

## Women and Sports from the Perspective of Islam

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### Abstract

*Women's participation in sport, which is an important part of human life, has been the subject of debate for centuries. In Islamic countries, the religious view of society influences women's participation in sport in different ways. In some Islamic countries today, women's participation in sport is encouraged, while in others it is restricted by various norms. Sports education and sports policies play an important role in attracting women to sports in Islamic countries. As part of our research, we examined the historical perspective of women's participation in sports in Islamic countries, the current status of women's sports, the role of Islamic faith in shaping women's participation in sports, and the potential of women's sports as a means of empowerment and social change. To summarise, Islam does not prohibit women's participation in sports, but only encourages them to participate in sports by covering themselves according to the religion and rules.*

**Keywords:** Islam, Woman, Sports

## INTRODUCTION

Sport is an activity in which the individual aims to achieve success by struggling and is carried out according to certain rules (Varol, 2017). Sport provides many physical, mental and social benefits for individuals. Sports organizations that people care about in their social lives can be easily used (Gül et al., 2018). Today, efforts are being made for women to be active and successful in sports. So much so that ensuring the satisfaction of sports elements is very important (Tok et al., 2017).

When we look at the concept of women and sport, we see that sport has many benefits and the power to change women's lives and promote social change. Women who exercise have a more positive body image and higher psychological well-being than women who do not exercise. In addition, sport plays an important role in building teamwork, confidence, resilience and self-esteem - crucial skills that enable women to succeed in life. Sport plays an important role in promoting gender equality by breaking down traditional gender roles and promoting women's rights. However, gender norms related to appearance often limit women's participation in sport (Senarath & Liyanage, 2020).

The participation of women in sporting activities can also provide information about the status of women in the respective society. If one examines the status of women in the world and the duties imposed on them, one realises that women's gender is taken into account more than their achievements in the field of sport. Especially with the feminist movement that has developed since the early 1970s, the issue of women and sports has become a serious problem on which studies and discussions have been conducted (Karacan, 2003). Although women's sports are experiencing an incredible resurgence today and are gaining more public acceptance, there are still significant historical obstacles to overcome (Lopiano, 2000). It is noted that women's participation in sport is more limited and different from that of men and that they are disadvantaged in the sporting environment (Koca & Bulgu, 2005). Thoughts such as the fact that women are seen as physically and emotionally weaker in society, or that the field of sport is seen as belonging more to men, mean that women have more difficulties in this area than men (Akkaya & Kaplan, 2014). In addition to this perspective, there are

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some restrictions that women face in their participation in sport. In particular, religious and socio-cultural restrictions, mixed sports activities, dress codes, the general tendency of the masses towards women's sports and limited resources are considered as some of the main limitations for women's participation in sports (Benn & Dagkas, 2017; Çetin & Ece, 2021). Due to these limitations and restrictions, it can be difficult for women to participate in sport.

## **Islam and Sports**

All over the world there are many forms of religion that differ greatly in practice, belief and doctrine. In fact, it is difficult to define the term "religion" as it encompasses a large number of beliefs. Beliefs and cultural practices are distinct concepts (Lefor, 2015).

Gender inequality continues to be a major problem in almost all areas of sport (Evans & Pfister, 2021). Sport, which is generally characterized as an activity practiced by many individuals and groups, appears as a sociological situation that changes according to society and culture and sometimes even within the same society after a certain period of time. It can be said that sport has an integrative character that extends from the family environment to religion, from education to politics. The value judgments, traditions and customs that make up cultures play an important role in determining individual perspectives and attitudes towards sport (Taşmektepligil & İmamoğlu, 1996). Religion is at the forefront of these elements that contribute to the formation of the cultural structure and by which societies are significantly influenced. In past societies, religion has continued to exist as a strong social institution with unifying properties. Even in secular societies, religion continues to be an important and effective institution for social life, communication between people and the psychological life of people (Tan, 1989). "Religion is a set of rules and beliefs that are generally assumed to have been commanded in some form by a supernatural divine being that is great and superior and that man cannot resist. Durkheim, on the other hand, defined religion as "a whole consisting of beliefs and ceremonies (faith and worship), the parts of which are linked together, relate to sacred things and uniting their members in the same society". Religion is a system, and the elements of this system are institutions and rituals. The basic principles of religion are the rhythmic movements, routines and expressions of faith (Dönmezer, 1990).

