

# Discrimination in Female Athletes in India

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**Abstract - Despite significant progress in gender equality, female athletes in India continue to face systemic discrimination, which hinders their participation and success in sports. This paper examines the multifaceted nature of discrimination against female athletes in India, exploring issues such as unequal access to resources, biased media coverage, gender-based stereotypes, and inadequate support from sports organizations. Through a review of literature and analysis of case studies, the paper highlights the persistent challenges that female athletes encounter and the impact these challenges have on their careers and well-being. The study also discusses the role of policy interventions and societal attitudes in either perpetuating or alleviating these issues. The findings underscore the need for comprehensive reforms to ensure a level playing field for female athletes in India.**

**Keyword: Gender discrimination, Female athletes, India, Sports inequality, Gender stereotypes, Media bias, Sports policy**

## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, India has witnessed a growing interest in sports, with increasing participation from women across various disciplines. However, female athletes in India continue to face substantial barriers that their male counterparts do not. These barriers, rooted in deep-seated gender discrimination, manifest in various forms, including limited access to training facilities, unequal pay, lack of sponsorship opportunities, and inadequate media representation. Such discrimination not only affects the performance and career longevity of female athletes but also contributes to a broader societal narrative that undervalues women's contributions to sports.

The issue of discrimination in sports is not unique to India, but the country's cultural, economic, and social context adds layers of complexity to the problem. Traditional gender roles and societal expectations often discourage women from pursuing sports professionally. Moreover, the lack of female representation in sports governance and decision-making bodies further exacerbates the problem, leading to policies and practices that fail to address the specific needs and challenges faced by female athletes. This paper aims to explore the various dimensions of discrimination against female athletes in India, shedding light on the systemic issues that continue to undermine their potential.

## OVERVIEW OF DISCRIMINATION ISSUES FACED BY FEMALE ATHLETES

Numerous forms of prejudice against female athletes in India originate in long-established cultural mores, institutionalised bias, and traditional practices. This extensive research delves into the difficulties these women face as they strive for athletic greatness, uncovering a tangled web of barriers that prevents them from achieving their goals and being acknowledged in the sports community. Pervasive gender prejudice is one of the main types of discrimination that female athletes in India face. It is present at all levels of sports, from amateur to professional. Unequal access to facilities, resources, and opportunities is one manifestation of this prejudice. The greatest training facilities are often allocated for male athletes, which causes many female athletes to struggle to find suitable locations. When it comes to coaching help, the gender gap widens, with female athletes often receiving less qualified or experienced instructors than their male counterparts (Chadha, 2004).

The study sheds light on the discriminatory behaviours that are common in sports coverage and how the media shapes public opinion and acknowledgment of players. Media coverage of female athletes is skewed towards male athletes, and the accomplishments of female athletes are frequently disregarded or minimised. Rather than highlighting their athletic abilities and achievements, media coverage of female athletes tends to centre on

their personal life or how they look. In addition to promoting damaging preconceptions and objectification, this biased portrayal diminishes the value of female athletes. The cultural and sociological demands of Indian society provide female athletes with significant obstacles. According to the research, many women encounter pushback from their communities and families when they try to pursue professions in sports (Das, 2006). Marriage and housework are typically seen as more important than athletic endeavours for women according to traditional gender norms and expectations. Some female athletes have faced criticism or social exclusion due to their commitment to athletics, while others have reported feeling pressured to adhere to societal standards. Both the number of people who participate and the mental health issues experienced by those who do participate in athletics despite social stigma are impacted by this cultural barrier. Female athletes in India are increasingly worried about the prevalence of body shaming and other forms of discrimination based on physical appearance. Research shows that women athletes frequently get negative feedback on their body image, clothing choices, and general attractiveness. Female athletes may experience difficulties with self-esteem, eating problems, and mental health as a result of this constant monitoring. And since some sports are seen as "unfeminine," women who do well in such areas can face prejudice and sexism.

