

Women in Sports Leadership Positions in India: Issues and Challenge`

¹Dhirendra Singh Chauhan

¹Asst. Professor Of Physical Education Govt. Girls P.G College Bindki Fatehpur U.P.

Abstract

In recent years, women in India have made great strides in sports, with many achieving success at the international level. However, women face many challenges when it comes to leadership positions in the sports industry. This article examines the issues and challenges faced by women in sports leadership positions in India and suggests some recommendations to address these challenges. The participation of women in sports leadership positions is an important aspect of promoting gender equality and empowering women in India. However, despite considerable progress in recent years, women face significant issues and challenges when it comes to assuming leadership roles in the Indian sports industry. This abstract explores the many factors that hinder the representation of women in sports leadership positions in India and highlights the challenges they face.

Keywords – strides, sports, leadership, position, women

Introduction

In recent years, women in India have appeared as prominent figures in various fields including sports. While sports have traditionally been dominated by men, Indian women are making remarkable strides in leadership positions in the sporting landscape. From athletes to administrators, coaches to officials, women are redefining the story of gender equality in Indian sports. Historically, women's participation in sports in India was limited due to social and cultural constraints. However, with changing times and growing recognition of the importance of gender equality, there has been a gradual change in the outlook and opportunities for women in the field of sports. Today, Indian women are making their mark as leaders, challenging stereotypes, and inspiring generations to come. Women have contributed to India's development in various fields, including sports, where they have challenged stereotypes and norms associated with male sports giants. Some famous Indian sportspersons who have made the country proud: Phogat sisters (Wrestling), Deepika Kumari (Archery), Sania Mirza (Tennis), Saina Nehwal and PV Sindhu (Badminton), Mary Kom and MC Mary Kom (Boxing), PT Usha and Hima Das (Athletics), Mithali Raj and Harmanpreet Kaur (Cricket), Rani Rampal and Savita Punia (Hockey), Dipa Karmakar (Gymnastics), and many more. Women in sports are changing the game not only in India but globally as they prove the values of teamwork, self-reliance, resilience, and empowerment. They also inspire millions of other women and girls to pursue their dreams and aspirations. However, women in sports leadership positions in India still face many barriers and challenges, such as gender discrimination, lack of opportunities, resources, and support, social and cultural pressures, and harassment and violence. According to a report by Egon Zehnder, there is currently 17 percent of women in board positions in corporate India, but only 11 percent in leadership roles. Another Times of India report states that only 10 percent of sports federations in India have women presidents or secretaries. Therefore, there is a need for greater awareness, advocacy, and action to promote the participation and representation of women in sports leadership positions in India. Some of the initiatives working towards this goal are: One Win Leads to Another (a joint program by UN Women and the International Olympic Committee), Women's Sports Foundation India (a non-profit

organization that supports women athletes Women in Sports India (a platform that connects and empowers women in sports), and SheThePeople.TV (a digital media platform that showcases stories of women achievers in various fields)

Objectives of the Study:-

Assess the status of women in sports leadership positions in India.

Find the key issues and challenges faced by women in these positions.

Develop recommendations to address these issues and challenges.

Research Methodology- The study is based on secondary data collected from interviews from websites, magazines, articles, social media platforms, and YouTube. Women in sports leadership positions in India face many issues and challenges. Here are some of the key issues they often face:

Lack of opportunities: A major challenge for women in sports leadership positions in India is the limited opportunities available to them. The sports industry in India is male-dominated, and women often face barriers when it comes to accessing leadership roles and decision-making positions. This lack of opportunities hinders their progress and prevents them from making full use of their skills and talents. **Gender bias and stereotyping:** Gender bias and stereotyping continue to exist in the sports industry in India. There is a common belief that sports leadership positions are more suitable for men, leading to prejudice against women seeking such roles. As a result of this bias, women are often overlooked for leadership opportunities, despite their abilities and capabilities.