When one examines the relationship between sport and religion, one finds that the Islamic religion encourages Muslims to engage in sport for various reasons. These reasons are that Muslims can practice their religion, know and perform their duties and responsibilities, become physically and mentally stronger, and that Muslims are willing to protect and preserve the Islamic land. In this direction, Muslims have been interested in the sports ordered and recommended by the Prophet Muhammad since the time of Asr-ı Saadet (Bayram et al., 2019). The variety of sports that exist today did not exist at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, but all sports that do not contradict the commandments and prohibitions of Islam are considered permissible. Furthermore, Islam does not encourage people to be spectators, but rather to participate in sports. There are sports that the Prophet Muhammad himself was particularly interested in, which he encouraged people to do and whose principles he laid down. These include running (athletics), weightlifting (power sports), wrestling, horse and camel racing, swimming, arrow shooting and hunting. In addition, these sporting events are observed individually or collectively and the winners are rewarded (Adam, 2003; (Shamsuddinova & Nisa, 2023).

It is acceptable that each religion contains a belief and ritual that determines and limits its own sporting activities. For example, the bullfighting competitions practiced in Spain are not accepted in Islam (Cengiz & Taşmektepligil, 2016; Saira et al., 2021).

As in all areas that people's individual and social life requires, the religion of Islam has also established rules in the field of sports that make people feel good and fulfill their needs. A proper study of the life of the Prophet Muhammad and the Muslim believers around him, as well as the history of Muslims, shows that sport is highly valued. Islam is a religion that is open to all kinds of sporting activities that are beneficial to the spiritual, mental and physical structure of human beings, provided that they are not harmful. There is no prohibition in this respect, and it is also seen that it is permissible to engage in sport depending on the situation. The essential thing is the material and spiritual well-being, peace, comfort, happiness and salvation of the person (Bayram et al., 2019).

In Islam, sporting activities and games should be practised within certain limits and should not exceed these limits. It is necessary to be honest and moderate, not to include gambling and other abominations in the games, to be moral, not to waste time and not to go beyond the religious rules while practicing sports activities (Canan, 2012).

Below you will find examples of verses and hadiths on the subject of sport in Islam as well as information on the importance of sport in the life of the Prophet Muhammad;

The Prophet Muhammad said: *"The strong believer is more beloved to Allah and better than the weak believer. Indeed, there is good in both. Strive for that which is beneficial for you. Ask Allah for help and do not show weakness. If a misfortune befalls you, do not say, "If I had done this, it would not have happened to me!" Say, "Allah has decreed it. Whatever He wills will happen!" Because the word "if" opens the door to the work of Satan."* (Muslim, Qadar, 46: H.no: 2664). What is meant by a strong believer in this hadith can be expressed as a believer who is sufficiently strong both physically and materially. For it is said that the believer who is strong by exercising can perform physical worship more easily and simply, help the oppressed, speak out against injustice and be more useful and active in case of war.

Shooting is one of the sports that Muslims have historically been most interested in. It is also mentioned in verses and hadiths. *"Prepare for them (the enemies) as much strength as you can"* (al-Anfal, 8/60). The word "strength" in this verse was interpreted by the Prophet Muhammad as Sagittarius (Riyâzû's-Sâlihîn Translation, II, 563). The Prophet Muhammad said: *"Teach your sons to shoot arrows, because the best way to pass the time is to play with arrows." He said: "Have fun and play, for I do not like to see coarseness and rigidity in our religion"* (Canan, 1993).

