

# A Comparative Analysis of Gender Inequality Issues in Sports with Special Reference to Jharkhand

Vinamrta<sup>1</sup> and Utpal Kumar Chakraborty<sup>2</sup>

*How to cite this article:*

Vinamrta and Utpal Kumar Chakraborty. 2024. 'A Comparative Analysis of Gender Inequality Issues in Sports with Special reference to Jharkhand'. *Sampratyaya*, 1(2):71-82. DOI: 10.21276/smprt.202412.12.a6

## Abstract

Gender inequalities have been the prime focus area for many development studies as it restricts the opportunities and facilities for half of the population and discriminate them as a weaker group based on their sex. In recent years in India, sports have gained popularity as a career option. The present study has taken the issue of gender inequalities in sports examine in the field of facilities available, recognition, and participation in the state of Jharkhand. The players belonging to three different sports have been chosen for this study. The findings of the study show that family plays a vital role for female players' participation, though job opportunity, is also a major concern for them. The sports facilities are less accessible and available to female players than their male counter parts. However, in Hockey the situation of facilities, training institutes, sponsorship, awards, recognition are better for female players than in any other sports in Jharkhand.

**Keywords:** Gender Inequalities, Gender Discrimination, Female Sports players

## 1.0 Introduction

The importance of sports and fitness is well recognised by the Government of India (GoI) towards creating a healthy and prosperous society (Khelo India 2020). According to census 2011, India is a country with more than 120 crores of population with 48.46% belonging to female category. The Khelo India Programme introduced in year 2018 with an aim to revive the sporting culture in the country, starting from the grass-root level (ibid.). The reviving of sports culture cannot be achieved without equal participation of half of the population i.e. female population. However, the questions are still crucial: in which conditions, how and where a female start participating in sports; or why not they participate; which kind of discrimination they face in sports industry; what are the obstacles in their sports participation and hindrance for continuing their sports journey, etc. The present article is an attempt to know about the gender issues in sports in India with special reference to the state of Jharkhand.

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<sup>1</sup>Guest Faculty, Department of Political Science, Jharkhand Raksha Shakti University,Ranchi-834008, Jharkhand.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Abdul Bari Memorial College, Jamshedpur.Email: [chakraborty.u007@gmail.com](mailto:chakraborty.u007@gmail.com)

**Corresponding author's email:** [vinamrta123@gmail.com](mailto:vinamrta123@gmail.com)

In Jharkhand mainly three sports are more popular as team sports; they are hockey, football, and cricket (Go Jn. d.). These three sports are chosen for study in this paper. Hockey and football are the sports which are more popular in rural areas of Jharkhand as they are less expensive than the chosen third team sports like cricket. In this paper a comparison has been shown between the female sports players of the above-mentioned sports and their male counterparts. How different sports affect the career of the players have also been highlighted in this study and therefore a comparison between facilities received by players among these sports has also been made.

## 2.0 Review of Literature

This section attempts a thematic review of some literature on gender issues in general and on sports in particular. The themes of works have been pointed out. Gender, a socio-cultural construct of inequality between male and female, has a short history in development studies though available literature shows that dichotomy between the two exists both in the public (economic and political) and private (personal and domestic) spheres (Okin 1994: 5-24). The ethical and political theorists have also often ignored family in the context of justice in their studies by considering it only as a unit of love, care and shared interest. These assumptions have serious repercussions on women and children (Dasgupta 1993) starting from their health (Sen 1990) to the lower consideration of economic participation against the value of the work done by them for the household (Blumstein & Schwartz 1983).

In a collectivist society like India, primarily women sacrifice their individual need in order to the benefit of their families (Razvi & Roth 2004). This practice put women in a position where she is viewed as a member of the family, as an individual, but without her own identity in Indian patriarchal culture (Alavi 2013). When an individual, who is socialised following the gender norms, acts, he/she actually becomes the part of reproducing the gendered societal dominance and power structure. Therefore, the micro as well as macro gendered structure reproduces and reinforces each other (Lorber 1994). Women having a relatively more disadvantageous position in society than their male counterparts appear as product of multiple social categories which arise from the complex stratification system in India (Dunn 1993) and reflect in different spheres of participation. Gender inequality in sports participation is not an exception.

