

Sports and recreation
—how can we
encourage more
young women to take
up a sport?



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

It is well-known that long ago, men and women were not treated equally nor were they given the same opportunities. While in the more recent past there has been a considerable change in this area, there is still a lot of scope for improvement.

This matter pertains to human rights and has a global extent. In many areas of interest women are still considered inferior to men, such as leadership roles, physical labor roles etc., most probably due to the ingrained beliefs that have been passed on through the generations. Some people attempt to provide rationale by putting forward the biological differences, but those do not have much impact as in this modern age, there are many amenities that can help to cope with these problems.

For a healthy community, all members should be allowed to participate equally, to promote peace and equality. Sports are a major part of our society, where there is a lot of publicity and adoration from people throughout the globe. But women are still given less chances in the field of sports. It was thought for a long time that due to certain biological characteristics, females would be too weak to take part in certain sports. It was thought that sports would be harmful to women. However, in actuality, sports have a number of benefits, both mental and physical, that women are being deprived of.

According to a research conducted by the World Health Organization, published by the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education, the statistics show the number of women participating in sport has been decreasing. “ Studies report a clear trend of decreasing levels of

activity as girls get older, and a widening disparity between girls' and boys' physical activity behaviors. For example, one US study estimated that the decline in physical activity during secondary schooling is 7.4% for girls, compared with 2.7% for boys. Another report suggested that Australian female adolescents were approximately 20% less active than their male peers. Since sedentary lifestyles are associated with increased risk of ill-health, both during childhood and in later life, these figures are cause for concern." as mentioned in the WHO report.

This suggests that due to the discrimination, women are being discouraged from participating in sports.

As the question connotes, it is younger women who should be encouraged to take up a sport. This is because it will be more impactful to women of a younger age and they will be able to pursue sports throughout their life.

FACTORS AFFECTING PARTICIPATION IN SPORT: According to a research conducted by Louise Cox, Lester Coleman and Debi Roker Trust for the Study of Adolescence (TSA), in 2006, there are many factors to women's participation in sports that can cause them to sometimes, always or never play sports. This research was conducted for girls between the age of 15 to 19. After reading the executive summary of the research, it was clear that the factors that affected the frequency of sports played as they grew up included factors such as family involvement and encouragement, facilities provided, and interaction of these girls with the opposite gender. However there were many personal factors such as self confidence, body image, social inclusion and peer pressure. But the key finding was that girls who

were exposed to sport at a young age and had good experiences of the sport were the ones who continued it as they grew up.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

There are still many inequalities between men and women in sports. “ Girls and women across the world get fewer opportunities, less investment, training and safety when they play sport. When they make it as professional athletes, they meet the glass ceiling and a substantial pay gap. The total payout for the last Women’s Soccer World Cup, for example, was \$15 million, compared to \$576 million for the last Men’s Soccer World Cup. Off the field, women are underrepresented in the leadership of sporting organizations, in sport clothing companies and marketers. As of July 2016, 22 women are active International Olympic Committee (IOC) members (24. 4 per cent) and four women (25 per cent) are members of the Executive Board.”, as stated by the United Nations women organization. Many countries have been working to increase the participation of sports. The United Nations has been working across the globe in countries such as Brazil, Jordan, Georgia, Pakistan, Kenya, rural Egypt, Zambia, Hungary, South America and Caribbean, Ecuador and India (including some in Himalayas) and many other areas. They also worked to improve clothing for Muslim women.

It can be seen that the problem of less participation in sports of women is worldwide. Even in developed countries, such as USA there are inequalities to women in sport. These are mainly disparities in funding for women and men’s sports, mainly in schools and colleges, despite title ix .

The trend seems to be that there is more work in conservative areas where women still are considered to be inferior. Clothing also seems to be a significant issue in many areas. In undeveloped areas, the facilities are being enhanced. In developed countries the issue mainly revolves around funding.

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

In India, there is a lot of disparity between male and female sports. The main reason is social taboo, that is women aren't supposed to be playing sports. This causes there to be less support from family and peers to pursue sports. Girls are also discouraged due to lack of security and sexual harassment. Poverty is another reason girls cannot participate in sports. Thus, before being able to make it in the field of sports, a girl has to be able to jump over a number of social hurdles.

