

Discrimination: Experience of Female Athletes

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Abstract - The research investigates gender bias and societal prejudices in addition to the numerous challenges that these athletes face. Inadequate infrastructure and a lack of support are only two of the other challenges that they face. Even though India is growing more prominent in the international sports arena, cultural standards that favor male players tend to be deeply ingrained that have been passed down through generations. This mixed-method study comprised both quantitative surveys and in-depth interviews, and it was conducted with the participation of female athletes from a wide range of sports. According to the findings, systemic biases present themselves in a variety of ways, including the unequal allocation of resources, a lack of visibility, and weakened financial incentives of various kinds. Additionally, the social stigma that is associated with women's engagement in athletics has a severe impact on both the mental health of women and their ability to maintain a competitive career. The findings of this study indicate the necessity of modifying rules and cultural norms in order to establish a sports environment that is more welcoming to all individuals.

Keywords: Discrimination, Experience, Female athletes

INTRODUCTION

Sports have long been lauded as a levelling force, a place where hard work, determination, and skill can overcome social obstacles. On the other hand, female athletes in India face an extremely uneven playing field. Indian women athletes still have several obstacles stemming from systemic gender bias, despite the country's long history of athletic excellence and its current prominence on the global stage. The purpose of this research is to illuminate the complex dynamics of this prejudice by investigating its forms, origins, and effects on the professional and personal lives of female athletes in India. In a country with a population of more than 1.3 billion, there have been many legendary athletes who have served as role models for many. Players like P.V. Sindhu, Mary Kom, Sania Mirza, and P.T. Usha are well-known all throughout the country for the success they've had. On the other hand, the triumphs of these women in athletics tend to obscure the struggles endured by the innumerable other women who share their aspirations (Adler, 2002). In India, female athletes have unique challenges due to their gender at every level of competition, from local leagues to the national team. Rather from being a simple problem, the institutional, social, cultural, and economic aspects all contribute to the prejudice that female athletes in India face. The prevailing patriarchal ideology, which dictates gender norms and expectations, is at the heart of this problem in Indian culture. In sports, which have long been associated with men, women frequently find

themselves fighting for more than simply the chance to compete; they fight for the right to compete in sports altogether. The fight starts at a young age, when many girls are told they shouldn't take athletics seriously and are instead expected to focus on more "feminine" pastimes or housework.

The road to sports success is not always smooth for those who choose to undertake it. Inadequate nutrition, a lack of appropriate equipment, and limited access to excellent training facilities are typical difficulties, especially in rural areas and smaller cities. Further exacerbating these material shortcomings is the dearth of female mentors and coaches who can offer more than just technical advice; they can also act as positive role models and strong advocates (Balatchandirane, 2003). In recent years, high-profile examples have startled the nation by bringing attention to the issue of exploitation and harassment, which many young female athletes face due to the lack of strong support structures. Lack of funds is another major obstacle. It is not uncommon for female athletes to face financial hardships, in contrast to their male counterparts who participate in highly lucrative sports like cricket. A lack of support and funding for women's athletics is a vicious cycle that is exacerbated by the gender pay gap in sponsorships, media coverage, and prize money. The growth of women's sports in the nation is impeded by this economic inequality, which impacts both individual athletes and the sport as a whole. Many people's views of female athletes are shaped by the media,

which frequently perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes instead of promoting positive ones. When it does air, coverage of women's sports is often sparse and places more emphasis on how pretty the athletes are than on how good they are at what they do. This does more than only downplay the accomplishments of female athletes; it also reinforces negative stereotypes about their ability and role in sports.

A additional aggravating factor is the prevalence of institutional prejudices throughout various sports organisations and regulating bodies. The lack of female representation in positions of power and decision-making frequently results in practices and regulations that do nothing to help female athletes overcome the specific obstacles they encounter. These systemic problems, such as insufficient infrastructure and unfair distribution of resources, foster an atmosphere where prejudice may flourish unregulated. The effects of this bias go well beyond the sporting arena. It exacerbates larger social disparities, has negative effects on athletes' physical and mental health, and restricts their access to school and employment possibilities. A multitude of factors, including societal expectations, financial constraints, and a dearth of institutional backing, prevent many women from realising their lifelong ambition of becoming professional athletes (Brown, 2010). Increased focus on women's sports and discussions about gender equality in athletics have resulted from Indian women's achievements in international tournaments. There are grassroots movements afoot to make sports more welcoming to all types of people, frequently spearheaded by ex-athletes and ardent proponents. Although there is still a significant resource shortage, government initiatives and business sponsorships are making some progress.