While the Prophet Muhammad primarily recommended sports that benefit the military, it is clear that he also attached importance to the preparation and construction of sports equipment. The Prophet Muhammad said the following about the arrow: *"Allah will admit three people to paradise with a single arrow. These are the one who makes the arrow, the one who shoots it and the one who carries it."* (Riya-zü's-Salihîn Translation, 564).

*As for riding: "Allah has created horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and as ornaments for your lives. He will create many other vehicles that you do not know"* (Surah al-Nahl / 8). Moreover, Prophet Muhammad organized races between racehorses and packhorses and rewarded the winners (Bukhârî; "Shalât", 41, "Jihâd" 56, 57, 58; Muslim, "Imarah", 95) (cited in Ayar, 2018).

It is well known that Islam encourages running as well as shooting and riding. In a hadith, the Prophet Muhammad said: *"Whoever runs between two targets has done a good deed for every step."* (<https://dergi.diyamet.gov.tr/makaledetay.php?ID=18941#>).

These examples illustrate the Islamic view of sport. For example, it is narrated that the sons of Jacob obtained permission from their father for their brother Yusuf by saying, *"Send him with us tomorrow, let him eat, drink and play with us"* (Yusuf, 12/12), and when they explained the situation of the missing Yusuf, they apologised to their father by saying, *"...we went away to compete and left Yusuf with our things"* (Yusuf, 12/17) (Adam, 2003). When Prophet Muhammad was wrestling between his grandsons Hassan and Hussein, he sided with Hassan and when asked why, he replied, "Jabrâil is helping Hussein and I want to help Hassan" (Canan, 1983: cited in Oral, 2014). Again, the Prophet Muhammad gave the famous wrestler of Mecca, Rukane b. Abdi Yazid, the condition that he should be able to wrestle and defeat himself in wrestling as a miracle that he should show in order to become a Muslim. Muhammad accepted the offer and defeated him with a result that surprised Ruqane, who was very confident of his biceps (Bukhari, 102: cited in Oral, 2014).

## Women and Sports in Islam

Women's participation in sports in Islamic countries is influenced in various complex and ambiguous ways. Although the teachings of Islam do not prohibit physical activity and sport for women, religious traditions and cultural norms have at times restricted women's participation in sport (Benn et al., 2016; Gül & Gül, 2021). The current status of women's sport in Islamic countries varies widely. In some Islamic countries, there are rules that significantly restrict women's ability to participate in sport, for example, women are not even allowed to participate in sporting events where men are present, while in other countries there are no gender-specific restrictions. In Saudi Arabia, which is considered an important place for Islamic countries, women were not

allowed to participate in sports until 2012, but after 2012, the Saudi government has taken various steps to end discrimination against women in sports and encourage women's participation (Al Ruwaili, 2020).

Muslim sportswomen face a number of obstacles when practising sports both at home and abroad. In some countries, for example, it is forbidden to take part in sporting events unless they are wearing the hijab. Strict dress codes and gender discrimination often limit women's opportunities to participate in sports. Barriers to Muslim women's participation in sport and physical activity are often linked to situations where women's autonomy, mobility and safety are restricted. These barriers need to be removed in order to promote women's sport in Islamic countries (Walseth and Fasting, 2003).

In many Islamic countries, women's sports are not given the same attention and resources as men's sports. While some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, have made significant progress in promoting women's participation in sport, others lag far behind the modern world (Benstead, 2017). In one of these countries, Iran, women are still prohibited from participating in men's sports competitions (Ziaee et al., 2023). On the other hand, countries such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates actively promote women's sports by investing heavily in sports infrastructure. Female athletes from these countries have participated in international competitions and brought home various medals (Kheyri et al., 2023).

