



BARRIERS IN GIRL SPORTS PARTICIPATION IN KASHMIR –AN ANALYTICAL APPROACH



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ABSTRACT

Given the clear benefits of regular physical activity (such as reduced risks of cardiovascular disease and obesity, as well as other benefits including those related to mental health), exploration of the barriers that keep Kashmiri girls away from the sports activities were analyzed. Four barriers became prominent as to why girls in this Valley do not participate in sports: Religious Barrier, Social Barrier, Lack of Opportunities, Lack of sponsorship, lack of self-confidence, Safety Barrier, Barrier of Parental and Adult Influence, Barrier of Sexual harassment and Abuse, Lack of Role Model, Personal barrier and Less Media Coverage. These all factors put a strong barrier and tremendously affect the participation of girls in sports activities in our Kashmir Valley. Kashmiri girls despite of having a fine talent are less seen around the sports fields and sports stadiums. The researchers after undertaking a keen observation over this issue found a few remedies/methods which could be employed for a positive impact over the girl participation in sports activities in Kashmir; Positive Social Recognition, providing Pro- sports message of Religion, Fair Sponsorship, Respect and acknowledgement in the society, Proper media coverage, Overcoming the Gender bias, etc. By overcoming all the odds and by changing our unanimous attitude towards the girl sports activities in Kashmir, a shift in focus may be possible. However, this needs to be maintained to allow girls more opportunities, role models and motivation to participate in sport.

KEY WORDS: Sports, Kashmir, Social, Girl, Participation.



Objectives of the study

- To examine the Barriers in girl sports participation in Kashmir.
- To study the benefit of girl/women participation in sports activities.
- To determine the methods/recommendations which can be employed to put a positive impact on girl participation in sports activities in Kashmir.

RESEARCH

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on the things and factors perceived by the researchers. The study is purely analytical in nature & researchers being the Kashmiris have analyzed all the barriers & given recommendations based on the perception level of all the factors relating to girl sports participation in Kashmir. The researchers also consulted the secondary source of information from all the competent sources. The researchers perceived and analyzed all the factors relating to the girl sports participation in Kashmir and some secondary data also has been collected from reliable sources and presented in a well determined manner to highlight the barriers in girl sports participation in Kashmir valley. The study is purely exploratory and analytical in nature.

INTRODUCTION

What is a sport?

A sport is a category that covers numerous different activities. Many sports involve high degrees of physical activity (for instance, running or rugby) whilst others focus more on strategy and mental exertion (for example, chess is considered to be a sport). Some types of sport involve playing in a team (such as football) whilst others do not (for example, running). Sports can be played for fun, fitness, recreation & joy or (as Olympic athletes do) at a professional level.

Necessity of sports: Sports have their great utility.

Sports are the sources of recreation. They provide relief and a sense relaxation in a life of monotony of routine marked by miseries, hardships and hurdles. They instill or infuse a sportive spirit to take up the heavy burden of life in a lighter vein and not to think of life either as a tragedy or a comedy but as the ordinary business of living. It is very essential to maintain health and physical fitness. It encourages the growth of team-spirit. Sports and games bring about various methods of diversions. Incorporating some sport into our lives is so important because it helps us to stay active and it connects us with other sport lovers across the world. Sports foster a real sense of community and they help us to achieve our personal best every time, no matter if we are just doing them for fun as amateurs or if we are professional athletes.

Why Sports Participation for Girls and Women

Sport has been one of the most important socio-cultural learning experiences for boys and men for many years. It is important for all of us to know benefits of sports for girls:

Better Physical Health.

The health benefits of playing sports for girls are numerous:

Better self-reported health. Regardless of grade level, a higher percentage of female athletes in the Women's Sports Foundation 2008 Go Out and Play study described their health as "excellent" than non-athletes. While girls were less apt as they got older to describe their health that way, three times as many female high school athletes as non-athletes (20% and 6% respectively) labeled their health as excellent.

Fewer chronic illnesses. Girls who play sports have stronger immune systems and run a reduced risk of chronic illnesses later in life such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, endometrial, colon and breast cancers

Higher body esteem. As noted in the Women's Sports Foundation's 2008 study, Go Out and Play, "girls are especially pushed by mass media to develop unrealistic ideal body images, and this can lead to unhealthy eating behaviors and personal dissatisfaction ... [with a] Harvard Medical School survey of fifth- through 12th-grade girls [finding] ... nearly six out of 10 were dissatisfied with their bodies." The study found a positive relationship between athletics and body esteem among girls, with higher scores on body esteem more likely at all grade levels among girls who played three or more sports per year.