This research aims to add to the growing body of knowledge by examining the prejudice that Indian female athletes confront in depth. Using case studies, qualitative interviews, and quantitative data, we want to provide a detailed picture of the present situation. We want to shed light on the varied experiences of women in Indian sports and the various types of prejudice they face by exploring the interconnections of gender, caste, class, and location. This study aims to do more than just find issues. By consulting with athletes, coaches, administrators, and legislators, we hope to gather insights into effective programmes and policies that have improved athletic opportunities for all in India and draw out lessons that can be applied at a larger scale. It is crucial that this matter gets addressed. Athletic competitions may inspire new ways of thinking, boost self-esteem, and test established standards. Promoting gender equality in athletics is not only the right thing to do, but also a practical requirement for a nation like India, which benefits from a large female population. Half of India's population has untapped potential that might transform the country's sports industry, helping India gain recognition abroad while also creating a more welcoming culture at home.

Gender equality has been a prominent theme throughout the twentieth century. While this has improved women's possibilities overall, particularly in developed nations, it paints a disturbing picture in several developing nations where gender parity is still a long way off. In South Asia and China, for instance, female death rates are substantially greater than male mortality rates.

In most poor nations, people are overjoyed to hear the news of a boy's birth. Having a son is like having insurance: you know he'll assist out financially when he inherits his dad's estate and finds work. In contrast, the response is drastically different when a girl is born; in fact, some mothers cry upon learning their child is a girl. This is because, in their view, a daughter is nothing more than an expenditure; she has no business being involved in the world of men, and her proper position is at home (Busse, 2003). It is customary to announce the arrival of a female relative by stating, "The servant of your household has been born." in certain regions of India.

From the moment of conception till the moment of death, girls face various forms of discrimination, abuse, and exploitation; this is not exclusive to India but affects many countries worldwide. Concerned delegates from Latin American nations voiced their escalating rates of "femicide" during the 2006 International Women's Day. Take Guatemala as an example; over 2,300 women had been savagely killed. One thing that Indira Lakshmanan noticed in her 2006 Boston Globe article was that, "Housewives, teenagers, and college students have disappeared and later been found naked, disembowelled, sexually mutilated, beheaded, and dumped in abandoned lots." News of a similar kind has arrived from Mexico, Peru, Colombia, and Brazil.

METHODOLOGY

DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOLS CONSTRUCTED

An important aspect of any research work is the selection of suitable tools for collecting relevant data. Since the tools are the data gathering instruments, the success of investigation depends on the proper choice and intelligent application of tools. To attain the objectives of the present study, the investigator adopted the following procedure for the development of the questionnaires as tools.

- A questionnaire on gender discriminations faced by the athletes related to participation in sports. (DFAPS)
- A questionnaire on gender discriminations faced by the athletes in other areas of life. (DFAL)

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE DISCRIMINATIONS FACED BY THE ATHLETES IN INDIA RELATED TO THE PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS (DFAPS)

A questionnaire was constructed and standardized by the investigator in order to collect data regarding the gender discriminations faced by the athletes in India related to the participations in sports. A questionnaire is a device consisting of a series of questions regarding the subject under study, sent or given to an individual or a group of individuals with the object of obtaining data with regard to some problems under investigation. Barretal (1953) define questionnaire as a systematic compilation of questions that are administered to a sample of population from which information is desired. The construction of the present questionnaire is explained below.

A QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE DISCRIMINATIONS EXPERIENCED BY THE ATHLETES IN OTHER AREAS OF SPORTS LIFE (DFAL)

A questionnaire was constructed and standardized by the scholar, in order to collect data regarding the discriminations faced by the athletes in India related to the socio-economical and other aspects of life in relation with sports.

Final Writing

On the basis of the suggestions received, the final draft was completed after incorporating all the suggestions and recommendations and finally all the questions were arranged randomly before administering the questionnaire for the collection of data. The final questionnaire contained 41 items covering six dimensions. **Selection of Subjects**

One thousand one hundred athletes from 11 states in India were selected as subjects. The sample selected for this study included national level athletes who participated in the all India inter university and open national athletic meets. The sample selected for this study was divided into locality and religion wise.

