



PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS - A HOLISTIC APPROACH FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN: AN INTERROGATION FROM SDG'S PERSPECTIVE

Vinamrta

JRF, Department of Sociology, Ranchi University, Ranchi,
Jharkhand, 834008

By implementing so many programs and policies since independence we are still far behind the vision of a socially inclusive society. The female section of the Indian society is still having very less control on the resources and in decision making process even for themselves. So the empowerment process for Indian women must be multidimensional in approach. The selected means like sports participation should be holistic in nature to enhance the impact on the life of women (Ahmad, 2015). This paper examines the arguments about impact of women sports participation on their empowerment process and the real situation with the help of secondary data.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Sports, SDG

INTRODUCTION

The human world is divided biologically into male and female, but society with its gender specific role, norms to behave and approach created the gender inequality and forced women to be at the bottom of the society. This made women a marginalized, oppressed and socially excluded section of the society and to have a developed society women must be empowered.

The empowerment of women is one of the prime focus areas of developmental programs and policies. Starting from local level to international level many organizations worked towards making women more capable and independent by focusing on their health conditions, educational level, skills and employment situation related to their financial independency. Many steps are taken to improve the political and administrative participation of women by working on the theory of social inclusion.

It has been noticed that to achieve the goal of women empowerment mainly education and skill development are focused as means for making them financial independent. To improve the health conditions of women majorly curative parts are taken into consideration like medicines, machines and building infrastructure for hospitals. We must look for the alternative ways, which can be a quicker means to achieve the goal of women empowerment. For this identification of more discriminative areas and direct action on the causes is the demand of the situation in India.

The role played by the patriarchal society theory regarding women body states that by creating misconceptions regarding weakness in physical structure of females during menstruation is the sexist theory which prevent girls in entering in the field of sports (Singh, 1990).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Empowerment

In the area of development studies, empowerment is a widely used term which indicates

towards the enhancement process of capacities and capabilities in a life-span of a human being. World Bank defined the term empowerment as "the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives" (WBPREM, 2002). Similarly, United Nations also put forward the term 'empowerment' as the process of enabling people to increase control over their lives, to gain control over the factors and decisions that shape their lives, to increase their resources and qualities and to build capacities to gain access, partners, networks, a voice, in order to gain control (UN DSPD DESA, 2012).

Women Empowerment

Swami Vivekanand once said that "It is impossible to recollect about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is unacceptable for a birdie to fly on only one wing" (Husan, 2015). Women belong to that part of our society which needs urgent attention for making a inclusive developed society. Indian National Policy for Women - 2016 aimed at "re-scripting" women's empowerment by following a "socially inclusive rights-based approach." Health including food security and nutrition, Education, Economy, Governance and Decision Making, Violence against Women, Enabling Environment, and Environment and Climate Change are the 07 priority areas to be focused under National Policy for Women - 2016 (GOIMoWCD, 2016).

Conceptual Framework on Sports : A Fundamental Human Right

First time in 1978, 'Sport' is recognized as fundamental human right by the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport (ICPES) of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Charter states: "One of the essential conditions for the effective exercise of human rights is that everyone should be free to develop and preserve his or her physical, intellectual, and moral powers, and that access to physical education and sport should consequently be assured and guaranteed for all human beings"(UN DAW DESA, 2007).

In 1979, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) recognizes the discrimination faced by women in the field of physical education and sports. It is mentioned in its article 13 as: "States parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of women and men, the same rights, in particular . . . [t]he rights to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life"(UN DAW DESA, 2007).

The article 29(1) of Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in year 1989 states: "States parties agreed that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential" (OHCHR, 1989).

The 4th world conference on women in 1995 adopted 'The Beijing Platform for Action'. The importance of sports on the life of human was accepted at the conference and calls the

member-states to make opportunities available to all girls and women to participate in sport and physical activity, equal to the availability of male section of the society. The four critical areas of concerns are recognized, which can be enhanced with the sport participation strategy. These are Education, Health, Power and Decision making and the situation of girl child (Haseena, 2015). The platform pointed out the underrepresentation of women in the areas of sport, media and law and emphasized on immediate action regarding gender - sensitive programs to ensure the participation of women in sports. This participation meaning is inclusive of all areas of athletics and physical activity i.e. from administration and management officials to being a participant player and instructor at regional, national to international level (UNDAW, 1995).

To review the activities involving sports within the UN programs and policy, an inter-agency task force on Sport for Development and Peace was created in 2002. The report recommended the principle of "sports for all" for sports programs. The resolution 58/5 adopted by UN General Assembly in 2004 says, "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace" (UNDAWDESA, 2007).

International Olympic Committee (IOC) plays a central leadership role in the world of sport. This IOC charter 2004 states "encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and women" (IOC, 2004).