Reduced risk of Obesity. The acceleration of 12- to 17-year-old girls' participation in school sports between 1971 (before the passage of Title IX) and 1980 was accompanied by a 24% increase in physical activity and a significant decrease in the obesity rate of girls. Today, about three in 10 6- to 11-year olds and 12- to 19-year olds are overweight. Health experts estimate that obesity and sedentary lifestyles are responsible for over 400,000 deaths per year in America, and that inactivity and obesity in the current generation of girls is likely to result in significant health problems later in life. Obese children are also more likely to be bullied than their non-overweight peers. Girls who play sports are less obese than non-athletes. According to the Go Out and Play study, eighty percent of high school girls who played on three or more athletic teams had a healthy BMI (body mass index), compared with 75% of moderately involved athletes and 60% of non-athletes.

Healthier menstruation: Girls who play sports have lighter and more regular periods and experience less cramping and discomfort.

- **Better grades in school**

Playing sports help girls do better in school. Girls who play sports:

Are better at organizing, setting priorities, and budgeting time. Playing sports adds to - not detracts from - a girl's time, energy, and commitment to schoolwork and increases the desire to attend college.

Perform better in math and science. A 1998 study found a strong and positive correlation between a girl's participation in high school sports and higher grades in science.

Have a lower dropout rate .A 2004 study found that sports participation reduces the dropout rate for female students in grades eight through twelve. High school athletic participation significantly lowers the dropout rate for white females in suburban and rural schools and Latina athletes in rural schools.

- **Better social life/more community involvement**

Girls who play sports are more socially well-adjusted than girls who don't:

Entry into an achievement-based social network: Sports provide girls a core of buddies, integrating them, as Sandra Hanson and Rebecca Kraus, researchers at Catholic University argue, into male -type "networks that are larger, less intimate and more based on achievement" which are different from the small, intense friendship groups based on building and maintaining relationship to which young girls are naturally drawn. This type of network may give female athletes an edge, Hanson and Kraus argue, in other areas of achievement as well.

Greater popularity among peers. Like male athletes, today's female athletes are more popular. Sports can gain girls entry into the often complex social hierarchies of high school. The *Go Out and Play* study found popularity gains associated with involvement in sports were particularly evident among elementary and middle school children.

More community involvement as adults. A recent study of Canadians found young people who play organized sports are more likely to be involved in community activities as adults.

- **Better emotional/psychological health**

Playing sports helps girls emotionally and psychologically

Higher self-esteem. Teenage girls generally experience a self-esteem crisis far more serious than boys. Girls playing sports have higher self-esteem and look to relationships with boys less to build self-esteem. They say that sports give them more confidence.

Better self-image. Female athletes obsess less about their looks and whether they are attractive, although this is not always the case. High school girls find participation in sports a way to break gender stereotypes.

More self-confidence. Teenage girls suffer from a lack of self-confidence far more than boys. Studies have consistently shown that girls who are physically active perceive their academic and athletic ability in a better light.

Lower rates of depression and risk of suicide. Sports and physical activity are linked to decreased likelihood of symptoms related to stress and depression. Teenage girls who participate in sports are less likely to be suicidal than girls who do not participate in sports.

After being all benefits of sports for women said & Turning closer to the purpose of this study, there is a famous quote that "There is no dearth of talent in Kashmir Valley" be it in Men or women sports, Hence the study is concerned with the barriers that keep the girls apart from participating in the sports activities in Kashmir Valley So here arises a question that if the above Quote is true then where is that female sports talent of Kashmir? Why there is no female participant representing the Country of India at International level? Why the girls are not exploring the opportunities to show off their talent? The aim of this study was to perceive, analyze and treat all those barriers which don't allow the Kashmiri girls to participate in sports. The researchers after thorough perception and consideration of various issues have pin pointed some of the following barriers which don't allow the Kashmiri girls to participate in sports:-

- **RELIGIOUS BARRIER: -**

Hence the valley of Kashmir is dominated by the Muslim population. For many Muslim women religious beliefs and values give meaning to the ways in which they structure and approach their life. Islam is a fundamental aspect of their identity and their approach to sport is often determined by religious, cultural and ethnic factors. In general, Islam promotes good health and fitness and encourages both men and women to engage in physical activity to maintain healthy lifestyles. However, there are aspects of the religion which affect how sports can be practiced, for example; women following their faith cannot engage in mixed gender sports and the environment and dress code also requires consideration. The girl sports in Kashmir are seen as a sort of sin & vulgarity in major cases & this has badly hit the women sports participation in Kashmir.