Cultural and social norms: Cultural and social norms play a key role in shaping the challenges women face in sports leadership positions. Traditional gender roles and expectations may discourage women from pursuing leadership roles in sports. They may face resistance from their families, social pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, and limited support networks. These norms can function as barriers and limit the participation and advancement of women in sports leadership. **Lack of representation:** Another critical issue is the under-representation of women in sports leadership positions. When women do not see enough role models or women in decision-making roles, it becomes difficult for them to imagine themselves in similar positions. **Lack of representation also leads to a lack of diverse perspectives.** **Gender pays gap:** Women in sports leadership positions often face the same gender pay gap as women in various other industries. Despite performing similar roles and responsibilities, they may receive lower wages or fewer financial incentives than their male counterparts. The gender pay gap not only affects women's economic empowerment but also perpetuates the feeling that their contribution to the sports industry is undervalued. **Limited support and mentoring:** The availability of support systems and mentoring programs specifically designed for women in sports leadership roles is limited in India. Women often face a lack of guidance, mentorship, and networking opportunities that can help them advance their careers and overcome challenges. The absence of a dedicated support network can make it challenging for women to break through the glass ceiling and move forward in their careers.

Addressing these issues requires concerted efforts by various stakeholders including sports organizations, policymakers, and society. It is important to promote gender equality, challenge stereotypes, create inclusive policies, supply mentoring opportunities, and encourage greater representation of women in sports leadership positions. By tackling these challenges, India can pave the way for more women to excel and contribute to the development of sports leadership in the country.

Women in sports leadership positions in India face several challenges that hinder their progress and influence. Here are some of the major challenges they often face:-

Gender bias and stereotypes: Gender bias and stereotypes play a significant role in limiting opportunities for women in sports leadership positions. There is a prevalent belief that leadership roles in sports are more suitable for men, resulting in a bias against women. These biases can manifest in many ways, such as underestimating women's abilities, questioning their authority, or doubting their decision-making abilities. **Lack of representation:** The under-representation of women in sports leadership positions is a significant challenge. When women do not see enough role models or women in decision-making roles, it becomes difficult for them to see themselves in equal positions. This lack of representation perpetuates a cycle where women have limited access to leadership opportunities, making it difficult for them to step up and create change.

Limited opportunities and support networks: Women in the sports industry often face limited opportunities and support networks. Existing networks and connections in a male-dominated industry may not always be accessible or inclusive of women. This lack of opportunities and support can hinder their career development, as they may miss important mentoring, sponsorship, and networking opportunities that can help them advance in their careers. **Work-life balance:** Balancing work responsibilities with personal and family commitments is a challenge for women in various professions, including sports leadership positions. The demanding nature of leadership roles in sports, which often involve travel, long working hours, and high-pressure situations, can make it difficult for women to balance their professional and personal lives. This challenge may prevent women from pursuing or keeping careers in sports leadership. **Unequal pay and financial disparities:** Women in sports leadership positions often face disparities in pay and financial rewards. They may also receive lower wages, fewer bonuses, or limited access to sponsorship opportunities than their male counterparts, even when performing the same roles and achieving comparable results. The gender pay gap in sports leadership worsens gender inequalities and undervalues the contribution of women to the industry. **Institutional barriers:** Institutional barriers such as a lack of policies that promote gender equality, rigid hierarchies and biased selection processes can hinder the advancement of women in sports leadership positions. The absence of inclusive policies and practices prevents women from accessing leadership roles and decision-making positions, further worsening gender disparities in the sector.

Overcoming these challenges requires concerted efforts by sports organizations, policymakers, and society. Initiatives such as creating inclusive policies, promoting equal opportunities, supplying mentorship and networking programs, and challenging gender biases and stereotypes can help pave the way for more women in sports leadership positions in India. It is important to create an environment that recognizes and supports the talents and contributions of women, fosters their development, and enables them to make a lasting impact in the sports industry.

Some specific organizations working to promote women in sports in India:- Women in Sports in India (WISI): An organization working to increase the representation and empowerment of women in sports and games. They organize various events and programs to empower and inspire women athletes, coaches, and administrators. Simply Sports Foundation: It is a non-profit organization supporting India's grassroots sports ecosystem. She has a special focus on women in sports and has published a

report on the barriers and challenges faced by female athletes in India. They also run a program called Simply Periods, which aims to raise awareness of menstruation and its effect on athlete performance.

