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Women sports participation in India

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Abstract

Sport is beneficial to all, and at every level. It improves health and self-confidence through greater awareness of one's body. It is also a way of learning how to show solidarity and how to excel oneself. Women's sports include amateur as well as women's professional sports, in all varieties of sports. Female participation and popularity in sports increased dramatically in the twentieth century, especially in the last quarter-century, reflecting changes in modern societies that emphasized gender parity. Girls and women hardly participated in the indoor and outdoor games in the olden times since they were busy with their household chores cares of siblings and similar activities. In the rural context women in addition to household chores were the main base of the agrarian economy. Women performed agricultural works of cultivation like sowing, weeding, harvesting, winnowing, livestock rearing etc. involvement in such activities left in them with little time for leisure and sports. In ancient times, women hardly participated in games and sports but the activities or household chores that were performed by them were full of physical activities. Thus, they were not imparted any physical training or even did not find any time to play games but their work and activities involved intense physical movement and the this phenomena continues even today.

Keywords: Women, sports participation

Introduction

Although the level of participation and performance still varies greatly by country and by sport, women's sports are widely accepted throughout the world today. In a few instances, such as figure skating, female athletes rival or exceed their male counterparts in popularity. In many sports women usually do not compete on equal terms against men.

Although there has been a rise in participation by women in sports, a large disparity still remains. These disparities are prevalent globally and continue to hinder equality in sports. Many institutions and programs still remain conservative and do not contribute to gender equity in sports.

In history there are references of women from royal families who were imparted military training; but such references are few. In post-independence India, Sports and games given importance in the curriculums and national education policies. One of the objectives of the sports policy of 2001 was an enhanced participation of women in sports. In spite of governmental policies and schemes it is found that sports and physical education is not popular with women and girls.

Why less participation of women in India:

The low female participation in sports is evident form that fact that only five women from India have been able to bring home Olympics medals so far {Karnam Malleswari, Mary Kom, Saina Newhwal, P.V. Sindhu & Sakshi Malik}. There are several constraints applicable to both women and men in sports. For example, the stipend paid to sportswomen (and men) is meagre. We should know that the stipend allotted for practice ranges from Rs. 8 to Rs. 80 per day which is too less. Similarly, the politics and favoritism in the selection procedure; lack of sports infrastructure; lack up funds and coaching related issues are common for both sportsmen and sportswomen.

However, the issues peculiar with sport women include socio-psychological problems; absence of family support in comparison to boys; poverty and economic reasons; security issues and issues of sexual harassment; domestic reasons such as those related to marriage, husband, children and in-laws; social taboos etc. In rural and urban areas girls generally play indoor

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games like carom, judo, chess, etc., studies shows that equipments like carom boards, skipping ropes, ludo-boards, cards and other sports material was lacking. Another factor was time, interest and motivation of the users. Availability of trained sports teacher or instructors was another barrier impacting the participation of girls in the sports and physical education. Lack of space and playgrounds in educationally backward and remote areas was another reason for lack of participation of girls in games. In remote areas, schools were held in rented premises and hardly any space was available for playgrounds. Playgrounds if any were ill kept and never constructed or maintained or used only on sports day and other days went without sports and games. Surveys conducted in state like UP, HP, and Rajasthan shows that girls preferred indoor games to outdoor games. The only outdoor games they enjoyed were badminton, Kho-kho, Kabaddi and Karate. The games were popular, as per the availability of equipments, physical Instructors and interests of girls. The preference for indoor games and sports was mainly due to cultural barriers related to girl child in patriarchal, traditional families. People believed that sports would not help the girls in their later life in household chores and won't help them to earn any extra income were certain attitudinal barriers that were observed in rural, poor and backward areas. (Jaireth, 2001) ^[2] Girls in resident schools usually prefer to learn music, craft, dancing, painting, cookery, clay modeling; the importance of sports and games for the overall benefit to health and fitness of girl students was neither realized by the teachers nor their parents. So it was not emphasized and received low priority physical activities are a part of the daily life of women in all kinds of geographical settings. It is ironical that the significance of the formal education about sports games and physical education, diet, nutrition, health And hygiene has neither been realized by women themselves nor men both lettered and unlettered and has received low weight-age in educational institutions. (Jaireth, 2001) ^[2]

Advantages of women participating in sports

Participation of women in sports leads to not only their empowerment but also allows them to acquire individual competency, team & personality building and health improvement. This would lead to positive consequence for the family as well as the whole society. Sporting activities also help women to reconnect with the power of their own bodies. The various other benefits include, mental wellbeing, independence, peace of mind, increased concentration, fame, discipline, reservations in jobs and educational institutions etc.

Women Role Model in Sports: When role models are mentioned in sport, the first thing that comes to mind is high profile celebrities. While positive role models can be found in amateur and professional sports, it's the people they see every day that make the biggest difference. Parents, coaches, teachers or even older siblings often have a profound effect on a young girl and how they view themselves and their chosen sport

Conclusion

Like primary education, government should also make sports compulsory at least at the primary and secondary levels. It need not be a competitive sport but healthy sports. Schools are made to educate women over the health benefits of sports. The government should start a Women's Movement of Sports. Under this women should be encourage to play an

organize team sport or even an individual sport from young age. More and more women should be made as coaches and referees as this will make women happy and comfortable with female coaches. Also, infrastructure facilities like Sports clubs and centers, hostels with safe and hygienic facilities have to be created for girls. The Ministry of Sports should establish a special cell that focuses on the development of women's sport in India. This cell should work with different stakeholders for the promotion of women's sport in India.

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