

## THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S SPORTS: TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

*Student: Ergasheva Muxlisa G'ulomjon qizi*

*National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek*

*Tel: +998919440504*

*ergashevamukhlisa0504@gmail.com*

**Introduction:** In today's era of globalization and increasing focus on social equity, gender equality in the field of sports has emerged as one of the most critical and actively debated topics. The global development of women's sports represents not only a matter of athletic participation, but also a broader movement towards human rights, women's empowerment, physical activity, and healthy lifestyles. Governments, international organizations, and civil society are steadily working to ensure that women's participation in sports is protected, promoted, and expanded.

Until the early 20th century, women faced various social, cultural, and religious restrictions that limited their participation in sports. However, with the rise of the women's movement, waves of feminism, and the global promotion of human rights, societal attitudes towards women in sports have undergone significant transformation. Today, women are increasingly active in nearly all areas of competition — from the Olympic Games to local sports leagues.

This article explores the historical phases of the development of women's sports, the global struggle for gender equality in athletics, and the role and achievements of women in contemporary sports. Special attention is given to the policies and initiatives of international bodies such as the United Nations (UN), the International Olympic Committee (IOC), FIFA, and World Taekwondo (WT), all of which play a crucial role in shaping the future of women in sport.

Purpose of the research:

To analyze the global evolution of women's sports and the international approaches to gender equality in athletics, while also reflecting on the current state of these developments in Uzbekistan.

Research methods:

- Historical and comparative analysis;
- Generalization based on statistical data;
- Examination of international legal frameworks;
- Critical and sociological analysis.

**Keywords:** Women in sports, gender equality, international initiatives, Olympic Games, female athletes' achievements, women's rights, women's participation in sports, coaching and leadership, media representation, social equity in sports.

### **The Historical Formation of Women's Sports and Initial Restrictions**

Throughout history, sports have been dominated by male participation and viewed as a masculine domain. Women were often perceived as physically weak and emotionally delicate, making them unsuitable for athletic competition. As a result, societal, cultural, and religious norms limited — and in many cases, prohibited — women's involvement in sports.

In Ancient Greece, for example, the Olympic Games were exclusively reserved for men. Women were not only barred from participating as athletes but were also forbidden from attending the games as spectators. Similar restrictions were prevalent in Ancient Rome and many Asian civilizations, where the idea of a physically active woman contradicted traditional gender roles.

During the Middle Ages, the influence of the Church in Europe further reinforced these barriers. Physical exercise for women was deemed inappropriate, even sinful, and often discouraged by religious authorities. For centuries, physical activity and sports were regarded as privileges belonging solely to men.

It was not until the late 19th and early 20th centuries that this dynamic began to shift. The industrial revolution, growing feminist movements, and increasing access to education provided a foundation for women to seek greater inclusion in public life, including sports. A major breakthrough came in the 1900 Paris Olympic Games, where women were allowed to compete in a limited number of events for the first time. Though symbolic, this marked a historic turning point for women's participation in international athletics.

Despite these advancements, a range of societal and institutional obstacles remained. Gender stereotypes—such as the belief that athletic women would lose their femininity—medical myths about the dangers of physical exertion for women, and political opposition continued to suppress female athletes' opportunities.

### **The Struggle for Gender Equality and International Initiatives**

Today, gender equality is recognized as a cornerstone of social progress and sustainable development at the global level. The field of sports is no exception — it has become a powerful platform for ensuring equal participation, creating inclusive environments, and dismantling gender stereotypes that have long limited women's involvement.

Since the second half of the 20th century, a number of international initiatives have been launched to advance gender equality in sports. One of the most significant milestones was the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) by the United Nations in 1979, which included specific

references to equal participation in sports. The 1995 Beijing Conference also emphasized women's empowerment across all sectors, with strong advocacy for women's active involvement in sports.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) introduced a gender equality strategy aimed at ensuring balanced representation across all Olympic disciplines. A notable breakthrough came during the 2012 London Olympic Games, where for the first time in history, every participating nation included female athletes. This milestone event marked a turning point in the global visibility and legitimacy of women's sports.

Other international sports organizations such as FIFA, World Taekwondo (WT), and FIBA have also implemented comprehensive gender policies. These include the creation of women's competitions, scholarship and funding programs, coaching development courses, and technical support systems. Such initiatives not only expanded women's participation in competitive sports but also increased their representation in leadership and coaching roles.