Other reasons are lack of facilities and infrastructure for sports, and the minimal funding for women's sport by the government. While India does support sports, there is a male bias. In a developing country such as ours, there is very little fund left aside for sports, and still a majority of it is being allocated for male sports.

Though there are efforts being made, like the introduction of the national youth policy that aims to promote gender justice, among other areas, but they have not been very successful .

It can be seen that the lack of participation by women revolves around social stigma. It is our conservationist society that needs to be changed first before anything else can be done.

Safety is another concern that needs to be attended to — such as provision of private changing rooms and reliable transport.

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

Across the globe, girls have been discouraged from sports. While many schools have a lot of facilities for sports, I believe that peer pressure prevents girls from taking up sports. Mainly during adolescence, girls have a greater tendency to be self-conscious.

“ Studies suggest that a key factor in whether girls engage in and sustain physical activities was whether they had a same-sex friend with whom to participate. This may, in part, be due to the support structure such shared experiences can offer, especially during adolescence, when many girls consider reducing their commitment to physical activities that they are most anxious about being rejected or excluded from same-sex friendships. For girls, physical activities often become less important in their lives as they, encouraged by pressure from their peer group to seek other activities associated with their preferred perceptions of femininity.” says a WHO report.

This suggests that, on a personal perspective, when girls are just starting sports or are in a lower level, the barriers such as lack of facility is not the problem, but it is the ingrained beliefs of society and peer pressure that discourages girls. I feel the only way this can be changed is to be able to develop a healthy community without such stereotypes and biases, allowing women to pursue sports.

POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

Sports benefit women in a lot of ways.

If more women are not encouraged to be physically active there could be a lot of consequences.

For example, if women do not play sports, women will be more prone to certain chronic diseases and will not have a good body mass ratio. Their bones and muscles will also be undeveloped, making them weak and incompetent for certain tasks. Due to increased sicknesses, they will have to pay extra for medical bills, or if they cannot afford it, there will be a higher death rate.

Sports allow reproductive health and allow girls and women to control pregnancy. Without sports, women will most likely be made to take care of a family, while men will provide income, further pressing on the pre-defined stereotypes of men and women's roles in society and will carry it on to the next generation.

Also, women who take up sports have psychological benefits such as being able to take up leadership roles in societies. Without their increased self confidence, they will not be able to take on these roles, leaving men to it, and there will be no one to provide a fresh take on problems being faced by different communities.

It is also possible that if lesser women participate in sports, the few who do want to participate will be oppressed that may lead to riots and conflicts that could cause a lot of uproar and reduce the economy of the nation.

<https://assignbuster.com/sports-and-recreationhow-can-we-encourage-more-young-women-to-take-up-a-sport/>

However, if women were given more opportunities in sports, they would be in better health. They would take on leadership roles to improve their localities. If they pursue sports and represent the country in international events, it could boost the economy of the country.

On a moral point of view, they would be granted their human rights and equality in society.

COURSES OF ACTION

To increase the participation of women in sport, a few changes can be made.

There could be programs in schools telling parents of the benefits of their girl child participating in sport to encourage them to give her support. There could also be sessions with students so peer pressure does not remain a barrier.

There could be provision of female coaches who the girls can connect with.

Greater funds should be allotted for girls' sports, allowing for scholarships and programs for those from rural areas

Facilities such as transport and clothing suitable to the girls should be provided.

The infrastructure for sporting events should be safe. Also, the changing rooms should be private and a comfortable distance from the playing area.

Over and above this, there should be equal publicity to women's sports. This will allow young girls to get role models that can influence and encourage them.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

I personally do not play much sports because it is very competitive in my school. However, our school encourages everyone with interest in sports to pursue it and provides a majority of the facilities required. This research has not encouraged me to take up a sport because it is not really my area of interest. But that is only my view. I believe the solutions I proposed would be really helpful to those interested and passionate in sports.

I knew beforehand that there was gender disparity in the field of sports. But, through the course of my research I found that the problems are ones that can easily be solved. It left me to conclude that this problem is still continuing because of the gender bias, and the only way to resolve it would be to change people's beliefs completely. Until this is done, the true potential of women cannot be reached.