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Inclination of women's participation in Olympic Games

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Abstract

Sport is an integral part of the culture of almost every nation. However, its use to promote gender equity and empower girls and women is often overlooked because sport is not universally perceived as a suitable or desirable pursuit for girls and women. This article aims to analyze the trend of women's participation in sports and physical activity at international and national levels.

As we know about the Olympic Games, this is a platform of maximum countries of the world to meet together for sports. So Olympic Games are the best representatives of all games and sports competition at various levels. Present article explains the ratio of women's participation in Olympic Games and their trend. This article shows that the women participants in Olympic Games were persistently increased and exactly after 100 years i.e., in 2000 Sydney Olympics the number of women participants increased up to 4069 (38.2% of total athletes). In 2012 Olympic Games which were held in London, 4862 women participated that is 44.2% of total participants. First time Indian women participated in 1952 Olympic Games (Helsinki). Some women i.e. Karnam Malleswari, Saina Nehwal and M.C. Mary Kom won the medals in Olympic games. On the basis of this trend we can say that, the women's participation in sports will be equal to men's near the mid of this century in Olympic Games.

Keywords: Women, Sports, Participation, Physical Activity, Olympic Games.

1. Introduction

'Women in Sport' has been a topic virtually ignored by most scholars and thus female sport participation has been a relatively undeveloped area of research. Sex role, stereotyping, male research bias and the reward structure of society have contributed to this neglect. Currently, sport for women represents a fast growing changing element in culture, and recent trends have sparked a need for knowledge about the female sport participation.

The beneficial effects of regular participation in sports and physical activity have been widely supported by scientific evidence. Studies have shown that physical activity can significantly lower the risk for cardiovascular disease, stroke, hypertension, osteoporosis, non-insulin-dependent diabetes, depression and some forms of cancer (Pate *et al.*, 1995; Glasgow *et al.*, 1997) [7, 5]. However, despite the prevalence of campaigns promoting the health benefits of physical activity, participation rates remain low in some groups. Numerous social and environmental factors affect participation. Gender, age, level of education are some of the variables identified that influence participation in sports and physical activity.

Sport is an integral part of the culture of almost every nation. However, its use to promote gender equity and empower girls and women is often overlooked because sport is not universally perceived as a suitable or desirable pursuit for girls and women. Existing social constructs of masculinity and femininity or socially accepted ways of expressing what it means to be a man or woman in a particular socio-cultural context play a key role in determining access, levels of participation, and benefits from sport (ibid).

2. Changing trend of Women's participation rates in sports

Here sports participation of women means women's participation in the field of sports. As a matter of fact, women's participation in sports has a long history. In the ancient Olympics women were not allowed to watch the sports competition. Even in the first modern Olympic games (1896 Athens) there was no participation of women. Women first started to participate from Paris Olympic Games 1900 onwards. In this Olympic only 22 women participated in 2 sports events. With the passage of time, the number of women participants in Olympic Games was persistently increased and exactly after 100 years i.e., in 2000 Sydney Olympics the

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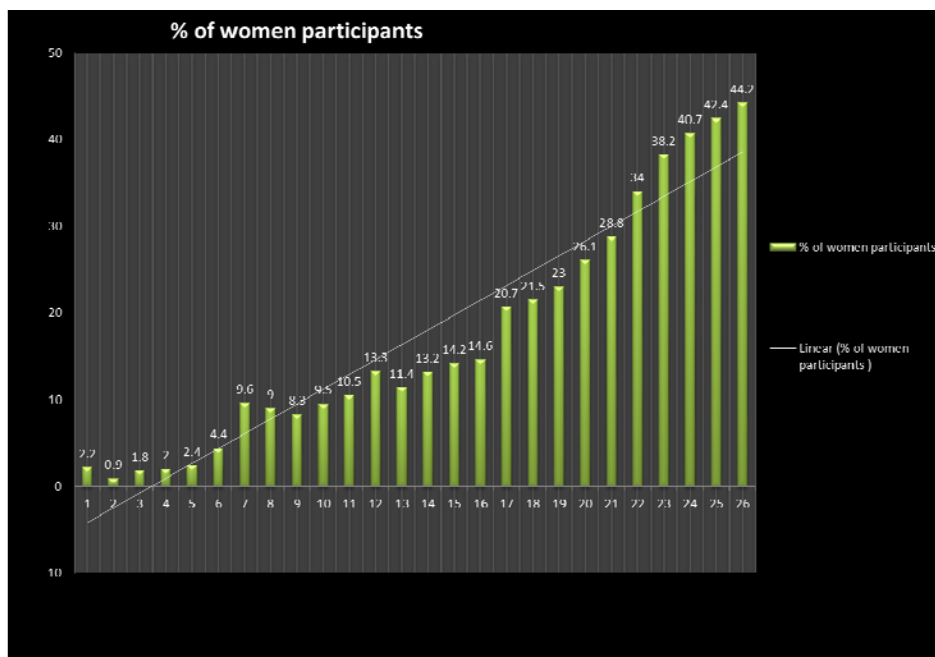
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number of women participants increased up to 4069 (38.2% of total athletes). In latest Olympic Games (2012) which were held in London, 4862 women were participated that is the 44.2% of total participants. In the last 20 years, the IOC has also increased the number of women’s events on the Olympic