There are studies advocating for policy measures to reduce inequality gap in different fields. Link and Phelan (1995) have underlined the importance of policies in reducing the risk factors in social conditions, which are 'fundamental causes' of disease causation at individual levels. Though the context of the theory relates to the impact of social conditions on differences in diseases at individual levels, it provides an analytical tool to understand different diseases between male and female within patriarchy and fitness in sports participation. In the field of sports, participation has policy implications. The social and economic policies aimed to reduce the gender inequalities also help in bridging the gender gap in participation (Heinemann 2003). In addition, the political will and different policy responses have been proven to be the most desired stepsto ensure gender equality in sports participation (Van Tuyckom et al.2010). There are different opinions for participation and benefits between sports in school and in life course, and having career in mainstream sports (Wellard 2009).

The scholars have varied opinion on participation of female in sports and the factors affecting it. Here if the gender is a social construct, then it is acquired and enacted by the

person and can be easily influenced by the social and gender order (Gertrud 2010). Aligning with the gender-based approaches (Hall 2002 and Knoppers 1989) the sex-role theorists explained the lower female participation rate in sports in terms of the stereotypes like 'due to lack of interest', which is criticised by role congruity theorists. The women under-representation in sports for role congruity theorist is impacted by the discrimination caused by societal and structural barriers (Burton et al.2011 and Eagly & Karau 2002).

If gender is a social construction, then it is acquired, influenced, and enacted by the social and gender order (Gertrud 2010).The role congruity theorist criticised the sex-role theorists or their gender-based approaches (Hall 2002 and Knoppers 1989) for supporting the stereotypes like 'due to lack of interest' part of population has been underrepresented. The role congruity theorist argued by pointing out that the sex-role theorist did not take into account the impact caused by societal and structural barriers in studying the women under-representation which can explain the discrimination situation (Burton et al. 2011 and Eagly & Karau 2002).

The socialisation of gender role is a vital deterrent in influencing women's participation in sports. Social and cultural dimensions put a pressure on accepting the established gender practice and this negative stereotype is added towards the existing inequality in sports participation by women. There are studies which find that co-education system has a positive effect on girl's participation in sports (Tuero et al. 2014). Sport can be a social agent which can help in changing the stereotyped gender norms, practices, and relations through multisport activities, because the multisport activities provide a platform for capabilities development on the basis of individual talent rather than their sex (Zapicoetal 2014). Sports policies cannot alone overcome the gender inequalities in sports participation. The policy changes must be accompanied with cultural, political changes specially at societal level. International Olympic Committee (IOC) has clearly stated in "Fundamental Principles of Olympism" that 'Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement' (IOC 2011).Olympic movement is a gender-based power system (Hargreaves 1994).Caster Semenya, the Middle –distance runner from South Africa has to go for gender verification test due to her success in year 2009 as she posted the fastest time of the year in the 800-meterevent at the Track and Field World Championships in Berlin. Although since 1960s, IOC had condoned the gender verification test in one form or another, Semenya was sidelined for about one year (Schultz 2012). It is not guaranteed that construction of 'men' will happen exclusively in the male body or 'women' will construe only in female bodies. Problem in Semenya's case is that athletic bodies were trying to verify her 'sex' while she has chosen 'woman' as her gender (Butler 1990).The inequality in representation does not exist between men and women rather it is male and female. So, a woman athlete has to choose between masculinity and femininity (Hargreaves 1994).Women are under-represented in sports even though they are belonging to a society having higher degree of gender equality (Apostolou 2015 and Deaner et al. 2012) and also showed lesser interest than their male counter parts (Evanset al. 2002; Jacobs et al.2002).The studies revealed that there is difference in male and female athlete publicity through media representation (Donnelly & Donnelly 2013).The given quantity of media coverage to female athletes is actually like symbolic squelching of their accomplishments (Boykoff & Yasuoka 2015).Having the equal number of male and female athletes during 2024 Paris Olympics is considered as a significant milestone for gender parity in sports. However, the case of Imane Khelif in the same event of 2024 Paris Olympics raised the issue of media misogyny and the challenges faced by female athletes and the ground reality of gender parity in sports (Singh 2024).