The Islamic faith plays an important role in the participation of women in sport in Islamic countries. Studies show that Islamic values encourage women's participation in sport. However, cultural barriers such as strict dress codes, gender segregation and traditional gender roles often limit women's opportunities to participate in sport in some countries (Pfister, 2010; Khan et al., 2012).

Although women's activities during the day varied from time to time in the Middle Ages, they generally performed domestic tasks. Urban women and domestic servants not only did housework such as cleaning and cooking, but also tended to the needs of their male masters. Noble and urban women are known to have taken over their husbands' duties in their absence when they left to serve a feudal lord or to go to war, in some cases only looking after the household, but in other cases also looking after many people. She was also expected to take care of their children's upbringing (Genç, 2011).

Christianity and Islam were historically influenced by this approach. In the medieval Christian world, in great civilizations such as Rome, and in pre-Islamic Jahiliyya societies, women were seen as pleasure material to be used, bought and sold. With the advent of Islam, men and women were considered and declared as equal human beings. There are many verses in the Quran that emphasize this equality (Altuğ & Günay, 2022).

For example; *"Muslim men and Muslim women, believing men and believing women, God-fearing men and God-fearing women, believing men and believing women, patient men and patient women, truly God-fearing men and truly God-fearing women, and the men who give alms and the women and the men who fast, and the women who fast, and the men who guard their chastity, and the women who guard their chastity, and the men who remember Allah much, and the women who remember Allah much, verily Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward."* (Ahzab, 33/ 35). The equality of men and women is clearly expressed in this verse.

Looking at the requirements of Islam and the position of women in this area, the perspective can be summarised as follows, according to the Presidency of the Supreme Council for Religious Affairs: *"Muslim women who have reached the age of puberty are commanded to cover their entire body in the presence of foreign (non-mabram) men, except for their hands, face and feet (Nur 24/31)." To ensure this, the dress worn must be of a quality that does not reveal the body lines and colour (Abu Dawud: Libas 34).* It is a religious duty for Muslims to follow these instructions. The hijab is obligatory in Islam and our religion has not given detailed instructions on the form of veiling, but leaves this to the climatic conditions of the geographical region, the characteristics of the place of residence and the customs and traditions. What is important is that the parts that the woman should cover must not be visible and that the lines of the woman's body must not be visible. Clothing in which the woman's body lines are visible is not considered appropriate by our religion and does not correspond to the hijab prescribed by the religion. The Prophet Muhammad said: *"There are many women who are naked even though they are clothed"* (Muslim: Libas, 125), referring to women who wear clothes that show their body lines.

Islam sees no obstacle for women to play sports and they should only pay attention to their hijab as prescribed by the religion. "When the Prophet of Islam, Prophet Muhammad, and Prophetess Aisha were newly married, one day they proposed to run a race together. The race was initially won by Aisha, the wife of Prophet Muhammad. About a year later the race was repeated, and this time Prophet Muhammad won the race, and in this way they were, in a sense, even" (Algül, 2000; Islam et al., 2023).

Not only the rules of religion, but also the culture, living conditions, legal prohibitions and social stigmas can prevent Muslim women from participating in physical activities, especially sports competitions (Pfister 1997).

International sporting events play an important role in promoting the status of women in sport in Islamic countries. However, cultural and religious concerns about the female body and public visibility often pose a challenge. The female body and public visibility are central to Islamic culture, and the high visibility of the female body in mixed-gender arenas can be challenging. Women's participation in sport is often based on their representation in the games rather than their results. Despite these challenges, international sporting events also draw attention to the potential of women's sport in Islamic countries. The success stories of female athletes from Muslim countries in international competitions show that more needs to be invested in women's sport. The successes have also raised new issues, such as gender equality in elite sport and the marginalization of Muslim women in sport (Benn and Dagkas, 2017).

