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A study of women experiences in sports in relation to their career

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Abstract

The present study has been taken to find out they lived experiences of women sports persons. Quantitative and qualitative tools have been used to collect and analyze the data. Ten subjects of various games have been taken in purposive sampling. For qualitative analysis, a small sample is advisable as the variables are used extensively and in depth. A rigorous work of interview is made and then transcribed in coding system. The questions were prepared to get the data and the themes for semi structure interview were prepared and used to collect data. The data was recorded in written work and transcribed in categories. Further was coded in themes and sub themes to identify the different coding. In results, it was found that the ultimate aim of the women was to reach to international level. It was also found that they are interested to get good job through sports. In their interview it was revealed that they need more social support as well as to strengthen their academic side. The players are satisfied with their choice to opt the sports as career but few have expressed regret to opt the sports as career activity. They preferred for more improvement in academic side if they get chance to study again. They advise their juniors to have interest in academic side which is very essential part for good career in sports.

Keywords: quantitative, qualitative, purposive sampling, transcription, coding, theme, academic, semi structure interview etc

Introduction

Women participation in sports is very challenging and difficult. The beliefs, values and norms of society are hurdles in the way of women sports. The participation is gender issue and its contribution is to make women strong and self-reliant. Research has shown it has positive influence on women in relation to social status, life chances and life style (MacPherson, Curtis and Loy, 1989) [1]. In society, male are dominating all activities, this differentiation results in social problems of a subordinate relationship between genders (Messner, 1989) [9]. But patriarchy and other biases are hurdles in pursuing sports as to oppose the outdoor activities for women. Fagot (1984) [4] found that teachers also give more positive feedback to boy's participation in sports than girls. The image of male is muscular, strong and athletic that of female is soft, curvaceous and nonathletic (Greendorfer & Hasbrook, 1991) [7]. The role of gender stereotypes are confronted in the field of games and sports. The increased presence of women in field of sports is proof of change in the outdoor activities of women. The restrictions to women are being challenged with increasing of the awareness through education and entry in various outdoor activities like in sports (Caocklay, 1990) [2]. The women participation has been increasing since 1970 onwards with inception of feminist movement (Wikipedia). Where, they have emphasized more opportunities to women in all fields. Changes in sports also took place so, consequently, the events related with strength and power also been introduced for women like thrower and shot-put in athletics and power lifting etc. A trend of increasing participation of women in sports is changing the image of women frailty rooted gender roles in society (Gahlot, 2010) [5]. The increasing presence of women in life of sports is changing the traditional image of women.

The study is destined to investigate the type of experiences that the women participants have gone through. Both, quantitative and qualitative tools have been selected to collect the data. On the basis of finding in percentage form, semi structure interview has been used to collect comprehensive views of sports persons. Feminist and social perspectives are helpful to understand the personal views of women sports persons in relation their lived experiences.

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Connel (2002) [3] has discussed gender as a process of social embodiment in which bodies are both agents and objects. These problems are prevailing in social structure of society which is much related to male domination. Gender is related with division of labor rooted in society and is best reflected in a task considered fairly in cultural expectations (Ransome, 2010) [10]. These contextual perspectives are reflecting the experiences of sports women with more clarity. They helped to make questions and understand their views. Questions related with qualitative tool have been framed in sequence in line with above mentioned theoretical perspectives. So, following objectives have been made to make the study factual.

1. To know the views based on their experiences in sports as career.
2. To find out their attitude towards to academic side of women sports persons.
3. To analyze their views for other career activities.
4. To understand their prevailing views in relation to level of satisfaction or not.