Statistical Technique

The following statistical techniques were used for analysis of the data.

1. Percent analysis using percentage: To quantify the data collected from the subjects' statements state wise, the percent analysis was done.
2. Inferential analysis using chi-square test and chi-square test of significance.

Chi-square test of significance

To find out the significant difference of opinion between different categories of respondents about the gender discriminations faced by women athletes in India on locality and religion wise on each variable of gender discriminations and also on each statement in the questionnaire (DFAPS) and (DFAL), the chi-square (χ^2) test was done.

$$\text{Formula } \chi^2 = \sum \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

RESULT

DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCED RELATED TO PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS (DFAPS)

Table 1: State wise percent analysis of the dimension public outlook towards participation of women in sports

Item No.	Percentage of Different States										
	AP	BH	HR	KL	MP	MH	PB	RJ	TN	UP	WB
1.	49	61	44	18	45	28	15	53	37	54	42
2.	59	47	62	12	16	33	17	32	52	39	43
3.	53	59	34	24	32	60	28	56	47	62	49
4.	48	68	42	24	46	54	23	56	58	47	33
5.	60	57	34	17	65	32	28	62	49	47	34
6.	35	56	53	16	37	46	29	57	50	59	26
7.	51	66	46	16	50	62	14	32	36	57	37
Avg.	50.71	59.14	45	18.14	41.57	45	22	49.71	47	52.14	37.71

AP – Andhra Pradesh, BH – Bihar, HR – Haryana, KL – Kerala, MP – Madhya Pradesh, MH – Maharashtra, PB – Punjab, RJ – Rajasthan, TN – Tamil Nadu, UP – Uttar Pradesh, WB – West Bengal

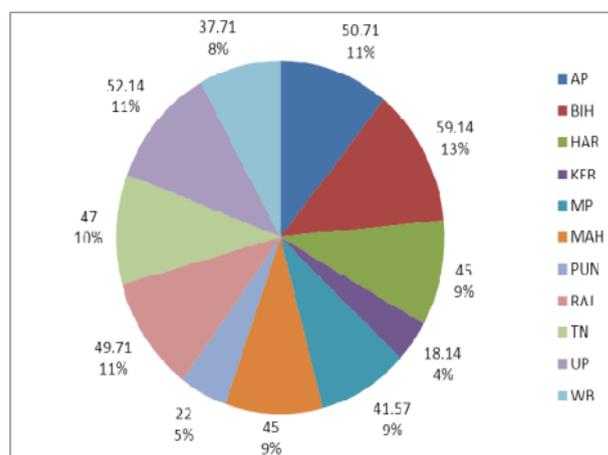


Figure 1: State wise percent analysis of the dimension public outlook towards participation of women in sports

Table 1 shows how female athletes in India feel about gender discrimination in public perceptions of women's sports involvement, broken down by state. There is gender discrimination in the public outlook towards the participation of girls in sports, according to nearly 60% of female athletes from Bihar (59.14), followed by nearly 50% from Andhra Pradesh (50.71), Rajasthan (49.71), and Uttar Pradesh (52.41). Following Madhya Pradesh with 41.57% and West Bengal with 37.71% were the states of Haryana and Maharashtra, followed by Tamil Nadu with 47%. The states of Punjab and Kerala had the lowest

percentages of respondents who shared this view: 22 and 18.14 percent, respectively.

CHI-SQUARE (X²) TEST OF INDEPENDENTS

The researcher employed the chi-square test of independents in a contingency table to ascertain the athletes' opinions on the replies derived from each item in the questionnaire. Each object had its own independent investigation, which is then classified according to its dimensions. This analysis is structured with a segment devoted to location and a section devoted to religion.

Analysis of items in the dimension discrimination related to the public outlook towards participation of women in sports

1. Responses based on Locality

There are seven questions in the survey that probe local attitudes on women's athletic engagement. The χ^2 values and locality-based athlete replies are shown in Tables 2.

Table 2: Chi-square analysis done on the item do you feel any gender discrimination in public's attitude towards the female participation in sports with respect to locality

Item No.	Locality	No of responses			c ² value
		Yes	No	Total	
1	Urban	243	258	501	23.45*
	Rural	203	396	599	
	Total	446	654	1100	

* Significant at 0.05 level as table value () 2 1 x = 3.84

The computed chi-square value is 23.45, as seen in the table above. At the 0.05 level, one degree of freedom corresponds to a table value of 3.84. At the 0.05 level, this means that the computed value is more than the table value. It follows that athletes' views on the question of whether or not they experience gender discrimination in the public's perception of women's athletic involvement vary considerably across geographic regions.