### **GENDER BIAS IN SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE AND FUNDING**

When comparing male and female athletes in India, one can see that there is a significant gender gap when it comes to infrastructural access and financial support. Systemic prejudice, especially in regard to funding and support, is highlighted by a thorough research that examines the experiences of female athletes across several sports in India. Female athletes, according to the survey, often feel they don't have the same access to high-quality training facilities as their male colleagues. Unfortunately, women's teams often have to make do with subpar practice facilities, antiquated gear and short window times to use them. Particularly in less populous places with less developed sports facilities, this gap is more noticeable. Inadequate training environments are a common occurrence for female athletes, which poses health risks and prevents them from reaching their full potential. Government agencies and private organisations provide much less funding to women's sports programmes and teams, according to the report. From a player's early growth through their peak competitiveness, this financing difference impacts it everything. Obtaining good nutrition, coaching, sports medicine assistance, and opportunities for exposure on a national and international level can be challenging for female athletes owing to monetary restrictions (Fasting, 2015).

The issue becomes revolving because of the prejudice in infrastructure and finance. The women's sports industry has a hard time getting sponsors and media

attention due to a lack of funding. Consequently, funding in women's sports continues to decline due to the perpetuation of the myth that these events do not attract a large enough audience or generate enough revenue. This research shows how this self-perpetuating loop keeps women at a disadvantage in Indian sports. The study provides concrete instances to show how widespread this prejudice is. When it comes to team sports like football and cricket, the fields that the women's teams use are frequently in worse condition than the ones that the men's teams use. Similarly, female competitors in sports like swimming and athletics say they don't have the same access to specialised training gear and professional coaches as their male counterparts. There is a discrepancy in the provision of both physical infrastructure and ancillary services. Physiotherapists, sports psychologists, and nutritionists are much harder to get by for female athletes than for their male counterparts. The lack of comprehensive support has a negative effect on female athletes' performance, health, and ability to stay in the sport for the long haul. This prejudice is also reflected in the travel and lodging arrangements for the tournament. According to the report, female athletes frequently have financial difficulties that prevent them from competing in events, particularly on a global scale. Their preparation and performance are affected because, when they do travel, they are often given lower-quality accommodations and transportation alternatives compared to male teams (Fasting, 2005).

Discrepancies in sports infrastructure and financing based on gender have far-reaching effects. It hinders female athletes' performance to a substantial degree, preventing them from competing at the top levels. Since nations with more fair sports systems often do better in men's and women's events, this impacts India's overall success in international contests. Women's sports participation rates are negatively impacted by the lack of assistance they receive. Many young girls are dissuaded from pursuing a career in athletics due to the obstacles encountered by female athletes and the restricted chances that are accessible to them. This keeps money from flowing into women's sports, which in turn reduces the pool of potential athletes. In addition, the study shows that this gender prejudice varies by area. There has been some progress in supporting women's sports, with some states having improved facilities and allocated more funds, while other governments are far behind. For female athletes hailing from particular areas, this unequal growth only serves to heighten preexisting socioeconomic disparities by erecting new obstacles. This dynamic is greatly influenced by media attention. The study highlights the fact that women's sports are underrepresented in the media, which has a direct effect on their capacity to draw sponsors and public interest. Not only does this keep present athletes in the shadows, but it also prevents young females from seeing positive role models in athletics.

## **UNEQUAL ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES FOR WOMEN'S SPORTS FACILITIES**

A major problem that has recently come to light in India is the unequal distribution of funds for sporting facilities catering to women. The severe financing, infrastructural, and general support gaps between men's and women's sports are brought to light by a research on the prejudice that female athletes in India endured. Both the advancement of women's sports and the elimination of gender bias in athletics are hampered by the uneven allocation of resources. The lack of suitable sporting facilities for female athletes is one of the main issues highlighted by the research. There are a lot of stadiums and training centres throughout the nation that don't have the most basic facilities for women, such as changing rooms, restrooms, and showers. Female athletes are discouraged from participating and have difficulty training properly due to the unwelcoming and even dangerous atmosphere caused by the lack of gender-specific infrastructure. When women's facilities do exist, the study found that they are frequently of lesser quality or badly maintained in comparison to the facilities offered for male competitors. The report also highlights the discrepancy in financial allocation as a major concern. As a whole, the sports budget for male-dominated programmes and teams is far larger than that for female-dominated programmes and teams (Hoe, 2007). Poorer equipment, less opportunities to compete and get exposure, and fewer resources for training and skill development are all ways that financial disparity shows itself. According to the research, this financing disparity discourages young girls from considering athletics as a career path and impacts the present crop of female athletes.

