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## THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF WOMEN SPORTS PARTICIPATION: - COMPLEXITIES AND CONTEXTS



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### ABSTRACT

This article identifies challenges facing researchers when studying physical activity in women. The three issues include social and cultural differences influencing women's physical activity habits, measuring lifetime physical activity, and measuring moderate-intensity physical activity within the context of women's lives .women were often perceived as being too weak for sports activities and it was often argued in the past that sports was harmful to women's health, particularly their reproductive health. Female participation in sports rose dramatically in twentieth century, especially in the last quarter; reflecting changes in modern society that emphasized gender differences. The level of participation and performance varies from country to country, culture to culture and game to game. Today modern society has accepted the women's participation in sports competition and it has risen to great extent as compared in past. Indian society has also accepted the women's participation in sports. Participation of women in sports is very essential keeping in view the need for empowering women. Participation by women in games and sports will not only enable them to becomes healthy and strong, but also instill in them the confidence and capability to face atrocities on them. Moreover, weather women will lay the foundation by a healthy nation. Today the battle for equality between men's and women's sports rages on. This coming of age of women as far as sports participation is concerned can be seen in the history and the ratio of sportsperson participation of men vs women in international events such as the Olympics.

**KEYWORDS :** social impact, sports participation, complexities

## INTRODUCTION

When the first Olympics were played in Greece in 1896, women were not allowed to even watch the events, let alone participate. Infact, their participation was seen only after the 1900 and that too only in two events, that is, tennis and golf. Gradually this number rose and the Olympics saw more and more participating in sports activities. From a mere 4.3 percentage ratio of women participation in 1900, this figure has risen to above 40 percent in the 2012 London Olympic Games. The first Indian women to have participated in the Olympics were four athletes. These athletes participated in the 1952 Olympics. In the 1984 Olympics P.T. Usha was unable to secure a medal, but they performed very well. In the 2012, London Olympics games, Saina Nehwal and M.C. Marry Kom both secured a bronze medal each. Through the years, there has been a long list of women sports person doing very well in various international sporting competitions, such as the commonwealth Games, Asian Games and various other international championships dedicated to particular sports.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In addition to women getting the courage to participate in sports, even sports authorities all over the world have been encouraging. They have changed the rule and regulations of certain games, in order to encourage women participation. As a result of this, now we can see different categories for men and women in almost all sports activities. In fact, the precursor to this was the Amateur Athletic Union conducted the first women championship at London.

Today the modern society has accepted women's participation in sports competition. Even modern clinical studies have proved that physical activities have benefitted for equality between men and women sports rages on. The participation of women in sports had also been a subject of debate as it was believed that strenuous exercise affects the reproductive cycle of most women. However, the following conclusions after various studies has negated this thought process to guide an extent.

- Temporary changes in the menstrual cycle are known to disappear as and when the woman stops the grueling exercise schedule.
- Participation in sports activities does not in any way interface with the child bearing process or ability.
- Muscular work out has a favorable impact on some women.
- Exercise or participation in sports neither hampers nor diminishes the ability of women athletes.
- Moderate physical activity during the menstrual cycle is not known to cause any harm.

Based on these findings, it can be easily concluded that opposition to women participation in sports actually has no base except for a psychological one. In spite of all the opposition, women are coming in big way to participate in sports and also seen participating in what are considered to be typically men sports like weightlifting and boxing. Even a venture sports now see a lot of successful women participation.

The recent report of the National Commission for Youth (2004) has traced in detail the participation of women in Sports before and after 1947. The first Indian woman to participate in the Olympics was in 1952. In 1975, the Government of India instituted the National Sports festival for women with a view to promote women's sports. The National festival is preceded by competitions at the local and the district level. However the report has observed that these competitions have been reduced to mere issuing of certificates and the subsequent selection at the national level is done on ad-hoc basis. The National Commission report has also pointed towards the issue of dropout rate of girls from the schools. The report observed, .Sports is by and large an elite activity in the country and the adoption of a sports policy, as the government has done in 1984, is hardly likely to change the situation

very much..

## **REASONS FOR LESS PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN SPORTS**

### **1. LACK OF EDUCATION AMONG WOMEN:**

Due to lack of education there is less participation of women in sports. There are various misconceptions prevailing in our society such as bores of women become weak and their femininity is also endangered who participate in sports. These are only misconceptions which are not related to any fact. Due to lack of education. Women also start to think on the same pattern and therefore their participation becomes limited. Those responsible for the education, training and development should ensure that education process and experiences address issues relating to gender equity and the needs of female athletes, equitably reflect women's role in sports and take account of women's leadership experiences, value and attitudes.

### **2. LACK OF FITNESS AND WELLNESS MOVEMENT:**

Due to lack of fitness and wellness movement women's participation in sports is less. We are well aware that sports and games play a very effective as well as significant role in the development of fitness and wellness. But it is a deplorable matter for women in India that they do not have strong awareness about their fitness and wellness. Most of women are not aware about fitness movement and wellness movement. Many women and girls are not aware and alert about their shape and size. Some are not conscious about the maintenance of their figure. If they come to know about the value of figure, shape, health, wellness and fitness they will definitely like to participate in sports because sports and game play an important role in the enhancement of their fitness and wellness. To get a perfect shape is not a bed of roses; it can only be achieved with the help of sports participation. Hence, the participation of women is low due to the lack of any fitness and wellness movement.