RECOMMENDATION: -

Due to religious misinterpretations or simply lack of awareness, Muslim girls in Kashmir have been prevented or not felt able to participate in sports. For many, apprehension about taking part stems from a fear of discrimination or facing negative attitudes from service providers in relation to their religious and cultural needs. The recommendation is that the true message of Islam regarding sports & sports participation should be conveyed.

How does Islam view sports?

Islam does not oppose having a strong body via practicing sports. Muslims are commanded to be of sound bodies and sound minds in addition to having sound morals. In the Hadith, we read: “A strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than a weak one.” (Reported by Muslim) A sound strong body is capable of fulfilling both the religious and the worldly duties. Islam never accepts anything that leads to neglecting these duties, save in some cases where some exemptions are made so as to make matters easy for believers.

The effects of sports on the body:

In his well-known book ‘Zad-Al-Ma`aad’, Imam Ibnul-Qayyim states that movement is the core of sports. It helps the body get rid of waste food in a very normal way. It makes it active, enhances its immunity and protects it from diseases. Each organ has its own sport that suits it. As for horse-riding, archery, wrestling and racing, they are sports that benefit the whole body.

Sports appearing in Islamic rituals:

In Islam, we see that many Islamic rituals contain sports that help the body attain physical fitness once they are practiced properly. The rituals of pilgrimage, paying visits to Muslim brothers, visiting the sick, going to and from the mosque and participating in many social activities are no more than sports.

- **Etiquette of sports in Islam:**

The fact that Islam encourages the practicing of sports makes one realize how great, flexible and comprehensive this course of Allah given to mankind is. In this context, Islam stresses the importance of spiritual and moral training that should accompany physical training so that the latter yield its desired effects.

Note :-As, Islam never restricts the human beings from participating in sports, Proper Islamic dress code, Religiously Permissible conditions and non-vulgar environment can be made sure & the sports Participation of girls in Kashmir must not be affected.

- **Barrier: sexual harassment and Abuse:-**

Sport-based research on this topic is lacking but recent studies indicate that sexual harassment and abuse is a problem in sport & same is the case in Kashmir. Evidence shows that some women and girls drop out of sport rather than continue being subjected to the undermining effects of constant harassment and abuse: others endure the sexual attention of their male coaches or peers because of fear, desire for athletic reward, low self-esteem or ignorance of who to turn to for help. Risk of sexual harassment or abuse arises from a combination of factors such as weak organizational controls within sport clubs, dominating and controlling behavior by coaches, and vulnerability, low self-esteem and high ambition among athletes. These all abusing and harassing factors also play a great role in affecting the girl sports participation in Kashmir.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS:-**

Moral and religious education should be given to all and furthermore adopt rigorous screening procedures and establish codes of ethics and conduct for all staff and volunteers. Staff and volunteers should be required to sign, to show that they agree to abide by the code. Ensure all the staff and volunteers who work with women are trained & have a social and religious know how of Kashmir. Foster a climate of open discussion about issues of sexual harassment and abuse so that women feel confident enough to speak out if they experience them. Provide the coach education programmes, which inform and advise about the ethical and interpersonal issues of sexual harassment and abuse and about the technical aspects of physical touch in coaching the sport.

- **Social barrier**

The traditional social side of sport does not link in with the religious requirements of Muslim women. In Kashmir the culture of sport itself presents a problem. Some women/girls are turned off 'sport' altogether because they see it as a male-dominated activity. Furthermore, they think that participating in sports can harm their social image. Sports in Kashmir is just not seen as feminine or 'girly' to be interested in sport and, for many girls, being sporty is felt to be at odds with being feminine and being a noble typical Kashmiri girl.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS**

There should be a positive social image endowed to a sports woman from her concerned society. The elders and respected citizens of the society in Kashmir should come forward and play their role in honoring the girl bestowed with the sports talent so that it can encourage other talented girls who hide their talent just because of their social image perspective. Challenge sexist assumptions and physical activity with social activities and guest speakers on active lifestyles, nutrition, body image, and smoking and promote a positive sports culture in which girls of the valley can freely & proudly participate.

- **Barrier:Lack of sponsorship: -**

There is a "chronic lack of sponsorship" in women's sport in the Kashmir from sponsors and broadcasters despite increased interest from spectators and viewers. The Girl sports in Kashmir is not treated at par with male sports and because of this the girl sports in Kashmir face a chronic shortage of monetary aspects and as a result majority of girls who come from poor background are not able to play their sport in which she can excel.

- **Recommendations:-**

The sponsors in Kashmir should show some interest in the girl sports and why not the latest study reveals that the female athletes come with a huge fan base and women sports is gaining popularity on all continents and across all markets, admiring female fans especially want to see more of their idols.