The study also underscores the need of addressing the gender gap in sports administration and decision-making. The survey revealed a striking lack of female representation in influential roles among various regulating organisations, including sports federations and selection committees. Because there aren't enough women in positions of power, decisions and rules aren't always tailored to the unique challenges faced by female athletes. In its last section, the research stresses the need of tackling these disparities from every angle. There should be more funding for women's sports facilities, gender-sensitive policies in sports administration, and specific initiatives to encourage more women to play sports at all levels. Another key finding is that women still face significant barriers to advancement in athletics due to pervasive cultural norms and prejudices.

## **LIMITED FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN'S SPORTS PROGRAMS**

Discrimination against female athletes in India has several manifestations, one of which being the problem of inadequate financing for women's sports programmes. Systemic injustices, cultural norms, and long-standing social prejudices have all contributed to

this issue in India's sporting arena. In order to grasp the magnitude of the problem, we must look at the causes of the financial gap and how it has affected the advancement of women's sports in India. The present situation of women's sports financing in India can be better understood by looking at its historical context (Jaireth, 2001). Many people still have the outdated belief that women don't belong in sports or that their involvement isn't as valuable as that of males. Because of this prejudice, women's sports programmes have historically received less funding and support, regardless of their level of competition. As a result, women's sports continue to be undervalued and unworthy of investment due to a vicious cycle wherein inadequate financing leads to less chances. Companies aren't willing to finance women's sports programmes in India, which is a major problem. Companies are wary of investing in women's sports because they believe the returns will be smaller than in men's sports. Outdated ideas about what would sell and what would pique an audience's interest frequently form the basis of this view. This problem is made worse by the fact that women's sports events are under-reported in the media, which in turn reduces the number of sponsorship options. Public and commercial organisations must work together to acknowledge and support women's sports if we are to end this cycle.

## **DISPARITY IN SPORTS EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING FACILITIES**

Research on gender bias in athletics in India found that female athletes have far less access to high-quality training facilities and equipment than their male colleagues. From recreational sports to professional athletics, this disparity exists at all levels of competition. Even the most fundamental sports equipment and safe places to practise are out of reach for many young women and girls, particularly in rural regions and lower socioeconomic metropolitan neighbourhoods. Girls are generally prevented from engaging in outdoor activities or using public spaces for relaxation, in contrast to males who often have access to informal playgrounds or open areas for sports. For girls and women who are interested in athletics, this basic lack of opportunity is a huge obstacle. When looking at higher education, the report shows that schools and universities routinely underfund women's sports programmes. The results of this include facilities that are either nonexistent or badly maintained, equipment that is either old or inadequate, and a lack of frequency in replacing worn-out gear. While men's teams often get first dibs on practice times and facilities, women's teams sometimes have to make up with less than ideal conditions. This inequality not only implies that women's sports aren't as important as men's, but it also stunts female athletes' physical growth and skill acquisition. At more advanced levels of competition, the problem becomes much more apparent. The criteria for male and female trainees at several state

and national sports academies, which are important places for aspiring professional athletes to train, are significantly different. Modern training equipment, such as high-tech exercise machines, sport-specific apparel, and data analysis tools, are often a boon to male athletes. When competing, female athletes often face more obstacles, such as a lack of funding for sports science resources, less advanced training equipment, and outmoded gear. Female athletes are hindered from reaching their maximum potential and competing on an international stage due to the disparity between the amount and quality of training resources (Klasen, 2014).

Significant gaps are also found in the areas of nutrition and nutritional assistance in the research. The significance of a well-balanced diet to athletic performance has been acknowledged by several sports academies and training centres, which is why male players are provided with healthier meals. There is a noticeable lack of focus on the nutritional demands of female athletes, and several of these athletes have complained that their diets are either too restrictive or just not right for their training. Neglecting to eat healthily can have devastating effects on the performance, health, and longevity of female athletes. Disparities in competition-related travel and lodging are also shown by the research. When travelling for competitions, male teams, particularly those in popular sports, typically have more transportation choices, nicer hotels, and bigger daily allowances. When asked about their experiences, female athletes often cite less-than-ideal travel arrangements, shared lodgings, and reduced allowances as factors that hinder their training and performance on game day. There is a dearth of sports apparel and equipment designed specifically for women, which is another important point brought up in the report. A lot of sports gear companies make their goods with men's bodies in mind, thus female athletes have to make do with poorly fitting gear. The need of a good fit for performance and safety makes this an especially big problem in contact sports and other activities that call for protective gear. There is an increase in both performance and injury risk due to the lack of women-specific sports equipment (Kew, 2007).