Methodology

A purposive sampling was followed to identify in the demography of heterogeneous sports population. The women belonged to several sports were taken as subjects. Ten (10) women were selected as subjects for collecting the data. Both type of data collection tools were used for data. These were quantitative and qualitative i.e. in quantitative, the responses were taken in yes and no which further converted in to percentage score. In which their level of participation, their aim of participation and present job status were measured as shown in table-1. For qualitative study, first of all a small group of ten students were taken as per characteristics of qualitative research. Where a small group with extensive and in depth of themes and variables are considered. A semi structure interview was used to find out their experiences in sports. General outline of the questions were made to get their views in relation to several contexts in sports. The questions were related to their decision in choice of sports as career, relation to academic side, any regret for choice to sports, if it is then what other option etc. Kumar (2005) [8] views the interview a suitable approach for studying the complex and sensitive areas.

The views were recorded in paper work in written. A transcription was prepared and coding method was used to identify the meaning and themes. Codes are guiding in to classify the transcription and are considered an essential part of qualitative research (Sarantakosh, 1998) [11]. The data in interview was organized in categories and finally in themes and sub themes. The themes were also analyzed in line with theoretical perspectives based on social context of their lived experiences (Gahlot and Rana 2020) [6]. Patriarchy, social power and cultural perspectives are very relevant to peep in the issues and problems of women; either they belong to sports area.

Participants

All ten (10) women were belonged to rural side in Haryana. They were belonged to various games including team and individual sports.

Their participation was from school zonal to international. Few of them are in job or seeking the job after completing their education. They all are matures sports persons ranging their age from 18 to 30 years onwards. Their personal attributes have been given in table-1.

Results and Discussion

Results

The results have been described under quantitative and qualitative sections. In quantitative, the digital presentation has been made and in qualitative the narrations have been made and presented to express their views for different themes.

Quantitative Results

The followings results have been given to the responses in digital forms in percentage (table-1) with several attributes of women sports persons. Their participation level is from zonal or distt. (30%), at state level is 30% and followed by 40 % of national and international level. 40% women are in job and 60% are trying to get the job. As far as their ultimate aim is concerned that is 40% women are interested in sports for getting the job and 60% are for participation and winning for medal at international level. The response to sports for opting as career, 40% are regretting to opt the sports as career and 60% are satisfied in opting the sports for their bright career.

Table 1: Personal attributes of the women participated in sports

Level of participation	
Zonal/Distt.	30%
State	30%
National/ international	40%
Ultimate aim	
Job	40%
International	60
Present status of job	
Job	40%
Seeking job	60%
Need of improvement	
in academic side	100%
Regret for opting	
the sports as career	40%
Satisfied opting	
The sports as career	60%

Qualitative Results

In qualitative research, the statement/opinion is the validity of the data or observation given in the interview. Semi structure interview is the main tool of collecting the data in such research. Where the issues are very relate to structure of the system. The problems must be seen in depth with recurring the questions in process. It is a rigorous to evaluate the themes in details that need very laborious mental work with theoretical formulations. So a small sample is always advised in qualitative study. In present study, the following themes have been identified after going through the coding process.

Realization of Academic Significance

All participants agreed in their opinion regarding importance of the good academic record for sports women. Participant (3) says “right now I realized the importance of study side, even for high level sports persons, the good study is relevant” another participant (8) “in case of injury, the sports person can be saved if she is having graduate degree at least, not only this, even having the knowledge of the subject to get the job”. As evident in table (1) that there was complete agreement among the participants for having good academic record. The international player (participant-5) is also realizing “we need to improve our academic grade though I have got job”. Although, the players were not aware at early stage of their career but now the situation is different so participant (1) enumerated “we were not bothered regarding the need of

neither good academic side, nor any one made us aware, but gradually we realized significance of study". It is a predicament in sports from all side for giving less attention to the study of sports persons. Participant (10) communicated with sadness "though our parents are backward in education, but even our teachers, coaches, administrative personnel also did not pay the attention to us for encouraging the study, now we are realizing and advice to coming novices to be good in academic".