### 3.0 Research Objectives

The objectives behind presenting this paper are as follows:

- To know about the socio- economic dimensions of gender inequalities in sports in Jharkhand.
- To examine the participation scenario of women in sports in Jharkhand.
- To identify the gender-based inequalities in accessing the sports facilities in Jharkhand.
- To understand the government contributions towards bridging the gender inequalities in sports in Jharkhand.

### 4.0 Research Methodology

The present article is written on the basis of primary as well as secondary data. Closed-end questionnaires with the use of digital platform were used as data collection tools from primary sources. The collected data has been cross-checked with personal interview method with the respondents whenever required during the coding and analysis of data. While the supportive information collected through secondary sources like articles from various journals, books, web pages, and reports. A total 33 respondents were selected through purposive sampling method for the collection of primary data (through digital platform).

### 5.0 Research Findings

The research finding is based on responses given by all 33 respondents who are sports players of Jharkhand state. Out of these 33 respondents, most of them (88%) are associated as players with their respective sports. The age group of respondents varied from 16 years to 36 years; with 12% respondents of 20 years of age. There were total 45% female respondents and 55% male respondents in this study. The respondents answered the questions based on their experience at various level of sport tournaments as 15% of them have represented the national team at international level, 22% played at national level and 30% respondents played the sport at state level while the remaining 33% played at the district level tournaments. Table1 give basic information of respondents based on 03 criteria i.e., sports, sex, and their association.

**Table No.1.** Sports-wise basic profile of respondents

Sports	Associated as	Sex (in Column %)		Total (in numbers)
		Female	Male	
Cricket	Player	38.0	63.0	16
Football	Coach	0.0	100.00	2
	Player	40.0	60 .0	10
Hockey	Coach	100 .0	0.0	1
	Others	100.0	00	1
	Player	100 .0	0.0	3
Total (in numbers)		45	55	33 (100%)

*Source:* Field data

From field study it was recorded that 67% (22) female respondents studied in 17 government schools while only 33% (11) male respondents have been to government school. It means that in Jharkhand the family spend less amount of money on female sports player whereas male sports players have the facility to spend more money on education than female sports players. As it is clearly shown by the received data that female sports players are receiving the education from government institution which is less expensive whereas the smaller number of male sports players have received the education from government institutions. Out of these 17 government schools 30% schools have no sports teacher while other 30% have only male sports teacher. The situation of availability of sports teachers in private schools is also not in very good condition.

**Table No.2.** Response based on facilities access and difficulties faced by players

S. No.	Asked Questions	Major response received as	Respondents (%)
01	Who introduce you to this sport?	Family members	70%
02	How much time has been given for playing sports to the boys in your family?	Too much	58%
03	How much time has been given for playing sports to the girls in your family?	Too much	42%
04	How much sports engagement impacted your academic performance?	Medium	40%
05	What is the level of impact on your sports performance due to investing time for academic performance?	Medium	37%
06	How much benefit you received from your school sports teacher?	Extremely to Medium	74%
07	Who is your present coach?	Male	82%
08	How do you rate the relationship with your coach?	Extremely good	58%
09	Have you faced any physical abuse by your coach?	Never	88%
10	Have you been in a situation where you are mentally tortured by your coach?	Never	91%
11	Did your coach uses the abusive language?	Never	85%
12	Have you faced any type of sexual favour/abuse/ harassment by coach?	Never	100%
13	Did female players faced any type of assault in playground?	Never	91%
14	How do you rate the behaviour of audience towards female players?	Good	49%
15	Did your tournament have female audience?	Sometimes	61%
16	What is the situation of toilet in playgrounds?	Unhygienic	46%
17	How much job opportunity is available for the players of your sports?	Few opportunity	68%

**Source:** Field data

Although only 15% respondents responded that their private school has no sports teacher but 40% of private school attendee respondents answered that there are only male sports teacher in the school. It can be inferred from the collected data that the availability of female sports teacher is more in private school than the government schools in Jharkhand.

