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# Gender Discrimination in Indian Sports

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## ABSTRACT

*The society has changed, now it argues towards equality among men and women but when it comes to equality in sports silence prevails. Women's sports are less broadcasted than male sports events by the media. Women face various constraints in sports in comparison to men. To name some, meager payment, lack of female coaches, biasness in awards, lack of family support. It's high time that they should be given equal opportunity in this arena. This paper highlights the challenges and possible measures which can be implemented for better participation of women in sports.*

**Keywords-** biasness, role of media, women's sports, sexual harassment.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sports are one such territory where gender biasness is quite visible. A large number of women are discriminated against men in majority of sports.<sup>1</sup> There is little mention of women's clubs or players in any historical research conducted. Even the media has played a very important role in widening the gender gap. Numerous examples can be cited to show this gap. For Example – Sania Mirza was criticized by Muslim organizations for wearing the women's tennis attire which is considered inappropriate in Islam.<sup>2</sup> As per sportswomen turned politician Jyotirmoyee Sikdar 'If a woman player does well her husband becomes the coach and is given the Dronacharya award.'<sup>3</sup> Apart from these there have been numerous cases where women players have been sexually abused by their male coaches or by other authority members of the sports federation.

The popular sports personalities in the country have faced discrimination from their coaches, governments or even their own families. We all remember the moment in 2009 when India's former sprint queen P.T. Usha broke down in front of the media regarding the discrimination meted out to her.<sup>4</sup> The situation has not changed much till now, but we are heading towards betterment with so many talented sports women in India like Mary Kom, Saina Nehwal reaching their peaks. All we probably need is need to recognize that differences exist and a will to push towards equal opportunities. Like many things in life, the change begins with us. Actually, Sport is one area where gender inequality is strongly evident. The problem is more

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socio-psychological than anything else. Today, as we stand in this new millennium it is unpardonable that men and women are treated so differently, especially in sport. Women make up 50% of the world's population but they are not given equal opportunities. Men are still considered the better sex and this is one of the main reasons why the world is yet to produce a female Tiger Woods, Mike Tyson or a Sachin Tendulkar.

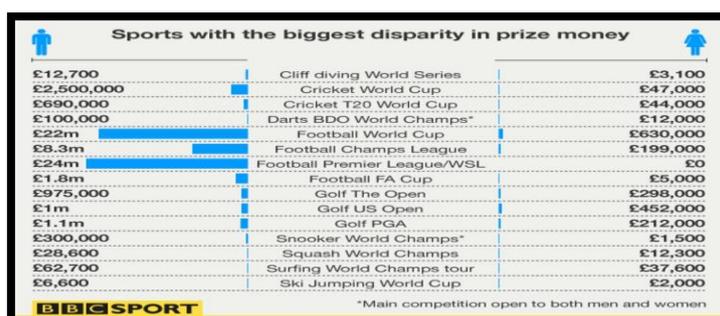
### (A) Objectives

1. To learn about the topic discrimination faced by women in sports
2. To know about the various challenges these women face
3. To know about the possible remedies to overcome these barriers

### (B) Reasons of Discrimination

#### 1. Gender pay gap

Apart from other challenges faced by women pay gap is the most prominent. This pay gap is evident in various studies and reports. For example, tennis players Naomi Osaka and Serena Williams are shown at the 29th and 33rd rank respectively, in the list of highest paid players in 2020.<sup>5</sup> According to the **Gender Gap Index in 2020**, India has slipped to the 112th position from the previous 108th in 2018.<sup>6</sup> During World Twenty 20 competitions, the International Cricket Council funded all the men's teams to fly business class, but only paid for the women's teams to fly economy class.<sup>7</sup> Basketball in the US is the most lucrative proposition for female sportspersons around the world. In the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), the average season pay in 2017 was US\$ 74,759. Now, compare this to the best-paid men's league in the world – the National Basketball Association. On average, a male basketball athlete in the league earns \$7,147,217; that's 96 times what a female professional would earn for a season.<sup>8</sup> Gender Prize Money Gap has also contributed towards the increasing gender discrimination against women player. The below image covers the variation in prize money of some most prominent sports.<sup>9</sup>



According to the 2017 study commissioned for Women Sports Week, stated that 83% of sports now reward men and women equally; however, disparity still persists in cricket, football and golf.

## **2. Biasness in awards**

In India there are four categories of sports awards: Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Awards, Arjuna Awards, Dhyan Chand Awards and Dronacharya Awards. P.V. Sindhu, Sakshi Malik and Dipa Karmakar were conferred with the country's highest sports award i.e. Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna after their performances in the Rio Olympics. An analysis of sports awards in India shows that women have lagged behind men by a large margin when it comes to getting government conferred sports awards.