Sports Authority of India (SAI): It is the apex national sports body of India under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. They have partnered with various foundations and academies to supply support and training to talented female athletes in various sports. Some of them include the Usha School of Athletics, Mary Kom Boxing Foundation, Ashwini Sports Foundation, Sarita Boxing Academy, Karnam Maleswari Foundation, Anya Bobby George Sports Foundation, etc.

Suggestion- Mentorship Programs: Set up mentorship programs where experienced women leaders in sports can supply guidance, support, and mentorship to aspiring women seeking leadership roles. These events can help bridge the gap by supplying networking opportunities and sharing insights into moving the industry forward.

Leadership Development Workshops: Conduct workshops and training sessions focused on leadership skills specially tailored for women in sports. These workshops can cover topics such as communication, negotiation, decision-making, and strategic planning, providing women with the tools they need to excel in leadership roles.

Awareness Campaigns: Launch awareness campaigns that highlight the achievements and success stories of women in sports leadership positions. By highlighting these role models, it can inspire other women to follow the same path and break gender barriers.

Encourage female participation: Create initiatives and programs aimed at encouraging more women to take part in sports at all levels. As the number of women involved in sports increases, the talent pipeline for leadership positions will naturally expand.

Equal opportunities and representation: Advocacy for equal opportunities and representation of women in decision-making bodies, sports federations, and governing bodies. Encourage transparent selection processes and policies that prioritize diversity and inclusivity.

Financial Aid: Supply financial aid and resources to women seeking leadership roles in sports. This may include scholarships, grants, and sponsorships to assist women in pursuing relevant education, certification, and professional development opportunities.

Policy Reform: Collaborate with sports organizations, government bodies, and policymakers to develop policies and reforms that promote gender equality and create a supportive environment for women in sports leadership. This could include implementing quotas or targets for the representation of women on committees and boards.

Network building: Encourage networking and collaboration among women in sports leadership positions through conferences, forums, and professional associations. Facilitating connections and building supportive networks can provide women with valuable opportunities for mentorship, career advancement, and knowledge sharing.

Research and data collection: Invest in research and data collection to gain insight into women's barriers and challenges in sports leadership positions. This data can inform evidence-based strategies and interventions to address gender disparities and promote effective change.

Cultural Change: Fostering a cultural change that values and supports women's leadership in sports. Challenge traditional gender norms and stereotypes by promoting the idea that women can excel in any role in the sports industry, including leadership positions.

Implementing these suggestions could help create a more inclusive and diverse sports industry in India, thereby empowering women to take leadership positions and contribute to the growth and development of sports at all levels.

Conclusion- The presence and representation of women in sports leadership positions in India is a complex and evolving topic. Although progress has been made in recent years, there are still significant challenges and inequities that need to be addressed. Overall, the inclusion of women in sports leadership positions in India has been limited. Traditional gender norms and stereotypes often prevent women from pursuing leadership roles in sports organizations. This has resulted in a lack of female representation at various levels including national and state sports federations, governing bodies, and administrative positions. However, there have been some positive developments in the recent past. The success of female athletes in international competitions, such as Mary Kom in boxing, Saina Nehwal and PV Sindhu in badminton, and Mithali Raj in cricket, has raised the profile of women in sports and highlighted their potential. These achievements have inspired and encouraged more women to accept leadership roles in the field of sports. The Sports Authority of India (SAI) and other government bodies have also taken initiatives to promote gender equality in sports leadership. She has introduced policies and programs aimed at encouraging the participation of women in decision-making positions. These efforts have resulted in the appointment of some women to leadership roles, including presidents and secretaries of sports federations.

Despite these positive developments, many barriers still hinder women's progress in sports leadership. Deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes, lack of adequate representation, gender bias, and limited access to resources and opportunities stay major barriers. Additionally, the lack of a strong pipeline and mentorship programs for aspiring women leaders in sports is a challenge.