Female athletes in Muslim countries have experienced many success stories despite the challenges. These success stories should not hide the fact that women are still a minority in competitive sport in Islamic countries. However, the success of Muslim women athletes in international competitions has drawn attention to the need for more investment in women's sport (Jawad et al., 2010). Furthermore, these success stories contribute to traditional gender roles. The acceptance of sport among Muslim women around the world has created a controversial space. However, debates in Islamic circles, including fatwas and media, about the public visibility and sexuality of Muslim women athletes continue to shape women's participation in sport (Wabuyabo et al., 2015).

The discourse on the Muslim woman's body is also at the center of the theological struggle between Islam and moderate secular ideologies (Hargreaves and Vertinsky, 2007). Various misinterpretations by people or societies hinder women's direct participation in sports in Islamic countries (Sofian et al., 2010). Considering the social responsibilities that patriarchal societies impose on women, it can be predicted that the restrictive approach even limits women's participation in recreational activities (Tiryaki, 2014).

Islam has always adopted the principle of protecting the soul and body and supported women's participation in sports within the framework of religious rules in order to educate healthy individuals and society (Turan, 1985). When we consider the requirements of religion in relation to Islam, sports as a whole and the place of women in sports, the Presidency of the Supreme Council for Religious Affairs has issued a fatwa as follows: "Muslim women who have reached the age of puberty are ordered to cover their entire body except their hands, face and feet in the presence of foreign (namahrem) men (Nur 24/31)." To achieve this, the clothing worn must be such that it does not reveal the contours and color of the body (Abu Dawud: Libas 34). "It is a religious duty of Muslims to follow these commandments. There is no religious objection to practicing sports in accordance with these precautions." The Islamic view on women's sports can be summarized as follows (Algül, 2000).

Since sports have recently been given different characteristics according to their purpose, it has been found to have benefits such as being in accordance with the Islamic religion in terms of clothing, not hindering the fulfillment of religious requirements, and keeping individuals away from inappropriate behaviors such as gambling and violence (Akyüz, 1995). As long as Islamic regulations are observed, there is no harm in women participating in or watching sporting activities (Bardakoğlu, 1999).

It is clear from this information that the female body and its veiling play a central role in Islamic discourse and practice. Moral integrity requires women to cover their bodies, including their hair. However, it can be argued that attitudes and practices regarding the body and the headscarf vary greatly between Islamic cultures and also between individuals.

## **Muslim Women Athletes at the Olympic Games**

Looking at participation in the Olympic Games, women are described as "latecomers" in sport. No female athletes took part in the 1896 Games, but since the 1900 Olympic Games in Paris, the number of participants has slowly but steadily increased. In Islamic cultures, sport is traditionally not highly valued and therefore the number of Muslim athletes at the Olympic Games is also quite low. In 2008, for example, 427 men (6% of male athletes) and 98 women (2% of female athletes) took part. Considering that about 20% of the world's population belongs to Islam, very few participants from Islamic countries take part in the Olympic Games (Pfister, 2008).

In recent years, there has been some progress in the participation of women. For example, 42 of the 160 NOCs (including 21 Islamic countries) that participated in the Seoul Olympics sent only male athletes (Hargreaves, 1994). 33 NOCs in Barcelona, 28 in Atlanta and only 9 in Sydney had no women in their teams. In 2008, only three delegations (Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait) were "male". Oman and the United Arab Emirates sent women to the Olympics for the first time, the Jordanian delegation consisted of three men and four women, and the North African countries provided a significant number of female athletes, even a volleyball team (Bannayan, 2008).