### **3. LESS NUMBER OF WOMEN COACHES:**

Less number of women coaches in India is also one of the reasons of less participation of women in sports. If the number of women coaches is enhanced there will be definitely be an increase in women's participation in sports and games. As a matter of fact, most of the female feel shy in front of male coaches, where as in front of female coaches they will not face that problems and take part in sports wholeheartedly without hesitation.

### **4. LACK OF INTEREST OF SPECTATORS AND COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S SPORTS**

: Lack of interest of spectators is one of the major reasons for less participation of women in sports. There is no surprise if there is less number of spectators in sports competitions of women because there is also less number of spectators in sports competitions or tournaments of men. A cricket match may be called an exception where there is always a huge number of a spectator but not in women's cricket match. Generally, there is no transmission of women sports competitions on TV channels. A due space about women's sports is not given in newspapers. Directly or indirectly these reasons are responsible for less participation of women in sports. As a matter of fact, if there is less number of spectators in any sports competition, the players, whether men or women, will not be properly motivated to participate in sports. This will decrease their enthusiasm to participate.

#### **5.LACK OF PERSONAL SAFETY:**

Personal safety on the roads, streets, on public transport, in and around sports Venues is an important problem for women who want to participate and from sports stadiums or complexes may be dangerous to women. Due to these reasons, parents, refuse them to take part in sports. Stadium or complexes should not far away from the city. If they are located far away from the city, women players may feel unsafe. Sports stadium should be secure and safe.

#### **6.SPORTS AND GAMES ARE CONSIDERED MASCULINE:**

It is a fact that some women leave sports and games because they see it as a male dominated activity. It is just not seen as feminine to be interested in sports. So it is also one of the reasons of less participation of women in sports because they take it as a masculine activity. However, there is no truth in this statement.

#### **7.LACK OF LEGISLATION:**

In 1972, legislation was passed in USA in which a provision was kept to provide the financial aid to all the educational institutions. This legislation was passed to prevent discrimination and to provide equal opportunities to women to participate in sports at all levels. Equal facilities will be provided in sports to women as in case of men. As a result of this resolution the participation of women in sports was enhanced. In India, there is no such legislation. Here such type of financial aid is not provided to educational institutions from central government.

#### **8.ATTITUDE OF SOCIETY TOWARDS WOMEN'S SPORTS PARTICIPATION:**

The attitude of society plays a vital role towards women's participation in sports. The attitude of Indian society is not proper towards women's participation in sports. Discrimination against women's participation in sports can be seen even in the field of media. Our women's Kabaddi team won the world cup. The concerned matches were not given due place on electronic and print media.

#### **9.LACK OF PROPER ACCESS OF FACILITIES:**

There is a lack of proper access to facilities provided to women in the field of sports. Facilities in terms of equipments, training and coaching etc. are not usually provided to women in comparison to men. Hence the participation of women remains low. Even the programmes related to games and sports in girl's schools and college are less in comparison to boy's school and college. Generally females do not adequate playing facilities near their homes that make it more difficult for them to participate in sports.

### **INDIA AND THE WORLD**

The situation in the western countries is better but still women are facing very similar problems to ours. America is a very developed nation in the world. But even in the United States, women are victims of gender inequality. They still do not have equal representation as compared to men. Men hold majority of the positions of managers, coaches and sport administrators. Things did change after the 1970s when Title IX was introduced but there is a lot of scope for improvement. There has been research in this area but it is far from conclusive. Lately, however, Indian female sports persons have fared better than the men. Be it Anju Bobby George, PT Usha, Sanya Mirza, Anjali Bhagwat. This does not overlook the achievements of Sachin Tendulkar, Prakash Padukone, Pallela Gopichand, and

Leander Paes. All that is implied is that women are making a mark for themselves in the world of sport and are gaining respect. This study has been carried out with the hope that it will help to map the past and the present Condition of women in sport in India. Such a mapping would enable to provide guidelines to improve women's sport in India. The study will cover all aspects associated with women's sport ranging from health, nutrition, financial and social support, gender biases and will later present a complete and wholesome picture on women's sport in India. The study attempts to trace facts pertaining to differential treatment of women from different social and financial backgrounds.

## CONCLUSION

### NOW IN THE CONCLUSION WE WOULD LIKE TO SAY.

1. Indian women players are no less than any women players in the world. They are equally talented and hard working. The problems that they face are much more daunting than the problems faced by the players in the developed countries. Indian players are a very courageous lot.
2. There is a total apathy. People who are running the show of sport in India are to be blamed.
3. All the players whom we interviewed and also those who responded to the said, We want to play. Want to have career in sport but...
4. What they want are good facilities and equipment.
5. They want fair and clean selection procedure.
6. They want good and experienced coaches, especially female coaches.
7. They want good medical support and advice on other related health matters.
8. They want support from families and the people around them.
9. They want job opportunities and job security.
10. They want more competitive opportunities.
11. They want support from the government machinery and the sport federations or some sponsors.
12. Equality is of utmost importance to them. They want equal opportunities to play and to be treated at par with men.
13. Women /girls sports clubs are very rare which restricts girls. Participation in sports as parents does not like their daughters to play with boys.

These girls have not stopped at telling their own stories. They have told what should be done to improve the condition of women's sport in India. In fact, those girls who are playing Indian games like Kho-kho and Kabaddi say, .we are playing this game because we want this game to become popular, we are fighting for survival.. We can now say that the job that we had undertaken has been completed successfully, though ideally we would have liked to bring in responses from players from all over India. Still we hope that we have managed to put up a case of the Indian girl player.

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