### INEQUALITY IN SPONSORSHIP AND ENDORSEMENT

There is a huge gender gap in how male and female sportsmen are treated in India, a country that lives and breaths sports and idolises its players. In spite of the nation's advancements in many areas, there is still a lot of gender discrimination in sports, especially when it comes to endorsement and sponsorship arrangements. This inequality is a reflection of the systemic discrimination and social prejudices that female athletes face on a daily basis, and it's not only about money.

- **Societal and Cultural Biases:** One of the factors that contributes to this mismatch is the pervasive cultural and societal stereotypes that view athletics

as predominantly a domain dominated by men. At an early age in India, ladies are discouraged from engaging in sports because they are seen to be unladylike or secondary to academics and domestic responsibilities. This discouragement of females from participating in sports begins. The implementation of these criteria not only makes it more difficult for individuals to take part in sports, but it also restricts their access to resources such as training facilities and instructors. Some of these challenges continue to exist even after women have entered the profession, where they are usually viewed with less seriousness than males.

- **Media Representation:** The manner in which athletes are depicted in the media has a significant impact on how the general public perceives them and, consequently, how marketable they are among consumers. Male athletes are able to attract more sponsors and enjoy greater public attention as a result of the biased coverage they receive in the media. On the other hand, the media almost never covers female athletes unless they are participating in major competitions or achieving extraordinary levels of accomplishment (Messner, 2001). The fact that they are not visible to the public makes it more difficult for them to secure sponsors and build a name for themselves.
- **Financial Implications:** When everything is taken into consideration, this discrepancy represents a significant financial worry. Sponsorships and endorsements are essential for athletes because they allow them to cover the costs of things like training, travel, and other expenses that are associated with their professional careers. Due to a lack of acceptable sponsorship arrangements, an excessive number of female athletes commonly find that their personal resources and the monies provided by the government are insufficient. There is a possibility that they may be forced to retire earlier than expected or that they will be unable to finance high-quality training and facilities, both of which might result in a decrease in their performance.
- **Efforts to Address the Inequality:** In an effort to address this disparity, a number of organisations have begun programmes that are designed to provide assistance to female athletes. There are business firms, nonprofit organisations, and government entities that fall under this category. The Indian government has launched a number of programmes, like the Khelo India programme, with the goal of identifying and cultivating untapped athletic potential, particularly among female athletes. Additionally, non-profit organisations such as the GoSports Foundation and Olympic Gold Quest provide assistance to female athletes in the form of professional and financial assistance.

## **DISCREPANCIES IN SPONSORSHIP DEALS FOR MALE AND FEMALE ATHLETES**

Sponsorship disparities between male and female athletes are an illustrative example of the larger social prejudices and inequality that has long irritated sports fans. There have been great advances towards gender equality, but female athletes still face gender pay gaps and a lack of sponsorship opportunities. This discrepancy arises from a complex web of causes, including but not limited to historical prejudices, media portrayals, and opinions of marketability. Historical prejudice is a major factor contributing to the disparities in sponsorship arrangements. For a long time, sports were primarily a man's domain, with males enjoying greater privileges and support. Because of this long line of precedent, the idea that male-dominated sports are inherently more competitive and worthy of funding has taken hold. Sponsors, who value exposure and ROI, are more likely to link their brands with male athletes because they think these sportsmen would attract more fans and generate more buzz. The function of media portrayal in this dynamic is vital.

## **IMPACT OF FINANCIAL DISPARITIES ON CAREER PROGRESSION**

In addition to providing advice, these networks may help you break into highly competitive fields or land a job where you can skyrocket your career. People who are financially disadvantaged, on the other hand, may be unable to afford to join such networks, which means they may miss out on important chances to improve in their careers. The capacity to take risks that can advance one's career is a manifestation of financial inequality. Taking on unpaid internships, accepting entry-level jobs with lesser pay to gain experience, or moving for better possibilities are all common ways to advance in one's career. Individuals with little income may find these selections financially burdensome, which limits their capacity to compete effectively in the labour market or migrate into more profitable areas. The failure to make these crucial professional adjustments might cause career trajectories to become stuck or less upwardly mobile (Rob, 2003).

