



Challenges and strategies for women sports in India

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Abstract

Women sports have bright future in India. However, various researches had shown that there are different type of barriers to participation experienced by women and girls. Research is helpful to find that there is a need of specific programs according to these specific problems to improve their participation in sport and active recreation for overcoming these barriers. Despite the plethora of research exploring women's and girls' participation in sports there is a need of making policies, implementation of them and evaluating the effectiveness of policies and programs for increasing their participation. Present study focused on the challenges and strategies of women sports in India.

Keywords: Challenges, strategies of women sports, opportunities for women sports, barriers of sports

Introduction

Historically, Indian women have faced significant societal barriers in sports. Traditional gender norms and societal pressure discouraged them from participating in activities considered inappropriate for their gender. Limited access to training facilities, resources, and opportunities pushed them to the background in a largely male-dominated field. These restrictions not only blocked their abilities but also strengthened the idea that sports were solely for men, further excluding women from the sporting world. Despite societal barriers, women athletes have challenged norms and made their mark in the sports world. Their unwavering determination has led them to question the established order and demand recognition for their abilities. With icons like P.T. Usha, Mary Kom, and Saina Nehwal emerging as role models, female athletes have gained the support and admiration they deserve. Their groundbreaking accomplishments in both domestic and international competitions have shattered preconceptions and empowered a new generation of women to chase their athletic ambitions fearlessly. Today, Indian sports are vastly different because of the brave actions of these strong women. Their dedication to excellence and pushing against societal boundaries have greatly changed Indian sports. They have started a time of inclusiveness, strength, and amazing success for female athletes. Their incredible journey has not only changed the story of women in sports, but it has also left a lasting impact that will inspire generations to come. In the captivating history of Indian sports, women athletes have emerged as innovators. Their stories are marked by unwavering determination and remarkable achievements. In 2000, Karnam Malleswari from Andhra Pradesh made history at the Sydney Olympics by winning a bronze medal in weightlifting. This triumph ignited a fire of inspiration that still shines today. Indian sports have witnessed a surge of female participation, with women challenging traditional gender norms. These pioneers have shattered records and made history, securing six out of 14 individual Olympic medals in the past two decades. Icons like PV Sindhu, Sakshi Malik, Mary Kom, and Saina Nehwal stand as emblems of determination and success, inspiring future generations to pursue their aspirations fearlessly. The

journey of these athletes is extraordinary due to its diversity. They come from all walks of life, from experienced mothers to enthusiastic teenagers, from urban centres to tranquil villages. They share a common aspiration for excellence. Their influence, however, goes beyond traditional sports. Pioneers like Bhavani Devi in fencing and Nethra Kumanan in sailing have blazed new trails, shattered barriers, and ignited a passion for sports in a new generation. Their journey, which began around the early 2000s, represents a time of empowerment and opportunity. Overcoming challenges, these determined athletes have shattered preconceptions and reshaped the norms of competition. Women have played a leading role in revolutionising Indian sports. They have overcome barriers and pushed limits, inspiring future generations to dream big and pursue their athletic goals. Their journey reflects resilience and determination, and their achievements have shattered stereotypes and opened new avenues for women in sports. Their ongoing efforts continue to drive Indian sports forward, promoting inclusivity and empowerment. By recognizing and supporting these pioneering women, we honour their legacy and ensure that their transformative work endures.

Challenges facing by women sports in india

▪ Funding and budget

Sportswomen face a lack of equal funding compared to men's athletics, making it difficult for them to compete and run consistent programs.

▪ Buoyant sexism

Women are made to face the barrels of buoyant sexism on a daily basis, be it at work or even at home. They are monitored and judged by the way they dress, by the way they speak.

▪ Gender disparity

Despite women's efforts to advocate for their social rights, they still do not receive the same level of respect or recognition on the professional front, particularly in the sports industry, as their male counterparts.

▪ **Lack of access and costlier**

Lack of physical education in schools and limited opportunities to play sports in both high school and college mean girls have to look elsewhere for sports –which may not exist or may cost more money. Often there is an additional lack of access to adequate playing facilities near their homes that makes it more difficult for girls to engage in sports.

▪ **Safety and transportation issues**

Sports require a place to participate – and for many girls, especially in dense urban environments, that means traveling to facilities through unsafe neighborhoods or lacking any means to get to a good facility miles away. And if there isn't a safe option like carpooling with other families, the only option for a girl and her family may be to stay home. For example, Manipur is a sporting powerhouse, but 48% of female athletes travel over 10 km to reach the practice facility.

▪ **Social attitudes and disfigurement**

Despite recent progress, discrimination based on the real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity of female athletes persists. Girls in sports may experience bullying, social isolation, negative performance evaluations, or the loss of their starting position. During socially fragile adolescence, the fear of being tagged “gay” is strong enough to push many girls out of the game.

Decreased quality training

The facilities are not as good as the boys' venues and the playing times may not be optimal. The availability of quality, trained coaches may be lacking in their community or these coaches may be more focused on the boys' programs that have more money for training. Equipment, and even uniforms aren't funded for many girls' programs at the same levels as boys so their ability to grow and enjoy the sport is diminished. In short, sports just aren't “fun” any more.

▪ **Lack of positive role models**

Today's girls are bombarded with images of external beauty, not those of confident, strong female athletic role models. Peer pressure can be hard for girls at any age; when that pressure isn't offset with strong encouragement to participate in sports and healthy physical activity, the results may lead girls to drop out altogether.

▪ **Limited media coverage**

Women's sports are often underrepresented in the media, which can make it harder for female athletes to gain recognition and sponsorship opportunities.

▪ **Pregnancy and maternity**

Female athletes often face challenges balancing motherhood and their sports careers. This can affect the training and competing opportunities for female athletes.

Strategies For women Sports promotion in india

▪ **Physical and mental health:**

Sports can have a positive impact on physical and mental health for both men and women. Girls active in sports during adolescence and young adulthood are 20% less likely to get breast cancer later in life.

▪ **Gender parity**

By providing equal opportunities and resources for women in sports, we can help to break down barriers and stereotypes that limit women's potential and participation in other areas of life. Sport in its most basic form encourages balanced participation and has the capacity to promote gender equality (SDG Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls).

▪ **Economic empowerment:**

Women who participate in sports often have more opportunities for education and employment, which can lead to greater economic empowerment.

▪ **Rectify societal connotations**

Women's participation in sports can also help to change societal attitudes towards women and their capabilities. By seeing women excel in sports, it can inspire more women to pursue their own goals and aspirations, and challenge stereotypes about what women are capable of achieving.

▪ **Representation**

Women's participation in sports can help to provide better representation for women in leadership roles, including coaching and administration. It can also serve as an inspiration for young girls to pursue sports as a career.

▪ **Community building**

Sports can bring people together and promote greater understanding and respect between different groups within society. By promoting greater participation in sports among women, we can help to build stronger and more inclusive communities.

Conclusion

Researches had shown that there are different type of barriers to participation experienced by women and girls. Research is helpful to find that there is a need of specific programs according to these specific problems to improve their participation in sport and active recreation for overcoming these barriers. Despite the plethora of research exploring women's and girls' participation in sports there is a need of making policies, implementation of them and evaluating the effectiveness of policies and programs for increasing their participation.

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