Additionally, global monitoring tools like the Global Gender Gap Report have become instrumental in assessing progress. These annual reports evaluate the level of gender equality in various fields, including sports, and rank countries accordingly. This has pushed national governments and sports institutions to intensify efforts in closing gender gaps. International initiatives have played a crucial role in the advancement of women's sports, contributing to meaningful progress and transformative changes in how societies perceive and support female athletes.

### **The Role and Achievements of Women in Modern Sports**

Today, women's participation in sports on a global scale has reached unprecedented levels of activity, competitiveness, and professionalism. For women, sports represent not only a means of maintaining physical health but also a platform for self-expression, social engagement, leadership development, and the pursuit of gender equality.

In recent years, the number of female athletes has increased significantly across all disciplines. At the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, women accounted for nearly 49% of all participants — a historic milestone. Women have excelled in numerous sports, including football, boxing, judo, taekwondo, weightlifting, swimming, and more. Iconic athletes such as Serena Williams (tennis), Simone Biles (gymnastics), Katie Ledecky (swimming), and Kimia Alizadeh (taekwondo) have become global symbols of women's athletic excellence.

The success of women in sports is not only measured by medals or records but also by their ability to challenge societal stereotypes, inspire future generations, and promote physically active lifestyles.

Moreover, women are becoming increasingly active as coaches, referees, sports managers, analysts, and journalists. The number of female leaders within international sports organizations continues to grow. For example, as of 2021, more than half of the

commissions within the International Olympic Committee (IOC) are led by women — a notable sign of progress.

Nevertheless, gender disparities still persist in certain sports — including financial inequality, unequal media coverage, and social pressures that disproportionately affect female athletes. These ongoing challenges highlight the importance of sustained attention, investment, and support for the development of women's sports.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Today, women's involvement in sports plays a crucial role not only within the athletic domain but also in the broader context of social equity, women's rights, and cultural transformation. Historically, women's sports have evolved by overcoming numerous restrictions, stereotypes, and institutional barriers. Now, women are firmly established in the global sports arena as strong competitors, leaders, and role models.

Thanks to international initiatives, legal frameworks, and evolving global sports policies, the progress of women's sports has accelerated. Female athletes are celebrated not only for their medals and records but also for their broader impact on society — inspiring youth, challenging outdated norms, and promoting gender equality.

However, several challenges still remain relevant. These include inadequate financial resources, unequal media representation, limited access to leadership and coaching roles for women, and concerns around safety and inclusion within sports environments.

To further develop and support women's sports, the following recommendations are essential:

1. Increase investment and grants for women's sports — including infrastructure development, training programs, and competitive opportunities.
2. Ensure balanced media coverage that highlights the achievements of female athletes across all platforms.
3. Expand access to coaching, management, and technical education for women, fostering career pathways beyond athletic performance.
4. Promote girls' participation in sports at the school and university levels, encouraging early engagement in athletic activities.
5. Strengthen international cooperation on gender equality, especially with global sports federations and organizations.

In conclusion, women's sports are more than just physical competition — they represent a movement for progress, equality, and empowerment. Supporting this movement is not only beneficial for women but for society as a whole.

### **References:**

1. Umarov, A. A., & Khojimurodova, M. K. (2022). Phenomenological Field of Gender Identity in Female Athletes. *Central Asian Journal of Literature, Philosophy and Culture*, 3(12), 15–18.
2. Umarov, A. A., & Khojimurodova, M. K. (2023). Problems of Women's Sport in Family-Marital Conditions. *Actual Problems of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(6), 313–317.
3. Khonturayev, B. (2024). Strengthening Uzbekistan's Position in International Gender Index Ratings. *Society, Gender and Family in Central Asia*, 4(9), 4–12.
4. Ramazonov, I. A., Mahmudov, M. M., & Ernazarova, D. Kh. (2023). Legal Foundations of Gender Equality in the Renewing Uzbekistan. *Research and Education*, 2(1), 101–104.
5. Khamdamova, N. T. (2023). Scientific Foundations of Developing the Concept of Gender Equality in Society. *Education, Science and Innovative Ideas in the World*, 33(3), 104–108.
6. Sayfiyeva, Y. O., & Akhmetova, A. K. (2024). Gender Equality. *Modern Transformation of Education*, 4(2), 91–94.
7. Saidivalieva, K. K., & Akramova, I. A. (2023). The Importance of International Rankings and Indexes in Achieving Gender Equality: Women, Peace, and Security Index (WPS). *Academic Research in Educational Sciences*, 3(4), 54–60.