## **SPORTS AND FEMINISM: GENDER INCLUSION AND THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE**

There is a diverse environment when looking at gender inclusion in sports from a worldwide viewpoint. Some nations have come a long way, but others are still fighting social and cultural obstacles. Women face barriers to athletic engagement due to cultural expectations and conventional gender roles in many regions. For instance, there are areas where women and girls are discouraged from being physically active and where they encounter mobility constraints. Sports and the health advantages of physical activity, like better mental and emotional health, are out of reach for them due to cultural norms. Many nations and groups are making strides to ensure that women and

girls have equal opportunities to participate in athletic competitions. Sweden and Norway are two examples of countries that have made it a priority to promote gender equality in sports by enacting legislation to that effect. Measures to improve female participation in sports governance and equitable funding for male and female sports programmes are among the policies put in place by these nations. Gender equality in sports has also received significant support from international organisations such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Equal participation of men and women in the Olympic Games and the implementation of programmes to help female athletes globally demonstrate the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) dedication to gender parity. One encouraging trend in the fight for gender equality is the proliferation of women's sports. Female athletes have the opportunity to display their abilities on a worldwide scale through professional leagues such as the FA Women's Super League in England and the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) in the US (Sen, 2019).

## **THE INTERSECTION OF SPORTS AND GENDER**

Race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic class are overlapping aspects that further complicate the interaction between gender and sports. There is already a lot of prejudice and sexism in athletics, and women of colour, LGBTQ+ athletes, and athletes from low-income communities have additional obstacles. Tackling these complex concerns necessitates a detailed comprehension of the interplay between various oppressions and the introduction of focused policies and programmes to ensure inclusion and fairness for every athlete. There are many different approaches being taken to combat gender disparity in athletics. When it comes to questioning established standards and attempting to bring about systemic changes, advocacy and action are crucial. Athlete Ally and the Women's Sports Foundation are two groups that help underrepresented athletes and advocate for gender equality. Also, if we want to see real change, we need to see more women and people of colour in executive roles in the sports industry. Policy and practice are more likely to be egalitarian and inclusive when decision-makers mirror the diversity of the athletes they represent. To combat prejudice and foster an inclusive sports culture, it is crucial to launch educational programmes and raise public awareness (Kahn, 2011).

## **INSTANCES OF HARASSMENT AND ABUSE FACED BY FEMALE ATHLETES**

The complicated combination of personal, institutional, and cultural variables means that female athletes endure a range of harassment and abuse that frequently goes undetected. Sexual harassment, psychological abuse, and prejudice are all types of this harassment, and they all have the potential to ruin their professional and personal life. Sexual

harassment, which includes unwanted approaches, improper touching, and coercive conduct by coaches, players, or officials, is a major issue. Systemic inadequacies in protecting female athletes and the culture of secrecy around such crimes are highlighted by Nasser's decades-long abuse of hundreds of young gymnasts. As a result of the imbalance of power in sports, victims may be reluctant to come out for fear of reprisal, diminished playing time, or reputational harm. Another common problem is emotional abuse, which can take many forms, including verbal assaults, denigration, and manipulation. As a kind of incentive, coaches may resort to threats or humiliation to put undue pressure on their players to succeed. Extreme mental illness, food problems, and exhaustion are all possible outcomes of working in such an atmosphere. For example, when coaches are driven by a "win-at-all-costs" mindset in competitive sports, they may put their athletes' well-being last and create a culture where emotional abuse is accepted. To make matters worse, female athletes often face body shaming and unreasonable expectations when it comes to how they should look, which can be quite emotionally taxing.

### **LONG-TERM EFFECTS ON THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELL-BEING OF ATHLETES**

To properly evaluate the holistic impacts of sports involvement, it is essential to have a solid understanding of the long-term consequences that sports participation has on the mental and physical well-being of athletes. Athletes frequently confront a variety of physical obstacles, some of which may continue to be present after their active careers have ended. It is possible for joints, muscles, and bones to develop chronic illnesses such as osteoarthritis, tendonitis, and stress fractures as a result of the repetitive strain and impact that those structures experience. Not only can these disorders negatively impact mobility, but they also have the potential to decline quality of life in later years. There is a possibility that cardiovascular problems might be caused by the demands of high-level competition. A higher risk of hypertension, coronary artery disease, and other cardiac issues can be increased by engaging in strenuous training regimens and the stress that comes with participating in competitive sports (Kelinske, 2001).