Table 3: Chi-square analysis done on the item do you feel that the attitude of public is discouraging female athletes from participating in sports with respect to locality

Item No.	Locality	No of responses			c ² value
		Yes	No	Total	
2	Urban	190	311	501	0.06
	Rural	222	377	599	
	Total	412	688	1100	

It is clear from the data in the table that the computed chi-square value is 0.06. At the 0.05 level, one degree of freedom corresponds to a table value of 3.84. At the 0.05 level, the computed value is lower than the table value, as seen above. Consequently, it is safe to say

that there isn't a statistically significant difference between the areas when it comes to athletes' views on whether or not the public's attitude discourages female athletes from competing.

2. Responses based on Religion

Based on the public's perspective on women's sports involvement, the survey asks seven questions. From Table 4, you may find the religiously-based athlete replies together with their χ^2 values.

Table 4: Chi-square analysis done on the item do you feel any gender discrimination in public's attitude towards the female participation in sports with respect to religion

Item No.	Religion	No of responses			c ² value
		Yes	No	Total	
1	Hindu	165	250	415	34.18*
	Muslim	92	64	156	
	Christian	118	198	316	
	Others	71	142	213	
	Total	446	654	1100	

* Significant at 0.05 level as table value () 2 3 x = 7.82

The computed chi-square value is 34.18, as seen in the table above. With a significance level of 0.05, the table value that corresponds to three degrees of freedom is 7.82. At the 0.05 level, it shows that the computed value is more than the table value. Based on the responses of athletes from all faiths, it is clear that there is a wide range of public opinion on the subject of gender discrimination against women in sports.

Table 5: Chi-square analysis done on the item do you feel that the attitude of public is discouraging female athletes from participating in sports with respect to religion

Item No.	Religion	No of responses			c ² value
		Yes	No	Total	
2	Hindu	156	259	415	0.57
	Muslim	58	98	156	
	Christian	118	198	316	
	Others	80	133	213	
	Total	412	688	1100	

As can be seen from the table above, the computed chi-square value is 0.57. Three degrees of freedom at the 0.05 level translate to a table value of 7.82. The computed result is lower than the table value at the 0.05 level, as shown. Therefore, it is safe to say that, when it comes to the question of whether or not the public's attitude discourages female athletes from engaging in sports, there is no statistically significant difference in the opinions of athletes about the issue.

Analysis of items in the dimension feelings of family members towards participation of women in sports

1. Responses based on Locality

There are seven questions in the survey that probe respondents' sentiments on the topic of family support for women's athletic engagement. You may find the athletes' replies according to their locality, along with their χ^2 values.

Table 6: Chi-square analysis done on the item are you discouraged by any of your family members from participating in selection trials with respect to locality

Item No.	Locality	No of responses			c ² value
		Yes	No	Total	
8	Urban	182	319	501	14.47*
	Rural	286	313	599	
	Total	468	632	1100	

* Significant at 0.05 level as table value () 2 1 x = 3.84

The computed chi-square value is 14.47, as seen in the table above. At the 0.05 level, one degree of freedom corresponds to a table value of 3.84. The computed result exceeds the table value at the 0.05 level, as seen above. As a result, it's safe to say that athletes' views on the topic of whether or not family members dissuade them from taking part in selection trials vary greatly between regions.

Table 7: Chi-square analysis done on the item did any of your family members deny your opportunity to participate in sports at various level with respect to locality

Item No.	Locality	No of responses			c ² value
		Yes	No	Total	
9	Urban	190	311	501	0.98
	Rural	244	355	599	
	Total	434	666	1100	

The computed chi-square value is 0.98, as seen in the table above. At the 0.05 level, one degree of freedom corresponds to a table value of 3.84. The computed result is lower than the table value at the 0.05 level, as shown. The results show that there is no statistically significant difference in how athletes from different places feel about the question of whether or not any family members prevented them from participating in sports at different levels.

2. Responses based on Religion

There are seven questions in the survey that probe respondents' sentiments on the topic of family support for women's athletic engagement. The χ^2 results and religiously-based athlete replies are presented in Tables 29–35.

