CHAPTER 3

Women and Sport

Cemre Didem EYIPINAR
Gaziantep University, Türkiye

Ugur ABAKAY
Gaziantep University, Türkiye

To Cite This Chapter:
Eyipinar, C. D., & Abakay, U. (2023). Women and sport. In M. Ozdal & F. Alincak (Eds.), *Current Studies in Sports Science 2023* (pp. 23-28). ISRES Publishing.

1. Women and Sport

Sport plays an important role in every culture from past to present, both actively and passively and in different forms (Esentaş, Güzel & Vural, 2018). As in many other fields, it is a fact that women are not as visible as men in the field of sports. The high importance of physical and mental strength in the sporting experience makes the field of sport an environment for the positioning of gender ideologies. On the other hand, the fact that sports contain ideas of masculinity and femininity has caused it to be seen as a traditionally masculine activity that embodies masculine gender roles, and thus to be considered equivalent to masculinity (Koca &Bulgu, 2005). It is stated that women struggle with these difficulties due to their position in sports, the fact that they are considered physically and mentally weaker than men, and the fact that cultural and social codes have areas where women belong, and that this special struggle has continued throughout history (Arslanoğlu, 2005). It is also known that women were not even accepted as spectators in the ancient Olympics, the oldest sporting event in history (Koryürek, 2003). Women cannot find a real place in organizations formed within male-dominated boundaries. In particular, patriarchal understanding has been a force determining the boundaries of modern sports and has prevented women from participating in sports. Women's presence in the sports media has generally been through the commodification of their sexuality (Kazaz & Hansu, 2020). Under these circumstances, women are often evaluated not for their athletic identity but for their gender. After the second half of the 20th century, the dominance of feminist waves ensured that the issues of women and sports were handled with care and opened these issues to discussion (Öztürk Kuter, 1998). Therefore, in this

section, liberal feminism, Marxist feminism and radical feminism, which are feminist theories that emerged around the feminist movement, will be discussed in relation to sports.

2. Feminism and Feminism Theories

The sex-gender structure, which is fundamental to how people live in families and how families connect to traditions and society, is challenged at the outset of feminist theory. An important historic beginning for feminist theory of family is the examination of sexuality, motherhood, marriage, and paid and unpaid labor by feminist scholars. Despite the fact that women perform the majority of the invisible, unpaid, and unacknowledged labor in the home (such as childcare, housework, and emotional labor), patriarchal structures nevertheless govern and control the lives of women (Allen & Jaramillo-Sierra, 2015). According to Watkins, feminism is "women demanding all their rights as human beings!" There are some feminist theories put forward in the history of feminism. These theories include liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, and radical feminism. With feminism, which has come to mean the women's movement, women under male hegemony have become a social movement to emphasize the importance of gender roles. For this reason, the emergence of feminism can be thought to be aimed at building the position of women against men on more solid grounds and eliminating the inequality between women and men (Dikici, 2015). Liberal feminism is essentially reformist. Rather than challenging the patriarchal social structure, it seeks to establish equal rights in public life in order to equalize the competition between men and women. These include the right to education, the right to vote, the right to a career (Heywood, 2014). Radical feminism, as a new movement compared to other feminist theories, emerged in the late 1960s on women's liberation. developed by women's liberation fans. Radical feminism of the 1970s attracted attention as non-institutionalized organizations with little or no hierarchy and leadership (Donovan, 2001). The Marxist-feminist view points out that inequality of opportunity between men and women can be eliminated, based on Marx's views on the elimination of the family institution (Dikici, 2015).

3. Liberal Feminism and Sport

Mary Wollstonecraf is considered the classic proponent of liberal feminist theory. In her book "Vindication of the Rights of Women" she wrote that women are as much God's creatures as men and should be allowed to develop their moral and intellectual abilities (Donovan, 2001). Liberal feminists tend to treat women as a homogeneous category, without recognizing the vast differences in culture, race, class, age, disability, sexual orientation. The main political point that the liberal feminist approach, emphasizes more is the equality of women with men. Liberal approaches to equality in sport often seek to create the same resources and opportunities for women as for men, to break down barriers