Approximately 52% of the respondents do not have any family background associated with sports. However, 40% of female respondents with no family sports background credited their family for introducing them to the sports and 13% of them get help from their school teachers. The male respondent's responses are divided between many options including family members, friends, teachers, etc. Therefore, it can be said that female sports participation is supported by the family members; however male have many different options to get introduced to the sports in comparison to the female. Table 2 represents the questions asked by respondents related to support and facilities they received and also the difficult situations faced by them to pursue sport as a career option.

Both male and female respondents equally agreed that they are engaged in household work. However, 42% respondents said that they have to do too much household work and 49% respondent's engagement to household work is of medium level. The point to be noted here is that 46% respondents agreed that this engagement in household work have medium level impact on their sports while 18% respondent's sports participation is severely affected by this. Performing in study as well as in sports has been faced by both male and female players. Only 30% of the respondents agreed that they have no pressure to perform in academics. The study revealed that male players feel that they should be allowed for more playing time in the playground. But the average playing time for male players are 3-4 hours daily while for female players it is 2-3 hours daily. The players of both categories (female and male) accepted that training at coaching institutes help them in improving skills at fast rate. However, 78% male player first played their respective sport at a coaching institute, only 54% female players first time played at a coaching institute. Once again it shows that the economic support that female sports players received from their family is lesser than their male counter parts because receiving coaching to improve their sports performance demands money. Only 33% respondents reported the limited playground availability for female players during the practice sessions. Table 3 presents the response of male and female players separately against same questions. During analysis researcher felt that these are the major points where players got discriminated based on their gender.

**Table No.3.** Separate response of male and female players on some questions.

S. No.	Asked questions	Respondents' major response (in %)	
		Female respondents	Male respondents
01	To access playground any family member company is necessary?	Yes (7%)	No
02	Financial difficulty in purchasing the sports equipment?	Yes (15%)	Yes (14%)
03	Limited time allowed to be in the playground	Yes (24%)	Yes (30%)
04	Did you use Gym facilities on regular basis?	Yes (30%)	Yes (96%)
05	At present are you enrolled for training at a private coaching institute?	Yes (43%)	Yes (90%)

**Source:** Field data

The situation of annual income level of players is of major concern for the female players. Jharkhand is known for the hockey and female players accepted that they have better facilities access than the female players of other sports but when it comes to the income, all of hockey female players (100%) reported that the annual income level of a state player is less than one lakh. The situation is worse in other sports as well. All female players of all three

sports included in the study (Cricket, Hockey, and Football) reported an income of less than three lakh per annum. On the question of the situation of sponsorship for female players in comparison to their respective sport's male players, all male and female players reported that receiving sponsorship is difficult for female players. However, improving sponsorship situation is also recorded by 12% of female hockey players. The situation of awards and recognition given by state government depends upon the sports. Hockey players (all female) responded with medium satisfaction level on the question of government awards and recognition. Female cricket players were totally dissatisfied with the response from government departments and male football players responded with too low to lower level of recognition from state government while more than 80% female football players are having medium satisfaction level towards government awards and recognition given to them. The residential coaching facility provided by Jharkhand state government is the main facility received by female hockey players in the state of Jharkhand in the present study. The football players are also receive the dress kits and coaching facility by the government now days but government support is not present for cricketers in the state as the sport cricket is not listed in Olympics.