According to Koca and Hacisoftaoğlu (2010), the number of female athletes has tripled since 1997. 13 percent of the 420,000 top athletes are women. Most of the 57,000 athletes in the 23 million female population (aged 15-64) compete in the sports of volleyball (around 11,000 women), taekwondo (9,000), basketball (5,000), karate (4,000) and 2,000 or fewer women. Swimming, kickboxing, handball and judo. One example of women overcoming barriers in sport is the Turkish top athlete Hamide Bıkçın Tosun, bronze medalist at the 2000 Olympic Games, a mother who covers her hair as much as possible in everyday life and in taekwondo competitions. Another example are the Syrian sportswomen who take part in national and even international competitions, mostly in pan-Arab, Asian and Mediterranean tournaments and championships. Successful female athletes such as Syria's Ghada Shouaa, a track and field athlete and winner of the heptathlon at the 1996 Games, are treated like heroes (Karfoul, 2011). The same applies to Malaysian athletes and female athletes from many other Islamic countries.

Turkey was the most successful Islamic country at the 2008 Beijing Games with 8 medals, four of which were won by women. 2 medals were won by the Ethiopian long-distance runner Elvan Abeylegesse, a Turkish woman in weightlifting and a Turkish woman in taekwondo. In addition, two women from Muslim countries won medals, an Algerian judoka and a Moroccan 800-meter runner. Despite these successes, this overview clearly shows that the marginalization of Muslim women at the Olympic Games is a serious problem (Pfister, 2008)

## **Factors Restricting Women's Participation in Sports**

Due to socio-cultural constraints, Muslim women face a number of restrictions and barriers to participation in sport. As many people believe that "sport is haram (forbidden)", Muslim women face many more barriers to participating in sport. When we look at the results of studies examining various barriers to participation in sports, lack of time, lack of information, overcrowding, distance to activity locations, family problems, money and lack of friends are mentioned as the most important barriers to recreational activities (Hoden, 2010; Kara & Demirci, 2010).

Viriden and Walker (1999), on the other hand, believe that women have more family responsibilities than men and are therefore preoccupied with housework and participate less in sport for fear of assault and rape. In addition to this information, religious and socio-cultural restrictions, mixed sports activities, dress codes, the general bias of the masses towards women's sports and limited resources are seen as some of the main barriers to women's participation in sports (Benn & Dagkas, 2017).

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Sport is a phenomenon that brings individuals together under the same rules regardless of their religion, language, race, level of education or social status, allows them to compete with each other and also ensures

communication between different societies and can be organised according to the social structure. Sport, which has developed from ancient times to the present day, has been negatively affected from time to time by the changes in social structure, but today it has acquired the quality of a universal language that can be spoken anywhere in the world, like music (Bayraktar, 2003). Sport teaches teamwork, self-confidence, resilience and confidence, which are very important skills that enable women to succeed in life. In addition, sport creates opportunities in traditional gender roles and plays an important role in the development of women's rights. Sport helps to promote women's participation in sport by eliminating gender norms related to appearance (Senarath & Liyanage, 2020).

In examining how sporting activities in general, and Muslim girls' and women's participation in sport in particular, are influenced by religion, it should first be noted that there is no general prohibition of sport in Islam, and this applies to sport for girls and women. Islamic sports scholars, both men and women, emphasize that health and fitness are important for both men and women and should be maintained through sports activities.

In this context, it has been repeatedly stated that Muhammad advocated a healthy lifestyle and recommended running, riding, swimming and archery (Pfister, 2008).

Sfeir (1985) states that "Islam in no way seeks to demean women, and certainly does not seek to discourage women from exercising. On the contrary, it attaches great importance and function to physical strength and sporting activities. Islam is constantly concerned with one's own body, cleanliness, purification and strength and distinguishes between the sexes. However, some religious elements, such as Islamic fatalism and Hindu mysticism, have been dominant factors in controlling general access to sport." He explains. Daiman (1995), after analyzing Islamic sources and authorities, concludes that sport should be compulsory for women for health reasons.