Copyright © 2023 by ISRES Publishing

and force their participation (Hall, 1996). In the following decades, the most dramatic change in the world of sport was the increase in women's participation. The increase in women's participation as athletes was due to the impact of a law (Title IX) enacted in the United States in 1972. Before Title IX, the percentage of female athletes in colleges increased from only 2% to 43% in 2001. Women have made significant financial and emotional gains from Title IX. The amendment allowed women to use federal funds and gain status in the public agenda (Lynn et al., 2004). According to Coakley, if governments in the US and without the introduction of equal rights legislation at the national level, millions of women would not exist in sport today. In the process, the expansion of girls' sports programs in schools, the expansion of school competitions for girls, and increased funding for girls' organizations. One of the reasons why the liberal feminist approach to sport reform has made more headway than other approaches has to do with its political nature and applicability. The desire to quickly achieve gender equality in sport has led to a flow of financial resources from male athletes to female athletes (Coakley,2001). Therefore, radical feminism, which criticizes sports with aspects that liberal approaches ignore, has developed as an alternative to liberal feminism (Hall, 1996).

4. Radical Feminism and Sport

Women who had taken an active role in the civil rights and anti-war movements created the radical feminism motion, which is based on the notion that male dominance is the primary source of women's subjugation and prejudice. It believes that sexism and gender inequality are the two most important variables in women's subordination and prejudice, and it ignores all other types, such as color, racial origin, gender, faith, cultural back ground, place of origin, impairment, class, and socioeconomic classes; male dominance is based on psychological and biological factors that are grounded in society Mohajan (2022). The radical feminist approach accepts an open women-centered understanding. This approach identifies and emphasizes the differences between women, as well as the serious problems associated with male-dominated and male-defined sports (Hall, 1996).

Sport is one of the oldest and most influential social institutions and - according to radical feminism - like any other element in society, it has not developed independently of patriarchal definition. To the extent that sport is male-specific, male-defined and loaded with patriarchal values, it is far from belonging to women, far from feminine values and inadequate as a means of female expression (Donovan, 2001). While liberals are trying to increase the number of women participating in sports, radical actions and policies are aimed at preventing the development and growth of spectator sports and physical games, they promoted the idea that the players should be for themselves (Lenskyj, 1986). Some radical feminists are trying to change discriminatory roles and practices in schools, universities and sports organizations. On the other hand, they are establishing women-only sport activities as alternatives to leadership, such as coaching

and management, which are regulated by traditional male values and controlled by men. According to radical feminists, in sports "it is possible to say that women's sports organized by women, for women can stop all the problems with men's sports".People who are connected to feminists and are directly involved in sports programs - administrators, coaches, etc. - should form a team to create an alternative. According to the radicals, overt discrimination causes bad feelings and women must work together to overcome this discrimination (Cohen, 1993).

5. Marxist Feminism and Sport

Marxism is a the left political theory prompted and created by the two philosophers, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (Khan et al., 2016). Marxists argue that the main reason for women's oppression is class difference rather than gender difference, and they think that there cannot be equal opportunity in societies where there is class distinction. According to them, capitalism is the cause of women's oppression. They believe that women, like all other oppressed people, will become independent from men only when we get rid of this system and adopt a socialist system, since they will no longer be economically dependent on anyone (Dikici, 2015). The patriarchal system according to Marxist feminists, is an outcome of capitalism. Women's oppression would be linked to private property, resulting in an atmosphere in which fathers and later husbands command women. Marxists oppose capitalism in its entirety, but they advocate for gender liberty and equity (Mohajan, 2022).

Conflict theory, based on Marx's ideas, focuses on class relations conflicts; social inequality and the consequences of change in society. Therefore, in relation to Marxist theory, feminist theory asks the question of how gender is produced and reproduced and how this relates to class analysis. Conflict theory is inspired by debates about how sport serves as a tool of economic oppression and exploitation, as well as how it reinforces the power and privilege of the elite in society. Based on Marxist analysis, it would not be wrong to say that sports organizations are gender discriminated institutions. Factors that may lead to the perception of women as an underclass in sports participation give men the natural right to have all kinds of opportunities related to sports, while women are portrayed as secondary, substitute, unworthy of investment and labor in sports. Thus, women have been pushed into an adventure that is heavier and meaner than what it takes to exist in sport. As can be seen, conflict theory, based on the ideas of Karl Marx, focuses on economic factors, class inequality, organized sports and the need for change in societies. These changes are the result of economic elites It focuses on raising awareness of how athletes and spectators are oppressed and skillfully managed for their personal gain and profit. (Messner, 1988).

Copyright © 2023 by ISRES Publishing

6. Take-Home Message

The development of feminist consciousness or feminist approach has been driven by the socio-economic independence of women in the social and economic spheres. This socio-economic independence is usually parallel to the processes of industrialization and modernization. The efforts made on the basis of feminist theory, which includes many theories, are aimed at finding ways to minimize gender discrimination and the oppression and subordination of women in political, social, economic, legal, administrative, political, social, economic, legal, administrative, private and public spheres (Taş, 2016).