The number of awards by the government for each year is limited and they are often given on the recommendation from the sports federations but the fact is that these federations is that they are male dominated. Another factor for fewer sports awards for women, and it is their low participation in certain sports. The participation of women for sports such as athletics is closer to 40%, but it drops to 10% when it comes to sports such as boxing and wrestling.<sup>10</sup>

## **3. Lack of women coaches**

Sports is one of the most visible and powerful social institutions in the world. Individuals who are seen and known in the world of sports, like coaches, who communicate; who and what is relevant and valued, and a majority of the time in every country in the world, those coaches are men.<sup>11</sup> The women, if appointed in the sports federations, are expected to tackle the growing complaints of sexual assaults in Indian sports bodies. Many women coaches found this job to be offensive since many at times they were seen as a security for the protection of women athletes and nothing more.<sup>12</sup>

In the west Title IX of US has been criticized for unexpected and steady decline of female coaches from 1972 to the year 2014. Title IX, 1972 is a landmark legislation which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex in all educational programs. In response to it many colleges combined male and female athletic departments, where slowly and gradually men were selected for female team players. Title IX also provided pay parity for women's-team coaches, but the lucrative salaries attract male coaches than female sports. This phenomenon pushed the women out.<sup>13</sup>

Sports require equal representation of men and women in all forms, be it playing games or being coaches for those games. Scholars have carved out differences in coaching techniques of male and female coaches. The differences, however should not hamper the interest of any

community.<sup>14</sup>

#### **4. Sexual Harassment**

One of the major reasons for depleting respect for female players in all the countries is that they are often seen as an object which can be used as when liked. They are subjected to sexual harassment. Broadly speaking sexual harassment includes a wide range of behaviors like requests for sexual favors which affects an individual's performance in Sports. Many females drop out of sport rather than being subjected to the constant harassment and abuse. It has been found that very few instances of sexual harassment getting reported.

In one of the incidents in the year 2016 in Bangalore, in the Kanteerava Stadium obscene printed messages signed by the sports authority were pasted in four places in the restroom that asked female athletes to masturbate before practice.<sup>15</sup>

In Bihar a shocking event took place in the year February 2011 when a kabbadi player who had represented India at several international events lost her life merely because she refused to share her mobile number with a CRPF jawan<sup>16</sup> in yet another case a minor and budding tennis player committed suicide after repeated molestation by the DGP. The accused was convicted for a rigorous conviction but was released within five months because of his excellent meritorious service, old age and to take care of his daughter who was suffering from a heart ailment.<sup>17</sup>

Sports Authority of India has set out its aims and objectives. Out of several objectives one of them is prevention of sexual harassment of women in sports. So far after the enactment there have been only two reported cases where coaches were arrested on the charges of molestation and sexual assault, with a very minimum amount of conviction like three days.<sup>18</sup> The Sports Law & Welfare Association of India (SLAWIN) has made provision for harassment in sports, but has never reported any incident.<sup>19</sup> National Sports Policy, under the ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, only provides lodging an online complaint but does not provide for any viable information where it can be traced, how many complaints have been filed in sexual harassment cases, in how many cases adjudication has taken place.

#### **(C) Related Laws**

The only legislation that we have for sports is Draft National Sports Development Bill, 2013.<sup>20</sup> the only problem is that it is still a draft which is under consideration. If given legal recognition, would be benefitting the women in sports.

Some of the key features of this draft related to sexual harassment provides for its elimination

under chapter IV C where it has been made a duty of every National Sports Federation, the National Olympic Committee, the Sports Authority of India and other sports bodies to prevent sexual harassment in sports.

The measures that can be adopted includes---

- a) Notifying, publishing and circulating, guidelines
- b) Establishing appropriate systems to ensure healthy relationship between coach and athletes
- c) Providing for sufficient number of women members in the coaching and support staff for every woman athlete or team of women athletes
- d) Providing appropriate conditions for women in respect of work, leisure, health and hygiene
- e) Providing reasonable assistance to the adversely affected athlete, where sexual harassment occurs as a result of an act or omission by any third party and initiate appropriate legal action against such third party
- f) To set up a complaints committee for redressal of the complaints in a time bound manner.

Our policy makers should definitely adopt this bill and implement it for the future prospects of women sport players.