It is important to take a multi-pronged approach to overcome these barriers and promote gender equality in sports leadership. This includes implementing gender-sensitive policies, supplying training and mentorship programs for women in sports administration, fostering inclusive and supportive organizational cultures, and challenging societal norms and stereotypes.

In conclusion, although progress has been made, the representation of women in sports leadership positions in India still is limited. Creating an environment that promotes and supports the inclusion of women in decision-making roles requires sustained efforts on the part of various stakeholders including sports organizations, government bodies, and society. By removing inherent barriers and promoting gender equality, India can unleash the full potential of women in sports leadership and pave the way for a more diverse and inclusive sporting landscape.

References-

- 1- Melton, E. N., & Bryant, M. J. (2017). Intersectionality: The impact of negotiating multiple identities for women in sport leadership. *Women in sport leadership: Research and practice for change*, 62-82.

- 2- Dorovolomo, J., Fitoo, B., Maebuta, J., Miniti, P., & Nanau, G. (2019). Women and sports in the Solomon Islands. In *Women, Sport, and Exercise in the Asia-Pacific Region: Domination, Resistance, Accommodation* (pp. 188-199). Routledge.
- 3- Viñuales, M. P., & Com II, M. A STUDY ON DIFFICULTIES FACED BY SPORTS WOMEN IN SNDT WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY. MULTIDISCIPLINARY PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL, 183.
- 4- Clastres, P., & Bayle, E. (2018). Introduction: becoming a global sports leader. *Global Sports Leaders: A Biographical Analysis of International Sport Management*, 1-30.
- 5- Ramling, S. N. Women Sports in India: Challenges and Remedies.
- 6- Toffoletti, K., & Palmer, C. (2019). Women and sport in Australia—new times? *Journal of Australian Studies*, 43(1), 1-6.
- 7- Mechels-Struby, B. (2013). Leadership development journey of women holding intercollegiate sport leadership positions. Northcentral University.
- 8- Pradhan, K. (2019). Games And Sports: A Gateway of Women's Empowerment in India. *Anudhyan An International Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(1), 11-24.
- 9- Mohandas, Y. (2019). Women sports champions in India-challenges, obstacles, and preparation. *IJAR*, 5(1), 325-328.
- 10- Sundstrom, L. J. (2012). *Alis volat propriis: pathways, challenges, and strategies for Australian women in elite-level sports leadership* (Doctoral dissertation, Victoria University).
- 11- Sharma, S. K., Sharma, Y., Sharma, E., & Kumar, S. Gender Discrimination in Indian sports.
- 12- Robins, D. (2017). Women in Sports Leadership Academy: an evaluation.
- 13- Leberman, S. (2017). Future sports leaders: Developing young women to lead. *Women in sport leadership: Research and practice for change*, 116-130.
- 14- O'Connor, K. (Ed.). (2010). *Gender and women's leadership: A reference handbook*. Sage Publications.
- 15- Dadswell, K., Mandicos, M., Flowers, E. P., & Hanlon, C. (2022). Women from culturally diverse backgrounds in sport leadership: a scoping review of facilitators and barriers. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 01937235221134612.
- 16- Women's Day 2022: 15 Indian Sportswomen who made our nation proud (decathlon.in)
- 17- Women in sport are changing the game | UN Women – Headquarters
- 18- Women Hold 17% Of Board Positions in Corporate India, But Only 11% Leadership Roles - Forbes India Blogs
- 19- Our Story - Women in Sports, India (womeninsportindia.com)
- 20- <https://www.simplysport.in/>
- 21- <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2021/state-editions/inclusiveness-of-women-in-sports-is-key-to-making-india-sporting-superpower.html>
- 22- <https://indiaeducationdiary.in/research-shows-women-are-still-a-minority-in-sports-positions/>
- 23- <https://www.drishtias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/issues-faced-by-females-in-sports>
- 24- <https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/Engineering/09i67GgGPCYC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Women+in+sports+leadership+positions+in+india+issues+and+challenges+essay&printsec=frontcover>