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Surender

Assistant Professor, Indira
Gandhi University Meerpur,
Rewari, Haryana, India

Women empowerment through physical activity and sports

Surender

Abstract

The purpose of the research article is to shed light on the benefits which women and girls gain through participation in sports. The word "Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender, or economic strength of individuals and communities. Today sports and physical activity as a strategy for the empowerment of girls and women has been gaining recognition worldwide. Women could be empowered through education, sports and physical activities and by giving them equal opportunities in different walks of life. A woman is both 'Mahamaya' and 'Maha Shakti' and holds the key of the world. As "Swami Vivekananda" wrote that it is very difficult to understand why in this country so much difference is made between men and women, whereas the Vedanta declares that one and the same Conscious self is present in all beings. In short, woman empowerment is the breaking of personal limitations. Sports and Physical Education play important and major role in all these segments of women Empowerment.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Sports, Physical activity

Introduction

We live in a world which changes so quickly that it is not at all a surprise that the image of women in sports is also changing quickly. However, it hasn't been that long since women were not even socially permitted to participate in sports or any kind of physical activity. In some places, women are not allowed to participate in the sport activities. For example, "In Afghanistan, women were allowed to participate in sports after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. In Saudi Arabia, women and girls are barred from participating in sports and physical education. Saudi Arabia is one of the countries never to have sent a female athlete to the Olympics but overall image of women in sports has changed. Now women can not only participate in sports, but they can also excel at them.



In recent years, sports and physical activity as a strategy for the empowerment of women has been gaining recognition worldwide. 'Women win' is the first international organization with a sole focus of providing support for innovative sports and physical activity programmes for

Correspondence

Surender

Assistant Professor, Indira
Gandhi University Meerpur,
Rewari, Haryana, India

empowerment and creating a social movement around sports for the advancement of women's rights. Empowerment of women through games and sports helps in maintaining the physical, mental and social health of the women. Participation in games and sports makes them physically active; improve their health, positive feeling of well-being, prevention of chronic disease, and prevention of osteoporosis.

Kiran Bedi, India's first and highest ranking Officer who joined the Indian Police Service in 1972, who is also a social activist says, "Sports and education were the key pillars of our upbringing." The Women's Sports Foundation (WSF) is an educational nonprofit organization founded in 1974 by tennis legend Billie Jean King. Its stated mission statement is – "To advance the lives of girls and women through sports and physical activities." Indian women have achieved great laurels for the nation in every sport. Some women sports icons of India, icons of sports are P.T. Usha (Athletics) Kunjarani Devi (Weightlifting), Diana Edulji (Cricket), Induprui (Table Tennis), Preetamrani (Hockey), Sania Mirza (Tennis), Karnam Anjali Devi (Weightlifting), Saina Nehwal (Badminton).

Benefits of sports for girls and women

In recent years sports and physical activities as a strategy for the empowerment of girls and women has been gaining recognition worldwide.

- Women who play sports or participate in physical activities have a more positive body image, build life skills, confidence and may create social networks than women who do not participate.
- Women who participate in sports and physical activities have higher self-esteem and pride in them.
- Sports involvement can play a significant role in promoting the physical and mental wellbeing of women, fostering opportunities for their leadership and achievement, initiating social inclusion and social integration of women and challenging gender norms.
- Women involvement in sports can make a significant contribution to public life and community development.
- Teenage sports participation may help prevent osteoporosis. "Four hours a week or more of such sports, played by men during their teens and 20s, increases bone mass and might provide some protection from developing osteoporosis later in life, according to a new study in the May, 2012 issue of the Journal of Bone and Mineral Research."
- Women who play sports have higher levels of confidence and self-esteem and lower levels of depression. Women involved in sports feel better about themselves, both physically and socially. It helps to build confidence when you see your skills improving and your goals becoming reality.
- Involvement of women in sports and physical activities creates merits of inspiration, faith, hope and courage.
- Physical Exercises in the form of walking, playing or watching any game which they prefer may make a world of difference to their lives Experts agree that involvement in sports and physical activity can potentially offer a wide range of life benefits for women.

Conclusion

Today, no doubt, women participate professionally in practically every major sport, though the Level of participation typically lessens when it comes to the more violent contact sports. More measures need to be taken to increase and improve the participation of women and girls

in sports for their better enhancement and empowerment.

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