programme, in cooperation with the International Federations (IFs) and the Organizing Committees. With the addition of women’s boxing, the 2012 Olympic Games in London were the first in which women competed in every sport on the Olympic programme.

Table 1: Percentage of women’s events and Percentage of women’s participants in Olympic Games

Year	Women’s Events*	Total events	% of women’s events	Women participants	% of women participants
1900	2	95	2.1	22	2.2
1904	3	91	3.3	6	0.9
1908	4	110	3.6	37	1.8
1912	5	102	4.9	48	2.0
1920	8	154	5.2	63	2.4
1924	10	126	7.9	135	4.4
1928	14	109	12.8	277	9.6
1932	14	117	12.0	126	9
1936	15	129	11.6	331	8.3
1948	19	136	14.0	390	9.5
1952	25	149	16.8	519	10.5
1956	26	151	17.2	376	13.3
1960	29	150	19.3	611	11.4
1964	33	163	20.2	678	13.2
1968	39	172	22.7	781	14.2
1972	43	195	22.1	1,059	14.6
1976	49	198	24.7	1,260	20.7
1980	50	203	24.6	1,115	21.5
1984	62	221	28.1	1,566	23
1988	72	237	30.4	2,194	26.1
1992	86	257	33.5	2,704	28.8
1996	97	271	35.8	3,512	34.0
2000	120	300	40	4,069	38.2
2004	125	301	41.5	4,329	40.7
2008	127	302	42.1	4,637	42.4
2012	140	302	46.4	4,676	44.2



Vertical scores –percentage of participation

Horizontal scores – No. of Olympic games

Fig 1: Graphical representation of percentage of women’s events and Percentage of women’s participants in Olympic Games

The participation in Olympic Games of women’s is revealed their interest and awareness of game & sports and physical activities. According to the data of Olympic Games we can see the ratio of women events is increasing in every Olympic Games to compare the men events, that’s prove the

participation of women athletes is not less than men athletes. In last Olympic Games there were 140 events for women’s out of 304 events, there were lesser events in comparison of men’s, and after that 45% of women athletes were participated, which is good strength itself.

3. Sports participation of women in India

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. With a decline in their status from the ancient to medieval times, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. In modern India, women have held high offices in India including that of the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Leader of the Opposition.

Several Indian women have participated in the Olympics in the past. First time only four Indian women were participated in 1952 Olympics (Helsinki) in athletics. The first Indian woman to ever win an Olympic medal was Karnam Malleswari who won a bronze medal at the Sydney Olympics in the Women's 69 kg category in Weightlifting. After that in 2012 London Olympic Games Saina Nehwal (Badminton) and M.C. Marry Com (Boxing) secured one bronze medal each. Through P.T. Usha could not win the medal in 1984 Olympics in 400m hurdle race, yet that was her remarkable and extraordinary performance. Infact, there is a long list of Indian female athletes who won various positions in world cups, commonwealth games, asian games etc. Among these Anju Bobby George, Sania Mirza, Saina Nehwal, Krishna Poonia, Seema Antil, Garima Chaudhary, Jwala Gutta, Geeta Phogat, Deepika Kumar etc. are the prominent athletes of India.

4. Conclusion

“Sports: A Powerful Strategy to Advance Women’s Rights.”- Astrid Aafjes.

Though time is changing very fast and situations are improving. A number of sportswomen has been defying the odds i.e., social and psychological hurdles related to participation of women in sports but there is still a lot to be achieved. No doubt the number of women participants in sports is having an increasing trend year by year but it is lesser than to men. There may be number of reasons for less number of women participation in sport. In fact women will have to challenge all the social hurdles with their herculean efforts to enhance their participation in sports. The mind set of persons will have to be changed specially of parents, families, schools, colleges, teachers and administrators. So on the basis of this trend we can say that, the women’s participation in sports will be equal to men’s near the mid of this century in Olympic Games.

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