References

Allen, K. R., &, A. L. (2015). *Feminist theory and research on family relationships: Pluralism and complexity. Sex Roles.* A Journal of Research, 73, 93–99. DOI:10.1007/s11199-015-0527-4

Arslanoğlu, K. (2005). *Futbolun Psikiyatrisi*. İstanbul: İthaki Yayınları.

Coakley, J.J (2001). *Sport in Society: An Inspiration or an Opiate*. (Ed.: Eitzen D.S), Sport in Contemporary Society. Newyork: Worth Publishers.

Cohen G. L. (1993). *Women in Sports, Issues and Contraversies*. India: Sage Publications.

Dikici, E. (2019). Feminizmin Üç Ana Akımı: Liberal, Marxist ve Radikal Feminizm Teorileri. *The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies,* 2(43), 523-532. http://dx.doi.org/10.9761/JASSS3100

Donovan, J. (2001). *Feminist Teori* (Çev: Aksu, B., Ağduk Gevrek, M., Sayılan, F). İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Esentaş, M., Güzel, P., & Vural, M. (2018). Popüler Kültürde Rekreatif Bir Etkinlik Olarak Dijital Sporlar. *Beden Eğitimi Ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi*, 20(1), 71-79.

Hall, M.A. (1996). *Feminism and Sporting Bodies, Essay on Theory and Practice.* Canada: Human Kinetics.

Heywood, A. (2014). *Feminizm, Siyasi İdeolojiler* (Çev: Ş. Akın vd.), Ankara: Adres Yayınları.

Kazaz, M., & Hansu, C. (2020). *Spor ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet*. Konya: Şelale Ofset.

Khan, W., Hussan, S., & Qureshi, B. (2016). The Purpose of the State: Ancient, Liberal, Marxist and Feminist Standpoints. *Global Social Sciences Review,* 1(1), 77-84. http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2016(I-I).06

Koca, C., & Bulgu, N. (2005). Spor ve toplumsal cinsiyet: Genel bir bakış. *Toplum ve Bilim*, 103, 163–184.

Koryürek, C. (2003). *Olimpiyatlar.* İstanbul: Stil Matbaaacılık.

Lenskyj H. (1986). *Out of Bounds, Woman, Sports, Sexuality*. Toronto: Woman's Press.

Lynn, S., Hardin, M., & Walsdorf, K. (2004). Selling (out) the sporting woman: Advertising images in four athletic magazines. *Journal of Sport Management,* 18(4), 335-349. https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.18.4.335

Messner M. (1988). Sports And Male Domination: The Female Athlete As Contested Ideological Terrain. *Sociology Of Sport Journal*, 5(3): 197-211. https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.5.3.197

Mohajan, H. (2022). An Overview on the Feminism and Its Categories. *Research and Advances in Education,* 1(3),11-26. https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/114625/

Öztürk Kuter, F. (1998). *Toplumsal Boyutlarıyla spor*. Ankara: Bağırgan Yayınevi.

Taş, G. (2016). Feminizm Üzerine Genel Bir Değerlendirme: Kavramsal Analizi, Tarihsel Süreçleri ve Dönüşümleri. *The Academic Elegance*, 3(5). https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/akademik-hassasiyetler/issue/27268/287075

Watkins, Alice S., M. Rueda ve M. Rodrıguez. (1996*). Yeni Başlayanlar İçin Feminizm* (Çev. Arıkan,Ö), İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları.

About the Authors

Cemre Didem EYIPINAR is a research assistant at Gaziantep University, Faculty of Sports, Sciences. She is doing her doctorate in Sports Sciences. Her research is focused on Sports Nutrition, especially on the sportive performance nutrition. She has published in various academic journals and has participated in many international scientific conferences. She has also published one book which are used as basic literature in university.

E-mail: cemreeyipinar@gantep.edu.tr , ORCID : 0000-0002- 9778-2074

Prof. Dr. Ugur ABAKAY received his doctorate degree from Gazi University, Institute of Health Sciences, Department of Physical Education and Sports in 2010. Research and interests; Physical education and game teaching, sports management are included. Research articles were published in national and international journals. There are also book chapters in different publishing houses.

Email: uabakay@gmail.com , ORCID: 0000-0002-3426-6785

Similarity Index:
The similarity index obtained from the plagiarism software for this book chapter is 20%.

Copyright © 2023 by ISRES Publishing