More need of extensive social support while pursuing the sports

Though social support is required to all genders, but in case of women participants in sports, it is emphatically required more. Women being disadvantageous section in society need more provisions in sports for their encouragement. Traditionally and culturally, the social constraints are imposing on women that can be eliminated only through policies and programs. In this line, the all participants are in consensus for need of social supports from all corners. Participant (9) said "had I not got the family support especially from my brother, I would not have got success in sports, but still I feel that I need more social support to continue my career in sports". Not only family system but even coaches are capable to give social support. Participants (3 & 4) expressed "our coaches encouraged me to continue the sports otherwise we would have left the sports. The coach being female is very supportive and empathetic to us for solving our problems and advised us very positively". Participant (6) said "my close friend helped me as well as my family members; my friend always extended the hands of help whenever I need. They stood with me for any type of help". Participant (5) said "my brother always stood with me to encourage my participation in sports. My coach also supported me". Coaches also played a great role to participation of women. Participants (1, 2 & 4) expressed "our coaches are instrumental to continue our sport participation to till today. At every moment, they supported us either it is in case of disappointment happened in competition. Family is the main agency to give social support. Participants (7, 9 & 10) said "their family members supported them very positively from very beginning. All members of family were supportive for our career in sports with high performance.

Need of encouraging environment for evading the regretful and disappointing situations

Many times and several occasions, the female felt regretted for adopting their career in sports due to interventions from administrative side. Main problem is the female not having as coach to them. They faced many hurdles to continue their career in sports. Participant (1) expressed "when the hurdles come unnecessarily, I felt very frustrated and about to leave the sports. More hurdles come to me being female. Either it is social problems or sexual abuse; they create pressure by imposing unwanted burden on us". Participant (3) enumerated the situation "I felt ashamed to the administrative staff due to not doing their duties; even they break the confidence of the players. They must be idealized but they are opposite". Participant (7) expressed "I am very regretful being in sports, much time I thought that it is my wrong decision to choose the sports. I would have chosen another career activity like academic purely". Another participants are being satisfied in sports but they are in same opinions of the dark side exist in sports. Though, it is very common affecting all men and women and it is also very discouraging to women in sports

due to their vulnerability in the system. It is a predicament that the female need more support compared with male but when they are facing the hurdles, and then it is becoming very difficult to continue the sports regularly.

Discussion

This is a small sketch of the life of sport women in sports and their experiences. It is very difficult for women to opt the sports as career activity. Being the rural background of women multiples the problems in sports. So in present study, it is depicted very clearly that they need more social support to continue as well as to be introduced. The sample being of rural background, they extended their social support to the Panchayat of the village, and that is public domain which is very assertive in any side being encouraging or discouraging. But in the opinion of the participants, they have foresight that the Panchayats should be included to strengthen the social support as well as other agencies like family, coaches, friends, teachers, administrative staff etc. In the study it was found that the academic side is also lagging behind. They felt that they should have studied more in term of subjects and degrees. Many participants are in opinion that they may have opted for medical, engineering etc if they had realized the importance of education at early stage. So they suggest and advise the coming novices to pay more attention to academic side with sports. Many participants expressed them still have the will to improve their education level. They could not have acquired satisfactory level so they have regret for it. Many participants in the study have expressed their regret being enrolled in sports. In their opinion, it would have better to opt another career activity like medical and engineering. They are frustrated regarding the system of sports where sheer nepotism, biases, partiality, abuses exists at large. They prefer for female coaches to understand their problems but female coaches hardly exist in the coaching system. As they were interested to sports as very attractive activity but gradually they become bored and found very useless activity. Though, the sport women who are successful in sports still found it very attractive activity but disgruntled women sports persons are not of same view. Since, they have faced the hurdles in their sports career.

Conclusion

So, sports women need more attention and provisions for creating encouraging environment for high enrollment in sports and also regular involvement in sports. They face hurdle while pursuing the sports, they have to face hurdles being due to female. So, special attention is required for their coaching, education, social support to pave the path for the sports as good career activity for women.

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