



Academic physical education and sports system: gender aspect

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Abstract

Objective of the study was to survey and analyze the gender split situation in the national academic physical education and sports system.

Methods and structure of the study. We sampled the students (n=2524 including 1298 men and 1226 women) of Lesgaft National State University of Physical Education, Sport and Health for the gender split analysis.

Results and conclusion. We believe that the modern sports communities are virtually free of any gender biases that are still alive in the non-sporting population groups as myths and gender stereotypes – albeit they also tend to fade with time. A good case in point is provided by the latest progress of the men's rhythmic and artistic gymnastics and synchronized swimming disciplines. It should be mentioned in this context that some gender inequality is still traditional for the national educational system management groups including the academic physical education and sports management which is still dominated by men like quite a few other sectors.

The national physical education and sport sector shaping historical and socio-cultural contexts and factors have been virtually free of expressed and specific gender inequalities or biases. Gender split in the national physical education and sports universities is traditionally and virtually equal, with women having a free access to every natural scientific education domain. Modern education system reforms tend to prioritize multidisciplinary integrative education models free of gender biases in every sector including the academic physical education and sport service.

Keywords: *higher education in physical education and sports, professional gender split, gender stereotypes.*

Background. For the last two decades, gender issues have been increasingly relevant for the Russian society on the whole and physical education and sport system in particular. The academic physical education and sport system has always ranked the social/gender equality among its key values, along with the Soviet sports progress with their institutional building aspects. Gender equality policies and practices have always been advanced in the national communities and physical education and sport system. Thus Peter Lesgaft Institute of Physical Education since the Soviet times trained students of both sexes on an equal basis – in the context of the traditional gender statuses and roles deeply rooted in the national culture. The concept of sexual dimorphism refers to the

natural differences of both sexes to give rise to many popular biases and myths on the men's sports being inaccessible for women since they are unable to compete with men. Ridiculously enough, the gender rivalry found new forms nowadays when transgender men are qualified in some countries for the women's sport competitions.

It is also beyond doubt that female athletes in many sports have come fairly close to the best men's accomplishments. Modern sports are increasingly women-friendly i.e. offer growing and greater opportunities for their progress in many aspects. This is the reason why the modern physical education and sports theory, practice and research are increasingly interested in studies of the women's individual and



specific resources, functionality specifics and other potential contributors to their competitive successes. It should be mentioned in this context that the modern physical education and sports knowledge is increasingly integrative. Having emerged in natural sciences, it has rapidly advanced to the social and humanitarian knowledge domains to acquire an expressed interdisciplinary character. On the whole, the physical education and sports progress within the historical, socio-cultural and research contexts have largely leveled down the traditional gender inequality in the vocational identifications and motivations of the young human resource flowing in the physical education and sport sector.

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Methods and structure of the study. We sampled the students (n=2524 including 1298 men and 1226 women) of Lesgaft National State University of Physical Education, Sport and Health for the gender split analysis.

Results and discussion, Given in Table 1 are the gender split data of the 48.6% female 51.4% male sample.

About the same gender split was found in the full-time and correspondence course masters majoring in 49.04.01 Physical Education and 49.04.03 Sports disciplines, with some sport-specific gender variations across the Departments. Thus the Summer Olympic Sports Department and Martial Arts and Non-Olympic Sports Department were found favored by women and men, respectively, albeit the gender differences are offset by the total numbers and percentages. Provisionally the departmental sports may be grouped into:

- Traditionally preferred by women “aesthetic” sports: rhythmic gymnastics, aesthetic gymnastics, sports aerobics, sport dances, acrobatic rock-n-roll, figure skating, etc.;
- Strength-intensive/ power contact sports preferred by men: football, ice hockey, wrestling; and
- Mass popular gender-unspecific sports: athletics, swimming, cross-country skiing, etc.

The above gender split is apparently dictated by mostly motivations and sport specifics, plus the growing commercialization trends of influence on the social and gender student groups – as demonstrated, among other things, by the figure skating discipline that reports recent growth in the paid demand for positions in the groups.

We believe that the modern sports communities are virtually free of any gender biases that are still alive in the non-sporting population groups as myths and gender stereotypes – albeit they also tend to fade with time. A good case in point is provided by the latest progress of the men’s rhythmic and artistic gymnastics and synchronized swimming disciplines. It should be mentioned in this context that some gender inequality is still traditional for the national educational system management groups including the academic physical education and sports management (see Table 2) which is still dominated by men like quite a few other sectors.

As demonstrated by Table 2, the physical education and sports management structure is still gender unequal/ discriminative – due to the national socio-cultural traditions rather than some formal preferences. This situation may be explained by repercussions of the Soviet ‘gender contracting’ requirements, although the gender equality issues in Russia appear

Table 1. Full-time bachelors majoring in 49.03.01 Physical Education discipline in the academic year 2020-2021 (n=2524): gender split

Academic unit	Total, n	Women, n/ %	Men, n/ %
Health and Rehab Dept	182	114/62,6	68/37,4
Winter Olympic Sports Dept	347	146/42,1	201/57,9
Management and Social Technologies Institute	84	43/51,2	41/48,8
Summer Olympic Sports Dept	1045	613/58,7	432/41,3
Martial Arts and Non-Olympic Sports Dept	419	119/28,4	300/71,6
Individual Education and Sports Technologies Dept	447	191/42,7	256/57,3
TOTAL	2524	1226/48,6	1298/51,4



Table 2. Academic physical education and sports management personnel: gender split (n=316)

Position	Total	Men	%	Women	%
Rector	14	13	92,9	1	7,1
Vice-Rector	65	40	61,5	25	38,5
Department Head	237	130	54,9	107	45,1
Total	316	183	57,9	133	42,1

less topical and sensitive than in the US, for example, and this is undoubtedly a subject to a special academic interest.

It was since the 1970s that the US expert community has been busy with analysis of the implicit and explicit sexist contents in the textbooks and manuals – and successful in detecting violations of the gender equality standards in lectures and other materials. These findings were followed by stringent censorship and revisions. Generally, they found that “men on the whole and white men in particular dominate as a standard” in the textbooks and, hence, schoolchildren develop a belief that this situation is normal and should be considered a social standard. It should be mentioned, however, that the school teaching population is traditionally dominated by women both in Russia and the US. However, it is the characters of success stories that dominate as role models for the youth – which are predominantly male, appealing, determined, active and successful in the social domains

viewed as most prestigious [2]. However, the relevant studies in Russia are relatively new and seldom at this juncture.

Conclusion. The national physical education and sport sector shaping historical and socio-cultural contexts and factors have been virtually free of expressed and specific gender inequalities or biases. Gender split in the national physical education and sports universities is traditionally and virtually equal, with women having a free access to every natural scientific education domain. Modern education system reforms tend to prioritize multidisciplinary integrative education models free of gender biases in every sector including the academic physical education and sport service.

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