## **6.0 Analysis & Discussion**

The women participation in sports or games before 1970 were recreational and not competitive in nature (Bell 2007). The sports participation is considered as a masculine activity (Csisma et al. 1988) and at the same time it is also believed that participation in sports leads to faster development of masculine characteristics like competitiveness in the participants (Birrell 1983). This belief strengthens the negative stigma towards female sports participation (Die & Holt 1989; Moore & Gobi 1995; Selby & Lewko 1976 and Ugucioni & Ballatyne 1980) and female athletes are perceived less feminine than the female with less or no sports participatory background (Fisher et al. 1977 and Snyder & Sprietzer 1976).

The sports participation of Indian women is impacted by two types of barriers, normative as well as structural. Normative barriers like the traditional stereotypes, believe in appearance and behaviour as a female (Sherrow 1996). It has also been found out those female children approximately at age 8 started curbing their behaviour along with sports participation to fit in this gender based social norms (Schmalz & Kerstette 2006). The conditional permission and protective parenting pattern (Beal 1994 and Coser 1986) of parents out of fear for their girl children also restrict the sports participation of female in India (Singh 2014).

In the present study it has been found out that the normative barriers related to appearance and behaviour has not been faced by current female players in Jharkhand although they agreed that specially in rural areas many female players faced the societal barriers for wearing the short length pants, but not from their family members. It has been noted that all the female players are supported morally by their family members which varies case to case and the main reason behind this as shared by respondents during personal interview is that the job opportunities available to the female sports players in different sectors specially the police services. Here the masculinity development in terms of strength is in favour of female sports participation because it is making them more employable.

Socio-contextual study reveals that gender differential barriers in accessing public recreational areas and sport programmes have an impact on the sport participation (Balishet al. 2016). However, the conditional permission and protective parenting pattern related to

safety- fear for the girl child is visible in Jharkhand too as seven per cent of female players revealed that while coming to the playground family members accompanying them. Going out alone in some areas is still restricted for female players in Jharkhand. This is more prevalent in urban areas due to distance in accessing the playground facilities; however in rural areas although there is poor quality of playground to play but still female players access them without safety-fears. Contrary in rural areas the usual playground in community is used by boys and rarely accessible by girls. It has been shared by female sports persons that in their childhood days they are even beaten up by their family members for playing in front of boys (YUWA 2019). Therefore, in rural areas female players face the difficulty of “shifting playgrounds” which hinder their regular sports participation and practice (Dey 2017). Here “shifting playgrounds” means that specially in rural areas girls used to play on some barren agriculture land in the area. But when due to favourable climatic conditions the land owner starts agricultural activities on that particular piece of land in agriculture season, girls of that area are forced to search for another piece of barren land in nearby area which can be used by them as playground.

The issue of male superiority has also pointed out in some research studies. They find out that male mentoring female is accepted as normal but reverse is not true (Singh 2014). This situation again reflected in the studies carried out among the sport organisations of colleges and high schools that retention of women is poor as an administrator and coaches in the sports field (Pastore 1994). In the present study also 82% respondents said that their present coach is a male person and also in the selected three sports in the context of Jharkhand only hockey has female sports player in administrative role in coaching institutes or in sports organisation; the female presence in administrative role in cricket is zero and in football it is rarely seen. Some studies also revealed the disparities in sports starting from the level of participation to the rewards received by female sports achievers (Huggins 2007).