### **ADVOCACY FOR POLICY REFORMS AND GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORTS**

According to the study's findings, many female athletes encounter pressure from family and friends to put their athletic aspirations on the back burner in favour of conforming to traditional gender stereotypes. To combat this, proponents are requesting uniform public education programmes that highlight the many ways in which girls' and women's athletic engagement improves their lives, including their physical and mental health, their capacity for leadership, and their academic achievement. There is also an effort to get girls involved in sports at an early age by getting them into physical education programmes that aren't

biased against them. It was noted in the study that female athletes from marginalised groups, religious minorities, or poorer socioeconomic origins have compounded hurdles, highlighting the interconnectedness of prejudice. Scholarship programmes, community engagement efforts, and culturally appropriate training settings are some of the proposed targeted interventions and policies to address the unique challenges experienced by these groups. The study also highlighted the significance of catering to the specific health requirements of female athletes. Period health management, the female athlete triad, and sports-related pregnancies were among the topics that were under-discussed and unsupported. Sports organisations should establish women's health programmes, according to advocates. These programmes should provide female athletes with specialised medical treatment, dietary advice, and mental health assistance. To guarantee equitable pay and prize money in professional sports, the report also highlighted the need for legislative reforms. While there are many interrelated economic considerations, those who want to see the gender pay gap eliminated say it's essential for female athletes to be paid fairly for the work they put in. Some suggestions include encouraging private tournament organisers to offer equal prize money for men's and women's competitions and making it a requirement for government-funded tournaments (Messner, 2013).

### **1.16 EVOLUTION OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS IN INDIA**

The path towards women's athletic involvement in India has been intricate and lengthy, characterised by major obstacles, little victories, and outstanding accomplishments. Changes in gender roles, access to education, and cultural views are all part of this transition, which mirrors larger social changes in India. Norms and customs in ancient India restricted women's involvement in athletics and other forms of physical activity. Nonetheless, artefacts and historical accounts from different eras reveal that certain ladies, especially those from privileged families, did participate in hunting, archery, and martial arts. One example of the aristocratic women having access to martial arts instruction is Draupadi, whose skill with an arrow is mentioned in the epic Mahabharata. During the time of British colonisation, sports in India entered their modern age. Even while this brought organised sports to the subcontinent, women still didn't play a significant role. Women were socially frowned upon for exercising, particularly in public places, according to the prevalent Indian and British societal standards of the period. Change began to take shape in the early 20th century. There was a rising awareness of the importance of sports and physical education in the Indian independence struggle. A number of forward-thinking educators and leaders started pushing for more women to play sports.

## **IMPACT OF DISCRIMINATION ON FEMALE ATHLETES**

For decades, sexism in sports has been an enormous problem with ramifications that go well beyond the field of play. There has been a lot of improvement in recent years, but gender bias still hinders women's advancement in sports at every level. It is difficult for female athletes to flourish and achieve because of the many ways in which this prejudice shows itself, such as in uneven compensation, little media coverage, stereotyping, and insufficient resources. Among the most glaring types of discrimination that female athletes encounter is the large wage disparity that exists between them and their male colleagues. Even when playing at the same level or having more success, women earn much less than men do in many professional sports. Soccer, basketball, and hockey are team sports where this difference stands out the most (Alexander, 2014). In spite of winning many World Cups and Olympic gold medals, the United States Women's National Soccer squad has had to take legal action to demand equal compensation with the men's squad.

When it comes to coaching, sports administration, and regulating bodies, women are noticeably underrepresented, especially at the highest levels. Because of this gender gap, decisions on the distribution of resources and the formulation of policies frequently fail to take into account the specific experiences and viewpoints of female athletes. This can discourage young women from pursuing athletic occupations since there are fewer female role models and mentors to look up to (Bhandari, 2016).

## **CONCLUSION**

Discrimination against female athletes in India remains a significant barrier to achieving gender equality in sports. Despite some progress, female athletes continue to struggle with unequal opportunities, biased perceptions, and inadequate support systems. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from policymakers, sports organizations, and society at large. There is a need for comprehensive reforms, including better access to resources, equal pay, and increased representation of women in sports leadership roles. Additionally, changing societal attitudes and stereotypes about women in sports is crucial for creating an environment where female athletes can thrive. Only by dismantling these barriers can India truly harness the full potential of its female athletes and ensure their rightful place in the nation's sporting landscape.

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