- **Barrier:Lack of self-confidence:-**

Girls, in Kashmir on average, have less self-confidence than boys and rate their performance or ability more negatively than do boys. Self-confidence is also linked to competition. Although some women enjoy the competitive element of sport, many girls and women are turned off sport because it's too competitive.

- **Recommendations:**

Make sure all women/girls of any region of Kashmir regardless of their religious, social, ethnic background or, skills & experience; get the same chance to be an active part of activities and teams. Where competition is a key component of an activity or sport, ensure women and girls have the chance to play at appropriate levels against teams or individuals of a similar standard.

- **Barrier:Safety: -**

This barrier is very dominant in the valley considering the socio-cultural backgrounds of girl participants. The Political imbalance and armed struggle also plays an important role in preventing the girls to participate in the sports activities.

- **Recommendations:-**

Ensure girls and women can have privacy in changing rooms, in facilities, in the design and layout of venues. Allow women to wear any clothing which don't hurt the socio-cultural and religious beliefs of the Kashmiris, but playing sports must not be quitted at any cost. Provide single-sex activities, staffed by women and make sure that they're not running next to men's session & in this case it may be expected that the sports - women in Kashmir can escape themselves from being a political, social, cultural and ethnic wrath.

- **Barrier:Lack of Role Model: -**

Girls in Kashmir due to their less participation over a period of time have no local role model in the premier sports disciplines. Due to this thing young & enthusiastic girls of Kashmir who look forward to excel in sports don't have a role model to follow & admire. For Instance Inclusion of **Mr. Parvez Rasool** in the

Indian national Men Cricket team has been widely and positively appreciated by the sports fraternity of J&K. Being a local boy the cricketers of the valley are now considering him a role model and widely began to participate in the sports in general and Cricket in particular. This thing should also be done with the girl sports wing of Kashmir & they should get a local role model.

- **Recommendation: -**

J&K state sports council, IOA,IOC,NSNIS&State& Union ministry of youth affairs & sports should play a greater role in establishing the women sports of Kashmir at a much bigger and professional level. They should put their efforts in bringing the media forward to cover the women sports. The women of Kashmir come from severe social, economic, cultural & environmental conditions & despite of this all, if they could possibly achieve something in the field of sports, the media should then left no stone unturned in making them a role model for the Kashmiri girl who aspires the sports.

- **Barrier: Parental and adult influence:-**

The influence of parents, coaches and other adults in Kashmir affects girls and boys differently. Adolescent females place greater emphasis on self-comparison and comments from adults and elders of the society than do adolescent males, who rely more on competitive outcomes as their basis for personal judgment of physical competence.

- **Recommendations :-**

In Kashmir ensure that your sport is open, decent, supportive and welcoming. Conduct outreach projects (they don't have to be expensive or time-consuming) to make links with the local community. Be aware of religious and cultural festivals such as Eid and Ramadan when arranging events. Ensure all your staff are trained in issues about ethnicity and diversity and are inclusive in their practice

- **Barrier: Personal Barrier: -**

This barrier is a strong & at the same time a strange one. The researchers perceive that there are some personal barriers which prevent the sports participation among women in Kashmir among those barriers the most dominant one is "Being in a relationship/engaged/Married". Pertinently the pro-sports girls in Kashmir are perceived to be in a relationship/engaged/married with the boys/men who don't like the fact that their girlfriend/fiancé or wife plays sports and indulge in physical activities. As a result in a pursuit to prevent their relationships, they are left with no choice except Quitting sports.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS:-**

The men/women/families of Kashmir should rise above all the negative mind setups & should promote the girl sports at all levels in order to put a positive impact on the health of the girls who are supposed to be the promoters and advocates of future generations.

CONCLUSION:

Sport and physical activity providers need to respect religious and cultural difference. This difference perception is especially important in Kashmir, for women of Kashmir are often not seen in the sports fields as compared to their male counterparts. Religious and cultural barriers make it difficult for Kashmiri Muslim women to participate in sport as people are often lacking sensitivity or understanding of their requirement around clothing, privacy and single sex provision. The Muslim faith itself should not be seen as a barrier to participation as Islam presents a positive outlook towards health and well-being. However, Islam does require that certain practices and procedures are followed. The guidelines below can help providers to ensure that their activities are more accessible to Muslim women. In case of Kashmir & the participation of Kashmiri girls in sports events the researchers believe that the recommendations would go a long way in promoting, enhancing and cultivating the spirit of sports among girls in the Kashmir valley.

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