After independence, India has been proudly represented by sports women on international platforms like P.T. Usha, Sania Mirza, Saina Nehwal, H. Mary Kom, Hima Das, Mithali Raj, etc. (Lakshmikantha & Nair 2013). Especially, when we talk about Olympics there are total eight Indian women who won Olympic medal for India but apart from Indian Men’s Hockey team after 1948 only 14 Indian men won the Olympic medals. However, the ground reality has shown in various studies that Indian Sports system is struggling with lower budget support from government and a smaller number of females in the position of coach and administrator (ibid.). The lack of female role models specially at the leadership level and the disparities in media coverage negatively impacted the women participation in sports (Huggins 2007). As per a report, only 29 females enrolled for diploma in coaching out of 115 seats under Sports Authority of India and that too there were no women coaches for the enrolled candidates (Lakshmikantha 2013). However, in the context of Jharkhand the present study revealed that women hockey is getting popularity in the state and many female players have represented the state in national, international, and even in Olympics tournaments. The situation of government facilities like residential coaching, having sports equipment, availability of coaches is highest for female hockey players in the state in comparison to other two sports i.e. cricket and football. One of the studies conducted among Indian sports persons also showed that the investment in sports influence the study of sportspersons as study and sports both are equally important for many sports person in India (Singh 2014). For example, Archana Kamath, the Indian table tennis female player who represented India in 2024 Paris Olympic and led India to reach round 16 for the first time in table tennis at Olympic, left the sports career to pursue her academic career (TOI 2024). In India, one of the most lucrative sports is cricket. Indian cricket team is well known for its

performance in both men as well as in women cricket. However, there is a huge difference in salary of male and female cricketers. Although in year 2022 the BCCI has announced the similar match fee to be paid for both men and women cricketers in India but still the annual contract list and the cricketer’s salary have huge difference for men and women cricketers (Karhadkar 2022).

The categorisation of players and their annual contract salary given by BCCI for National team are as follows:

**Table No.4.** Salary of National Cricket Team of India

Grade of Players		A+	A	B	C
Salary of Players per year	Male	7 Crore	5 Crore	3 Crore	1 Crore
	Female	No Player	50 Lakh	30 Lakh	10 Lakh

**Sources:** BCCI (2020), Singh (2020) and Karhadkar(2022)

The cricket is not supported by government in the state of Jharkhand; the district and state level sports authorities related to Jharkhand State Cricket Association (JSCA) are responsible for development of cricket in the state. The cricketers do not even have any job opportunities under sports quota in the state government. They used to get recruited mainly by Indian railways. The Global Sports Salaries Survey in year 2017 based on the issue of gender inequality has also reported that in comparison to academia, business, medicine, and politics the gender pay gap is more in Sport (Wilfred 2018).

The comparative study of media coverage of sports revealed that the achievement of male athletes is reported and framed as a heroic ideal masculine figure of strength and endurance whereas in case of female athletes their achievements in the sports field still lag behind in comparison to the depiction of femininity, female traditional roles as wives and mother (Jhally & Alper 2002) and the sexuality through bikini photo shoots (Hanson 2012). According to a study, out of 36 newspapers with over 10,000 articles collected from nine countries the women’s sports has been referred by only 6% of the articles (Soren 2005). In the present study media coverage and sponsorship for female sports player is more in hockey and football than the male players and lesser in cricket in comparison to male cricketers.

## 7.0 Conclusion

In the state of Jharkhand, out of the three chosen sports (Cricket, Football and Hockey), the female players of hockey have access to better playground facilities and training institutes supported by government bodies than the other respondents of the study. Family support has been with both the female and male players but female players reported that they have restricted permission due to the safety issues. The allowed playtime is also lesser for female players than the male players. The financial situation also restricts the female players in opting for the private coaching institutes for skill improvement than their male counterparts. The gender inequalities have been found in the availability of playground for practice session, female sports teacher in schools and female coaches for the teams, sponsorship for the players, in using the gym facilities and specially in the job opportunity for the female players in the state. The facilities and support from government is highest for hockey players followed by football and then cricket in the chosen sports of this study.

## 7.1 Recommendations

The researchers would like to make the following recommendations based on the analysis of collected data and discussion with the respondents:

- i. The issue of financial difficulties faced by players in purchasing the sports equipment can be supported by state government.
- ii. To have more female sports teacher and coaches, administrators in sports field, sports training institute must be started by government in the state. It will also be helpful in tackling the issue of job opportunities for the players in the state.
- iii. The playground facilities should be improved with proper care and maintenance to cater the safety and hygiene issue of the players specially the female players.

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