relations, and what does the future hold for women in sport? What does the future hold for the inclusion of men and women in sports that are typically stereotyped for the opposite sex? First things first; it should be stated that merely allowing a particular gender to participate in a particular sport does not actually mean that we have been able to remove gender or sexual differences successfully. On the other hand, there are several sports where this may be seen as a step to new and subtle methods of gender representation. For instance, figure skating continues to be seen as an area of sport that has been tailored to be women-friendly. Gender differences are captured quite clearly in ice dancing and pair skating (Pfister, 2010). Unlike sports in which the outcomes are defined and measurable, figure skating aesthetics and presentation form are a huge part of the evaluation process. Performing gender is an essential part of figure skating, and the different moves and creative freedom allowed in the sport gives room for athletes, both male and female, to carry out gender in different forms.

Turkish Women's Volleyball

The Turkey women's national volleyball team is part of the Turkish Volleyball Federation (TVF) and has gained a reputation around the world with its unbeatable performance. In the Olympics, World Championship, FIVB World cup, and in other famous volleyball tournaments, the women's national team of Turkey has been ranked Top 10. The team is considered to be the best in the country and has been named as "Filenin Sultanları" since 2003 Women's European Volleyball Championship facilitated in Ankara, Turkey. It is positioned tenth in the FIVB World Rankings as of October 2015. This team won bronze medals at both the 2011 Women's European Volleyball Championship and the 2012 FIVB World Grand Prix.

Turkish National Basketball Team

The Turkey national basketball team gained its reputation in international basket- competitions. They are represented by the Turkish Basketball Federation. Their nickname is "12 Dev Adam", which means 12 Giant Men. Turkey has contended at each significant international ball competition. Their most prominent accomplishments are winning two silver medals on home soil at the EuroBasket (2001), and FIBA World Cup (2010) individually. Turkey has likewise won two gold (1987, 2013), one silver (1971), and three bronze (1967, 1983, 2009) awards at the Mediterranean Games. Currently, Turkey stands fifteenth in the FIBA World Rankings.

How Does Religion Prove to be a Hurdle for Turkish Women in Sport?

When considering how women's participation in sport is impacted by Islam, it must be expressed as a matter of first importance that there is no broad prohibition of sport in Islam, and this includes girls and women. Numerous Islamic researchers have emphasized that wellbeing and wellness are similarly significant for both sexes and must be maintained by standard physical movement. Attention is given to the fact that the Prophet Mohammed himself suggested horseback-riding,

swimming, and archery. Leila Sfeir and others have derived from this that Islam initially demonstrated a positive mentality towards women's sport, yet certain religious components, for example, Islamic acquiescence and Hinduism's supernatural quality, have effectively affected general access.

In recent decades, female competitors have progressively begun partaking in sports that have been customarily viewed as manly (e.g., wrestling, weight-lifting, kick-boxing). Notwithstanding, numerous sports have been viewed as unseemly for women, and women who take part in "the wrong sorts of sports" are regularly seen as acting outside of their sex role. Thus, they are treated as carrying on improperly. It very well may be accepted that the nearby relationship between the traits required for the sport and the customary ideas of sexual orientation add to this frame of mind. The participation of women and men in the social establishment of sports and the very state of the established organization of sport are incompletely controlled by the significations of what people should be in the public view. Turkey is a unique nation, and the participation in sport, just as the general practice and experience of physical action, shift significantly in the different locales of Turkey. The quantity of female competitors' in martial sports, for example, taekwondo, karate, and judo, is developing rapidly, which demonstrates that an expanding number of women are taking an interest in sports customarily dominated by men. It is likewise a reality that society is changing, and younger people are increasingly interested in sport, and families have to support their youngsters', particularly girls, to appreciate sport. This phenomenon has driven scientists to explore the organization of sport as a significant field of gendered social practices in Turkish society [43]. As per the insights taken from General Directorate of Sport of the Turkish Ministry of Youth and Sport, before the finish of 2017, only 33% of the official competitors are females (1,469,314 female competitors and 2,959,521 male competitors).

Sport in the Early Republican Era

In every modern society, there are similar missions and goals for sport, which are basically to improve the health and fitness level of the general population and create visibility for the country worldwide. These were relevant goals and objectives for Turkey as a country, which had been adversely affected by the ending of the Ottoman Empire and associated conflicts between different countries.

Nationalism centres on men being the subject of a country and, as such, the sport policies of a country aimed at national representation should be developed for and meant for men (Hobsbawm, 1992). In 1937, Prime Minister Celal Bayar stressed the importance of sport in his speech, which can be found inside the Journal of Turkish Sports Administration. In his speech, he asserted, "Sport is the guide of our national culture. The ultimate aim is to raise the Turkish citizens [...] to have a healthy body and an excellent character." Founder of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, also shed more light on the concept of developing the new man, which was to promote a powerful and virtuous generation with the sole aim of increasing and developing people's talent with the help of physical education and also developing the human mind.