According to Altuğ and Günay (2022), *"it is very important to avoid religious bigotry and to understand religion from the Quran, which is the main source of religion, and not from an Islam that is influenced by Arab and Iranian culture, in order to ensure women's basic rights to life. If the religion is centered on the Quran, it is obvious that women will take their place in society as individuals with equal rights as men."*

In sport, as in everything else, there are gender-specific advantages. In sports, there is a dominant side with different percentages of performance levels. However, the perspective on this issue differs in societies with different levels of development. While the participation rate of women in sports is high in developed countries, it is low in developing countries. This is because in these societies it is still assumed that women were only created for fertility, that they smell of perfume instead of sweat and that they prefer a passive life to an active one. It is recommended that women should prefer artistic and aesthetic branches such as tennis, swimming and ice skating (Açıkada & Ergen, 1990). Sport is generally regarded as free and voluntary. Although participation depends on age, gender, class and race, it appears to be unpaid because it does not belong to the spheres created by necessity (paid male labor and paid female labor). This free and independent inner world of sport disappears when women are involved. What the majority are aware of is the strange reception of the presence of women in sport. Coverage of women's sport often focuses on the novelty and humor rather than the sport itself (Willis, 1995, p.34). Most media reports on female athletes focus on their qualities as housewives and mothers. Photos or television images of female athletes consist either of poses that emphasize their transformation or, on the contrary, of poses that emphasize the de-gendering and masculinization of women in sport. This is because the characteristics associated with sport, such as being fast, strong and powerful, are also characteristics associated with the male gender. For this reason, sport is often identified with male identity and seen as a man's job. Physical success and masculinity are seen as one and the same. Successful women become more masculine with increasing success. A successful female athlete is seen as a man, but an unsuccessful one as a woman. No male athlete in society faces such a dilemma (Amman, 2006). If a female athlete is successful, it is assumed that she is a man. For this reason, female athletes are constantly subjected to a gender test. Female athletes are only praised and applauded by society if they are successful in sports such as figure skating and gymnastics. As this sport is already associated with the image of youth, flexibility and femininity, it again appears as an indicator of gender discrimination in sport (Willis, 1995). In South American newspapers, women's sports account for 15%

of coverage, compared to 3% to 7% in all sports magazines and 1% to 3% in women's tabloid media. This low coverage is consistent across all sports competitions and media, from indigenous youth sports to Olympic sports. Even print media that only report on women either treat the femininity of female athletes in sport as an image or give the impression that women in sport are undervalued (Aykor, 1994). There are so few comments about team sports played by women that they are usually either negative or disparaging, like less than perfect heroines, exceptional people with emotional problems and contradictions (McPherson et al., 1989, p.233). Although it varies from society to society, these prevailing ideas about women in sport in all countries also determine the proportion and type of sporting activities women participate in. Women mostly prefer sports such as aerobics, stepping, walking and jogging to maintain their fitness, beauty and attractiveness (Doğramacı, 1989).

There were times before the modern age when women were not accepted in social life. Sport was also affected by these views. The times when women's participation in sports activities was forbidden and humiliated have continued from antiquity to the present day. Today, women's participation in sport and other social life is increasingly accepted. The Greek Olympic Games have survived from antiquity to the present day. About a century ago, women were not yet admitted to the Olympic Games. At the Olympic Games, which were resumed after the wars, Baron De Coubertin said that the role of women was to honour men (McPherson et al., 1989). This thinker, who played an important role in the increase of sports activities in the world, declared in 1902 that "women's sport is against the rules of nature" and in 1912 that "the Olympic Games should be reserved for men and it should be emphasised that female athletes are fearsome." This shows that the mentality that degrades women was still prevalent at the beginning of the 20th century. About 30 years before the reorganisation of the Olympic Games, women were only included in sports competitions (Doğramacı, 2000). However, Coubertin continued to defend his old view and stated that women should be excluded from the Olympic Games. While in 1925 he recommended that women should compete in unclassified events, in 1934 he warned that the participation of female athletes in competitions was not good for male athletes. In 1935, she again emphasised that she was against women's participation in public competitions, that they should not play sports in public, and that women's main role in the Olympic Games was to participate in rewarding men's achievements (McPherson et al., 1989).

