



Woman in Culture and Arts

Examining the Elements and Effective Characteristics of Iranian Women's Sportswear from the 1996-2020 Olympics Using the Functionalism Theory

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article type: Research Article</p> <p>Article history: Received: 19 June 2024 Received in revised form: 10 December 2024 Accepted: 6 January 2026 Published online: 1 July 2026</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Female Athletes, Functionalism, Islamic Sportswear, Olympics Sportswear.</i></p>	<p>Introduction The performance of sports activities and initiatives is significantly influenced by sportswear. This attire, which is a reflection of the art and culture of various countries, also facilitates international communication. And since Islamic hijab has become an indisputable component of the apparel industry, it is also significant in the context of Muslim women's daily lives and their personalities.</p> <p>The Olympic Games are the first set of sports competitions and competitions between athletes that were established in ancient times, founded on a historical and religious background. Muslim women progressively demanded to participate in international and Olympic sports following the presence of women in the Olympic Games in 1924 and the intensification of the competitions of this group of athletes. In Iran, women also participated in the Olympic Games for the first time in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Following the revolution, women were permitted to participate in the Olympic games while wearing the Islamic hijab, following a 20-year absence. Special attention was given to the clothing of female athletes in all disciplines as a result of the qualification of women for global competitions. This issue was placed on the agenda of federations and the Women's Sports Affairs Commission.</p> <p>Methodology The present research approach to the sportswear of Iranian Olympic women, which takes into account aesthetic features and functional considerations, analyzes the sportswear of Iranian women who have participated in the Olympic Games following the revolution and outlines the factors that influence its design and production under functional components. In order to achieve this end, the garments are initially analyzed in three primary categories: headwear, bodywear, and legwear. Headwear typically comprises items that cover the hair and neck, bodywear encompasses clothing that covers the upper body from the neck to the buttocks, and legwear, which is frequently in the form of trousers, encompasses clothing that covers the lower body. Each of these garment groups is examined separately, and then the contextual factors affecting the design of women's clothing in the Olympic Games after the Islamic Revolution of Iran will be mentioned. The content analysis is qualitative, and the data, which consists of 62 images of Iranian Olympic women's clothing, have been deliberately chosen. Answering questions about the influential factors in the design and production of this type of clothing in terms of functionality, as well as identifying the aesthetic dimension in terms of color and clothing decorations are also among the goals of this research.</p> <p>Results The research findings indicate the following: a) Clothing is classified into two distinct categories: specialized and non-specialized. Specialized clothing is permitted for specific sports disciplines, including Taekwondo, Karate, and air rifle shooting. Conversely, non-specialized clothing is observable in other disciplines and lacks international uniformity. The headscarf is the sole additional component in specialized clothing, whereas the tunic and breeches have been altered in non-specialized attire for female athletes, in addition to the headscarf. The primary causes of</p>

these modifications are the Islamic attire codes and the anatomy of women's bodies. These garments are supplied by national federations or athletes from a variety of countries, and their appearance is subject to variation as a result of cultural distinctions. They must be approved by the sports federations and the International Olympic Committee during the Olympic Games.

b) The design of clothing is significantly influenced by the following contextual factors: the religious factor, which results in increased coverage and the addition of pieces to women's sports attire; the type of sport, which results in the design of specific clothing for women; the geographical climate, which influences the choice of fabric; and the cultural climate, which, except in rare cases such as the symbol or color of the Iranian flag, does not significantly impact the design of these garments.

c) In certain Olympic sports, headscarves have witnessed the most substantial changes. For example, in shooting competitions, a simple veil was initially used, and in the most recent Olympic edition, a sports headband and collar cover was implemented. The white scarf in rowing is an example of a headscarf that has remained in its original form in certain sports. The 2020 Olympics witnessed the participation of Iranian female kata athletes in competitions. However, due to the approved headscarf for these women, we observed disorder in their attire and a lack of concentration on their performance due to its instability.

d) In addition to the hijab, women prioritize the coverage of their waistline. A jumper is employed in certain sports disciplines, such as archery, for this purpose, while a brief skirt is employed in others like weightlifting. In some sports such as discus and rowing, due to leg movement and the need for minimal coverage to reduce friction, such clothing is not applicable. Initially, trousers aimed to cover the legs up to the ankles and the lower perimeter lines of the torso. They mostly consisted of loose or straight pants. Nevertheless, the design evolved to focus on lightweight, breathable options to accommodate body perspiration as new disciplines were incorporated into the Olympics. Sports leggings are currently employed in certain sports, such as rowing and field events.

Conclusion

The current study examines the alterations in the apparel of Iranian Muslim women during the first three Olympic cycles in the following disciplines: air rifle shooting, archery, pistol shooting, rowing, kayaking, taekwondo, weightlifting, table tennis, badminton, athletics, and karate. The investigation explores the aesthetics of Muslim women's attire during these competitions, demonstrating the evolution of attire from the initial Olympic presence over time. The gradual adoption of hijab by sports federations and the increasing allocation of Olympic sports disciplines are among the factors that have contributed to these changes. For instance, the most substantial changes in headscarves are observed in the technical and artistic aspects, which include design, fabric type, color, patterns, cutting, and patterns. Furthermore, the study investigates the influence of contextual factors on the design of Olympic apparel for Iranian women. The following factors are ranked in order of influence: the official religion of the country, the form of sport, the geographical conditions of the competition venue, and the cultural climate of the participating country. The preparation of suitable theoretical and methodological texts in the field of sportswear is imperative due to the scarcity of research on women's sportswear.

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