Sport in the 1920s was generally influenced by these ideas and under the control of official policies and politics. By 1922, the Turkish Training Association Union (TICI) was established. The union aimed to bring together and organize physi-

cal education and sport in general. TICI ran as an autonomous organization representing sport clubs, and its responsibilities included championships, record keeping, and representing the country in international sport activities. In addition to the aforementioned, the organization was also responsible for supervising the creation of sports legislation and regulation, and also promoting the development of modern sport activities (Senol-Cantek, and Yazar).

The TICI maintained autonomous status right until 1924; however, in terms of changing sport policies, the state began to assert more influence. By the 1930s, sport was a national phenomenon, and it became imperative to hand over the control and administration of physical education and sport to a state-owned institution. This led to the birth of the Turkish Sports Administration (TSK), established in 1933, and the Physical Education General Directory (BTGM), which came in five years later in 1938 (Turkish National Assembly, 1938). The 1930s saw the evolution of sport and physical education as a means to training soldiers to the level where it was adopted as a way to condition the body and provide education for the citizens of the country. This led to the passing of the Physical Education Law in 1938, mandating participation in sport and physical education for all citizens of Turkey. The law mandated men and boys between the ages of 12 and 45 years and also women and girls between the ages of 12 and 30 years to take part in sport and physical education. The original plan was to develop and construct sporting facilities all over the country to train instructors and staff who would, in turn, teach and train the people. Sadly, this law could not be enforced fully due to the harsh economic conditions of the country at that time (Tarakçıglu, 2014).

In the Media

The media throws more light on gender-related views and also plays a part in the spread and adoption of these views. The majority of the citizenry are not exposed to sporting activities; however, they have easy access to the media, and as a result, they have access to information with different media outlets. Female athletes' coverage is about 5% of the total media coverage, and this lays credence to the fact the media has played a very small role in the progression of female sport over the years (Orta, 2012). The media has an important role to play, both in the current circumstances, and also to promote the ideas and practices as regards to gender. Critics of the media say it fosters patriarchy and also the exclusion of women, and this contributes to gender inequality and promotes discrimination between males and females (Hardin & Greer, 2009). For instance, about 50% of women shown in sport magazines in Turkey are not female athletes but rather wives and girlfriends of male athletes.

When we get to see actual female athletes in a magazine, the focus is mainly on their appearance (T.C. Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı, 2018). The commentators that present them as people with marginal accomplishments are also not helping these athletes, portraying them as pretty, dependent, and young (Ugur-Tanriover, Vitrinel, & Sözeri, 2009). They tend to be radical in the separation and marginalization of sex-based roles of women only in the social circle. A close look at the media in Turkey shows patriarchal views, identifying women as emotional beings that lack the ability to think rationally (Menevse & Albay, 2018).

When an athlete representing Turkey excels in an inter-

national competition, the pride of the nation eliminates the gender gap that is predominant in Turkish media. Typical examples include the case of Yasemin Dalkilic, a World and European free diving champion; Yasemin Adar and Lena Erdil, gold medallist in wrestling and a champion in windsurfing, respectively. Otherwise, the standard routine for women is to get minimal coverage at most. This means there are basically two levels to rating success for male and female athletes (Koca & Hacisoftaoglu, 2011).

The most detailed analysis and research on Turkish women's involvement in sport and in sport media reveal that women are generally overlooked in the media; 21% of news headlines involve women; 2% of regular columnists are women; 0% of political programmes on TV are headlined by women; in addition, 0% of headline news presenters are women (Women for Women's Human Rights, 2016).

Researchers have raised concerns as to the under-representation of women in the media in Turkey to the fact that even when women are discussed, the coverage usually centres around existing stereotypes, such as women being mothers or housewives or objects of sexual pleasure (Gencel-Bek & Binark, 2000; Gencel-Bek, 2001; Hortaçsu & Ertürk, 2003). However, these studies reveal that media views did not differ after the introduction of women into sport media, and women's coverage remains negligible. In the case of sport columns in newspapers, the views are much more singular in dimension, and it is very difficult to see a woman as a member of staff in the newspaper office (Davidson & Burke, 2011).

Currently, the leading claim is that the media does not reflect the progress that has been made in women's participation in sport over the years. The focus still centres on male participants. There is very minimal interaction with female sport events, which plays a part in promoting the perception that female participation in sport is less significant than their male counterparts (Fullagar & Toohey, 2009). In the world today, there is much focus on financial and commercial considerations and, as such, it is very difficult to expect the emphasis to be placed on cultural and educational values. Based on this assumption, it is quite easy to understand that emphasis would be placed more on scandalous and aggressive elements in sport, which can sell more (Halbert & Latimer, 1994). While it is a fact that the media alone does not have the ability to change the differences currently experienced in sport today, it has the power to contribute positively to the evolution of female participation in sport.