In recent years, women's interest in sport has increased significantly, especially in some sports. The increase in martial arts in particular is remarkable. It has been observed that there has been a large increase in the taekwondo branch. It turns out that cultural style plays a role in this increase. Firstly, the attire worn in taekwondo has become one of the most popular branches in terms of faith and spirituality as well as the living customs and traditions of our country. Secondly, there has been a noticeable increase in women's interest in the sport in recent years as their need to defend themselves against robbery and similar situations has increased. In other sports, a sports culture is emerging with the increasing media coverage of Olympic disciplines, which is accelerating women's turn to sport (Amman, 2006). In recent years, the increase in diseases related to inactivity, the rise of the third preference and doctors' instructions to citizens to exercise have led to a significant increase in health sports. Although these developments are good, it is certain that we are still far behind developed countries. The main reason why women cannot participate in sports is the cultural level of our country and the effect of the position of women in tradition, custom and traditional understanding (Pfister, 2008). There is a need for serious studies on the place of women in sports in our country. The place of women in sports in Islam is very important. This issue urgently needs to be clarified by experts from academia. In this context, it is necessary for the Presidency of Religious Affairs to explain the place of women in Islam in a way that the whole society can understand (Alkan, 1981).

The presence of women in public spaces and their participation in sport are in line with gender research. Legal regulations on equal rights for women, women's movements and an increased interest in women's sport in the media have increased women's participation in sport since the 1970s (Koca et al., 2005). The international women's movement of the last 30 years has enabled women to develop intellectually and physically. As a result, women's roles in work and family life have been redefined and women with more time and financial resources have increased their participation in sport (Martin et al., 2004). The years of development of women's sport are the period from the middle of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. During this period, known



as the Victorian era, women began to take their place in the history of sport. It can be said that the number of women entering the public sphere from the domestic sphere, known as the private sphere, and participating in working life increased significantly. As women enter the public sphere, they are gradually allowed to participate in certain sports within certain limits (Amman, 2005). The number of female athletes, which was very low until the 19th century due to some traditional factors and social constraints, started to increase after the 1900 Paris Olympics (Göde & Köksal, 1996). In the 1940s, when the Second World War affected the lives of all humanity, women began to work in jobs that required heavy physical labour instead of the men who participated in the war. The fact that they could do all the work that men did influenced women's thoughts about participating in sports activities. After the end of the Second World War, men returned to work, while women had difficulty finding work and had more free time. During this period, golf and tennis became widespread among women and it became possible for women to participate in all kinds of sports activities (Sofuoğlu, 2006). Only 11 female athletes from 4 countries took part in the Olympic Games in Paris in 1900. The Games with the largest participation in Olympic history were organised in Munich in 1972 with over 10,000 participants, and about a third of them were female athletes. If we look at the progress in women's participation in sport, we can say that this is a great improvement in 70 years. In fact, the situation varies from society to society. In societies with different levels of development, the view on the topic varies, and women's participation in sport is higher in industrialised countries. In some societies, however, it is still assumed that the female sex is only made for fertility, smells of perfume instead of sweat and chooses a passive life instead of an active one. It is recommended that women should prefer artistic and aesthetic sports such as tennis, golf, swimming and skating (Göde & Köksal, 1996). Although many sports are considered unsuitable for women, it is believed that women who participate in these unsuitable sports transcend gender roles. It can be said that the close relationship between the qualifications required in sport and stereotypical judgments about gender roles has led to this notion (Koca et al., 2005).

Consequently, the status of women in society is also an important indicator of women's participation in sport. The value placed on women worldwide and the social status of women show the social differences in the valuation of sport in women's lives. In general, the role of women is determined by the consideration of gender. Women's participation in sports has increased, especially in recent years, even with the advent of the first sport. It can be said that society's view of women is important in which sports women who are interested in sports can be successful or which sports they can participate in.

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