Table 8: Chi-square analysis done on the item are you discouraged by any of your family members from participating in selection trials with respect to religion

Item No.	Religion	No of responses			c ² value
		Yes	No	Total	
8	Hindu	167	248	415	4.362
	Muslim	73	83	156	
	Christian	131	185	316	
	Others	97	116	213	
	Total	468	632	1100	

* Significant at 0.05 level as table value $\chi^2_{(3)} = 7.82$

The computed chi-square value is 4.362, as seen in the previous table. Three degrees of freedom at the 0.05 level translate to a table value of 7.82. The computed result is lower than the table value at the 0.05 level, as shown. It follows that there is no statistically significant difference in how athletes feel about the question of whether or not members of their family discourage them from taking part in selection trials based on their faith.

Table 9: Chi-square analysis done on the item did any of your family members deny your opportunity to participate in sports at various level with respect to religion

Item No.	Religion	No of responses			c ² value
		Yes	No	Total	
9	Hindu	161	254	415	1.56
	Muslim	68	88	156	
	Christian	124	192	316	
	Others	81	132	213	
	Total	434	666	1100	

As can be seen from the table above, the computed chi-square value is 1.56. Three degrees of freedom at the 0.05 level translate to a table value of 7.82. The computed result is lower than the table value at the 0.05 level, as shown. The results show that there is no statistically significant difference in how players feel about the question of whether or not any members of their family prevented them from participating in sports due to their faith.

DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCED IN OTHER AREAS OF SPORTS LIFE (DFAL)

Table 10: State wise percent analysis of the dimension economic aspect and women in sports

Item No.	Percentage of Different States										
	AP	BH	HR	KL	MP	MH	PB	RJ	TN	UP	WB
1.	57	65	42	25	50	55	28	66	54	61	56
2.	29	25	14	16	27	13	12	20	22	15	13
3.	12	13	8	6	9	11	7	10	12	14	8
4.	15	16	11	5	12	14	7	14	11	15	10
5.	2	5	2	0	1	4	0	3	2	4	3
6.	7	12	8	2	11	14	4	13	12	14	8
Avg.	20.33	22.66	14.16	9	18.33	18.5	9.66	21	18.83	20.5	16.33

AP – Andhra Pradesh, BH – Bihar, HR – Haryana, KL – Kerala, MP – Madhya Pradesh, MH – Maharashtra, PB – Punjab, RJ – Rajasthan, TN – Tamil Nadu, UP – Uttar Pradesh, WB – West Bengal

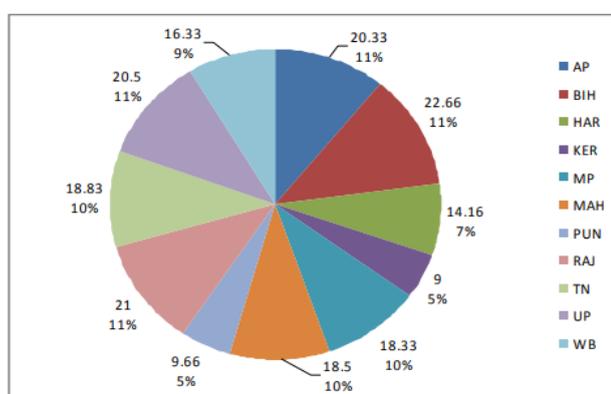


Figure 2: State wise percent analysis of the dimension economic aspect and women in sports

Table 10 shows how female athletes in each state feel about the economic side of sports and about women in general. Among female athletes, over 23% in Bihar(22.66) and 21% in Rajasthan(20.5), Uttar Pradesh(20.5), and Andhra Pradesh (20.33) reported experiencing economic discrimination due to their gender. Following closely after were the states of Tamil Nadu (18.83%), Maharashtra (18.5%), Madhya Pradesh (18.33%), West Bengal (16.33%), and Haryana (14.16%). The states of Punjab and Kerala had the lowest percentages of respondents who shared this view (9.66 and 9%, respectively).

CONCLUSION

This research on sexism in athletics in India should be a wake-up call and a guide for the future. It will need consistent work and dedication from every part of society to overcome the highlighted problems, which are big and long-standing. More fair sporting environments may have far-reaching positive effects on social, economic, and cultural dynamics, but that's not all they have to offer. The treatment and achievements of India's female athletes will be more and more seen as a measure of the country's progress towards social justice and gender equality as it keeps making its mark on the world scene.

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