The Power That Men Wield: Foundations of Leadership and Control

Sport is perceived to be a micro-representation of a larger society (Wolfe et al., 2005), in which dominant concepts are actualised and represented as well as contested and challenged (Messner, 2002). Sport, compared to any other ideology, comes with a special side that allows the ideology of male superiority (Messner & Sabo, 1990; Hall, 1999). According to Cunningham (2008), gender inequality is an institutionalised practise within sport organizations and the varying degree of gender inequality. This cuts across having access to mid- and upper-level of management positions, career progression, and opportunities in general, which are largely considered to be male-dominated sporting circles (Aitchison, 2005).

If the decision-making process in sport organization are examined, it will be found that the degree to which female

exclusion occurs in leadership and management positions in countries such as Canada (Hall, 1999), Sweden (Ottesen, Skirstad, Pfister, & Habermann, 2010), Denmark, the US (Whisenant, Miller, & Pedersen, 2012), and Germany (Pfister & Radtke, 2009) means that almost 50% of all entry-level positions were occupied by women, 28% and 23% were occupied by executive and technical directors, respectively, while less than 10% of national coaches were women.

The culture in sport establishments of defining the skills, ideals, behaviours, and qualities of its employees based on masculinity puts women in a difficult situation in terms of the value they bring to the organization (Hovden, 2010). For instance, the views typically associated with leadership and management in sport are intertwined with male characteristics and traits like toughness and prior sport participation background (Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2008). Shaw and Hoerber (2003) discovered that upper management positions were strongly dominated by discussions centred on masculinity (with English words like "chairman" and "businessmen"). While in female circles, the discussion centres on femininity (with words like "loyal", "kind", and "feminine"), and these are typically associated with lower-level roles within an organization. Unfortunately, there are not enough articles, papers, and studies that focus on the low representation of women in sport circles in other countries apart from the West. Like Chen and Henry (2012) pointed out, it is essential that Muslim-dominated communities look beyond Islam as the main origin of female segregation and focus attention on the different patriarchal kinds of domination within their communities. As such, the socio-cultural perception of Turkey as a predominantly Muslim country should not be seen as a surprise.

Due to the socio-cultural composition of Turkey, men predominantly occupy high-level management positions in sport organizations in Turkey. The percentage of women in top management positions in sport organizations in Turkey is 7%. In comparison to this, the percentages of several other European nations, like Denmark (25%) (Ottesen et al., 2010), Sweden (33%), Finland (27%), Germany (15%), and Norway (37%) (European Commission, 2014), show that the Turkish rates are very low. This is mainly due to the perception of women in Islam and the increasing levels of patriarchal domination, in addition to the complex cultural, historical, and political factors all contributing to increasing the inequality gap between men and women in society.

Conclusion

Turkey is a rather complicated society in which religion, economic, social, and cultural forces interfere in the life of an average woman. As a result, female participation in sport is simply a reflection of the wider Turkish society. To promote female participation in sport, different actions need to be investigated; a constant engagement with government and public institutions to pass laws that encourage gender equality in terms of funding and representation is required. Sporting organizations also need to encourage the creation of sport teams that promote sport experience in the lives of young girls and women by interacting and cooperating with families, schools, and their communities.

Budgets should be split equally amongst men and women, and there should be an increase in the number of women given employment opportunities as coaches and also in sport associations and committees. This, in turn, will create an atmosphere

that promotes female participation in sport; it will also purge society of the stereotypes and bias that currently exists against women. Women have been fighting for equal rights and representation in various aspects of life, and this fight has yielded positive results in different areas of public life. The fundamental political and social position with respect to sport should be put out in the open. Also, the Olympic movement motto “international freedom and equal rights” is not being practised.

Legislation and affirmative action are not enough to help the fight for gender equality. These solutions only provide opportunities, and the opportunities provided need to be followed up with challenges, criticism, and questions centred around the social discussion as regards to the processes and

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- actions on stereotypes and prejudice. Given all these, there is a belief that women's participation in sport and sport activities will gather momentum in the future. The programmes, initiatives, and budgets to promote female participation and equal representation in sport should be at the forefront of the Turkish sport policy. Also, there is a need to promote special ideas that will include health advancement and improve the image of young women and girls. There is also the need to develop quality social values and prevent sexual harassment and violence in sport. Previously, sport was a male-dominated world; however, the future is in the hands of all. The chances of this happening are not clear right now, although it would be very good if it does.
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