#### **(D) Methodology**

Qualitative Research where data is collected from secondary sources like websites, articles, newspapers and books

#### **(E) Literature Review**

Dr. Bhalerao wrote her Ph. D. thesis which talked about gender issues in sport. The title of which is Analysis of problems faced by women players who participate in interuniversity sport competitions. This thesis analyzed the problems faced by girl players at the university level. There are quite a lot of similarities in the factors that she has analyzed and the factors that we are dealing with in the present study but consists some basic differences in the sample. Dr Bhalerao's sample is limited to inter-university players, hence the girls are basically playing at one level and also they are in the similar age group.<sup>21</sup>

According to the news published on Huff Post during the Rio Olympics 2016 the media featured 169 events for men and 137 for women. It was taken as men walked away with more than 55% of the gold, silver and bronze medals.<sup>22</sup>

In yet another two English newspapers were taken at random to study their coverage of the 2014 Asian games. These newspapers indicated women as second class citizen who deserved

less coverage than male counterparts. The females were depicted more as feminine, glamorous rather than as athletes. Sarita Devi a boxer did not get coverage because she won multiple gold medals but because she complained of unfair rules. The photographs surfaced on various platforms showed her crying with her husband.<sup>23</sup>

Three times World champion boxer Mary Kom won gold but her news became prominent only when the Bollywood movie Mary Kom was made featuring Priyanaka Chopra was made but most of the photographs carried the image of actress Priyanka Chopra, a single image of Mary Kom with her husband and children. Geeta Phogat, female wrestler and gold medalist, says 'I won the gold medal at the Commonwealth Games in Delhi in 2010 but did not get recognition in the same way I am getting after the release of the movie 'Dangal' in 2016.'<sup>24</sup>

## **II. FINDINGS**

- People think that women's sports are not entertaining as men.
- Men play more sports than women. The percentage of women playing sports decreases as they grow older.
- The ratio of women participating in sports in developed states like Haryana and Punjab is merely 15-20% as compared to the north eastern states which have a balanced sex ratio in sports
- People have by hearted the names of men engaged in sports but when it comes to name some women sports personalities except a few none of them remember their names.
- Boys play a variety of sports be it cricket , football or any other sports from being a toddler to an adult but when it comes to girls as they grow older they are made to engage themselves in knowing the work done by women in the household.

## **III. SUGGESTIONS**

Parents' influence is important. Girls are more likely to participate if they their parents agree upon it. Also, parents can help by insisting schools provide equal facilities and opportunities to their daughters and sons.

The problem exists even for girls who participate in sports and fitness , they cite various obstacles like getting picked for teams after all the boys are picked , girls are not as good as boys in gymnasiums , better coaches and equipment for boys' teams.

Both urban and rural girls participate equally in sports and fitness; rural girls quit sports more often because of transportation problems or inadequate funds.

An individual can also stop these types of discriminations by adopting some of the measures

stated below-

1. Support Women's and Girls' Sports
2. Join a Women's Rights Organization
3. Challenge the Myths
4. Speak Out Against Gender Inequity Encourage Other Women and Girls
5. Push for Gender Equity Policies
6. Publicize Discrimination at your School or University
7. Spread general awareness

Playing any kind of sports benefits a person and prevents various diseases. Studies have shown that sports benefits girls in a variety of ways:

- Lesser chronic diseases
- Higher self esteem
- Reduced risk of obesity
- Healthy Menstruation
- Better academic grades
- More involvement in society
- Popularity among peers
- Develops leadership skills and self discipline

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Gender Discrimination in sports is manmade. There has been no case where women have not competed with their counterparts in any sports but still there exists a lot of disparity when it comes to unequal pay for men and women for equal sport events, discrimination in the amount of prize money and the biasness in getting awards. Another reason is the dearth of female coaches in India. There have been many reported incidents of sexual harassment against women players. Media acts as a representative on showing what is going on in the society by digging deeper into the facade of any incident but when it comes to highlighting women in the sports field; this body overshadows the female players.

These and many such other reasons have contributed towards less participation of female in sports. Both men and women have brought laurels to India. Women can bring even more if we show them little encouragement and a better gender parity. It is not the parents to be blamed for lesser participation of females in sports but the mindset of the society as a whole which still prefers male. Various measures and policies have been adopted by the government for the

proper management of sports but the lacunae are clearly visible. It is high time that we as individuals must insist the government to give Draft National Sports Development Bill, 2013 legal sanctity. Our constitution mandates that it is state's responsibility for the smooth and proper functioning of sport system in India. Now the government should take the accountability to implement the sports laws strictly. If done then those days are not far when an Indian woman would take lead in all sport events in majority.

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