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Role of sports in women empowerment

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Abstract

This is the era of women's empowerment. Women are developing their selves in every aspect. As per National Family and Health Survey between 2019 to 2021, there are 1020 women for every 1000 men in India. So, women's empowerment can play a key role in the development of our nation. Sports have an important role in the empowerment of women. Participation in sports helps women to have an active lifestyle, be role models in society, build self-confidence, have the ability of decision making, accept challenges, have economic freedom etc. In the 2012 London Olympics out of 6 medals 2 were won by women athletes. In the 2016 Rio Olympics both the 2 medals were won by women athletes. In the 2020 Beijing Olympics out of 7 medals 3 were won by female players. BCCI announced the same remuneration for both male and female players. These are the positive signs of women's empowerment where sports are playing a vital role.

Keywords: Women empowerment, sports

Introduction

Sports have been an integral part of the culture and tradition of every nation. Usually, the participation of girls and women in sports is less than that of boys and men because of a lack of encouragement from family and society, domestic needs, safety concerns, insufficient facilities for women etc. The status of women depicts the socio-economic condition of any nation. Though the current status of women in our country is improving this is far beyond that of men. Female infanticide, child marriage, domestic violence, women trafficking, harassment in the workplace, rape, social norms etc. are the barrier to women's empowerment in India. Swami Vivekananda said "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing." Government has many taken initiatives for gender equity and women empowerment like 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao', 'Poshan Abhiyaan', 'Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana', 'Ujjawala Scheme, Nirbhaya Fund: One Stop Centre', 'Swadhar Greh Scheme' etc. According to research on sport ^[1], gender and development participation in sports may be an effective means for gender equity and women empowerment and this can bring the welfare of the society as well.

Women Empowerment

Empowerment is the process of becoming stronger and confident, so as to control one's own life and claim one's rights. According to this definition one has to be aware of one's right and ability to claim those rights if we consider that person as empowered. As per National Family and Health Survey between 2019 to 2021, there are 1020 women for every 1000 men in India. Most women are not aware of their rights and they are deprived of their basic human rights. Considering those facts, Women's empowerment can be defined as the process of promoting women's sense of self-worth, ability to determine their own choices, access to opportunities and resources, power to control their own lives, and their right to influence social change for themselves and others.

Why Women empowerment is necessary

For the sustainable development of a nation, women's empowerment is very essential. Literacy percentage or level of education, state of health and wellbeing, political participation, possession of property, representation in decision-making bodies, social influence etc.

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Are the relevant indicators of women empowerment in society? As per a report published by Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister in 2022, the current status of Indian women in education, health, employment, possession of property, and political participation is as follows ^[2].

Education: According to the Periodic Labours Force Survey (PLFS) in 2020-21 women's literacy rate in rural areas is 67.4% and in urban areas, the rate is 82.7%. Overall literacy percentages of men and women are respectively 85% and 71.9%.

Health: According to the National Family Health Survey, there are 10 20 women for every 1000 men. But the rate of anaemia among women has increased from 53% in 2014 to 57% in 2021. Besides iron deficiency as the major cause, malaria, malnutrition, chronic infection etc. are the causes of anaemia.

Employment: As per the report of the Periodic Labours Force Survey (PLFS), the labour force participation rate among women is 39.2% in rural areas and 25.8% in urban areas. The labour force participation rate among men is above 80% in both rural and urban areas.

Possession of property: House or land ownership by women alone or jointly with others has increased from 38.4% in the year 2015 to 43% in the year 2021. Under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, institutional credit of up to 10 lakhs is given to micro or small entrepreneurs. Under this scheme, 68% of the total accounts are held by women.

Political participation: Contesting of women candidates in elections out of the total contestant has increased from 8% in 2014 to 9% in 2019. But this increase is not at all satisfactory.

Crime against women: According to National Crime Records Bureau, every 3 minutes a crime against a woman is recorded. Every 6 hours a young woman is found beaten to death, burnt or instigated to suicide. Every day almost 94 women are raped ^[3].

India is one of the major growing economic countries in the world. India aims to attain a \$5 trillion economy by the year 2026-27. To make this vision possible the whole society should be encompassed in the development process. As per the Global Gender Gap Report 2022 of the World Economic Forum ^[4], India ranks 135 out of 146 countries. So, without empowering the major portion of our citizens i.e. women, we can't think about any economic or social development.

How sports help in women empowerment

Active and Healthy Lifestyle: Participation in sports means being involved in regular physical activity and exercise for a long time, which lay the foundation for living an active and healthy lifestyle.

Empowering Women as Leaders and Role Models: Girls are told to be quiet, and polite and not to be boss. Sports empower women by providing the opportunity to be a leader and role model in front of others. Sports make belief in teamwork, team making, organizing, and leadership quality. It helps them to be successful in their careers, relation and lives. Sports make role models like Mery Kom, P.V. Sindhu, Sania Mirza, and Shakshi Malik, who can say their opinions and influence the society to change the mindset of the society.

Building self-confidence and self-worth: Sports empower women by giving them the opportunity to show their strength and stamina, confidence, and athletic abilities. It develops a sense of self-worth and self-confidence.

Ability to digest defeat and fight back: Victory and defeat walk side by side in sports. Every time you lose, you analyze the defeat and motivate yourself, work hard to prepare again and fight back and then keep going. This way sport teaches you that victory and defeat are inevitable part of your life and whenever there are difficulties and thing seems to be impossible, you have to work hard and fight back with confidence.

Empowering through choices and confidence in decision-making: Participation in sports helps to develop decision-making ability. In a game situation, within a second players have to take a decision. It helps them be more confident in the decision-making process in life and career.

Empowering through economic development: The total projected revenue from sports in India in 2022 was US\$ 5.11 million. Though most of the revenue is earned by male athletes the earnings of female players from sports are gradually increasing. India's Smriti Mandhana earned \$410000 from WPL 2023 auction ^[5]. P.V. Sindhu became the 12th highest-paid female player in the world. Despite this advancement still, there is sex discrimination in the pay policy. According to the Global Gender Gap Index, the 2022 rank of India is 143 out of 146 countries in Economic Participation and Opportunities ^[4]. In the year 2021, India's rank was 151 out of 153 countries.

Conclusion and Recommendation: There is some encouraging evidence of women's empowerment through sports. In the 2012 London Olympics out of 6 medals 2 were won by women athletes Saina Nehwal and Mery Kom. In the 2016 Rio Olympics, both the 2 medals were won by women athletes P.V. Sindhu and Sakshi Malik. In the 2020 Beijing Olympics out of 7 medals 3 were won by female players Mirabai Chanu, P.V. Sindhu and Lovlina Borgohain. Media is the reflection of people's choices. They try to cover the news which the people like the most. During the 2016 Rio Olympics, the most circulated Bengali and English newspapers covered greater sports news for female athletes than males ^[6]. The Board of Control for Cricket in India announced a 'Pay equity policy' for its centrally contracted men and women players. In the first WPL in 2023, the five debut franchises were sold for US\$ 200 million which is more than eight debutant franchises sold in the first IPL in 2008 ^[7]. In the 2012 London Olympic Games, the flag bearer in the opening ceremony was Sushil Kumar and Marry Kom was the flag bearer in the closing ceremony ^[1]. Abhinav Bindra was the flag bearer in the 2016 Olympics, whereas Mery Kom was the flag bearer in the 2020 Olympics. These facts depict the encouraging scenario of gender equity.

So, we should create opportunities and infrastructure for girls and women to participate in sports and encourage them to take part in sports as much as possible for their empowerment and the sustainable socio-economic development of our country.

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