MDGs, SDGs and Sports

Worldwide every Government, civil society, institutions, NGOs and business enterprise's goal and missions are directed towards having a more developed society, for making a better place of living for human. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was a holistic framework to achieve the targets of development. Each and every member country of United Nations (UN) launched many programs and policies specifically towards achieving the targets of MDGs. In India also with many new policies and programs government tried to fulfill the goal of MDGs. To achieve the targets of MDGs various approaches, tools and strategies were searched and implemented worldwide and sport programs are one of those strategies recognized by UN. United Nations in its Agenda in 2001 adopted the theme of "Sport for Development and Peace". The United Nations General Assembly also celebrated 2005 as the "Year of Sport and Physical Education".

After MDGs in 2015, at the UN General Assembly 2015, 193 members adopted the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets which came into effect from 1st January 2016. The 2030 agenda is focused on 03 dimensions to achieve sustainable development. These dimensions are Social development, economic development and environmental development. It seeks to guide members to transform their approach as inclusive, people centered and sustainable with 'no one left behind'. Considering the importance of social development Commission for Social Development (CSocD) was also created by UN. Sport is considered as one of the most

important means to build the network necessary for social development. Acknowledging the contribution of sports towards addressing the MDGs targets, Sports is distinguished as a powerful enabler of the SDGs. Indian Government through different agencies, recognizes the contribution of sports to achieve the 2030 agenda for sustainable development in the area of health, education and towards achieving the objectives of social inclusion for the realization of development and peace ((NITI Aayog, 2017). It also acknowledged the potential of sports participation especially towards the empowerment of women, young people, individuals and communities (UNOSDP, 2016).

Sports Participation and Women Empowerment in Context of SDGs

This section is presenting the relationship between different SDGs and ways through which sports can contribute towards various dimensions of women empowerment. Once Myriam Lamare, a World Boxing Association champion from France, has said that the punches she lands shake the foundations of society (ILO Newsroom, 2006).

Social Empowerment

Prakash (1990), mentioned in her article that due to lack of physical power a women has no faith in a force that she has not experienced in her body; she does not dare to be enterprising, to revolt, to invent. She feels comfortable with already existing fixed norms of society, only a place already made for her.

When it comes to social interaction beyond the family structure especially outside the home girls have fewer opportunities than boys. Through sports they can build a new interpersonal network which will develop a sense of identity among themselves. Sports can increase the self-esteem and self-confidence of women by giving them a better means of freedom of expression and movement (Aafjes, 2011). Sports can provide an alternative way for participation in social and cultural life of communities to women with new opportunities of building social capital and increased self-esteem (Punzoo, 2017). An individual with more social capital can depend upon their frequent social interaction in times of need, to find employment.

Educational Empowerment

The Goal 4 of SDGs states 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all' (UNOSDP, 2016). The UN report on sport as an enabler of SDGs accepted that sport can improve learning outcomes by fostering academic performance and achievement, leadership abilities, and concentration and focus capabilities.

The members of UN have already identify the right to education and equal rights of women and girls in the field of education as an important aspect towards achieving the gender equality in the world. Inclusive sport activities in schools encourage inclusion and the equal participations of women and girls, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable or underrepresented groups and individuals (UN IA task-force on SDP, 2003).

It is now well proven that sport programs for girls, including in refugee camps, drop-outs can

be used as an incentive to stay in school. Education is not only limited to the school - boundary it must prepare us for life and sport-based programs put forward such education opportunities and life skills which can be used beyond school including the workplace(UN DAW DESA, 2007).

Economic Empowerment

Indian government through National Youth Policy 2014 accepted that young women are among those segments of youth population who requires special attention. The policy stated that empowerment of women youth is critical aspect of the overall youth empowerment. This policy recognizes sport as priority area to fulfill the objective of developing a strong and healthy generation equipped to take on future challenges and to create a productive workforce that can make a sustainable contribution to India's economic development (GOI MoYAS, 2014).

Sports is mentioned a priority area number 05 to promote physical, mental and emotional growth of youth of India. Sport is also identified as a growing viable professional option. The Goal 1 of SDGs is related to economic empowerment as it states about 'End poverty in all its forms everywhere' (UNOSDP,2016). The report from UNOSDP mentioned that Sport itself is a productive industry, which can contribute towards employment, contribution to local economies through sport events and infrastructural development, sustainable sport tourism. Sports values such as fairness, respect, teamwork, cooperation, fair-play and goal setting can help in teach and practice of transferable employment skills which can support employment readiness, productivity and income - generating activities(UN IA task-force on SDP, 2003).

Physical and Psychological Empowerment

An active life style for all is the basic characteristic encouraged by sports, which has a positive impact on child and healthy adolescent development and well-being. The target of SDGs Goal number 3 is to ensure healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages. Report of UNOSDP (2016), pointed out many health benefits for a women being involved in physical activity and sport. Sports participants had reported in reduction of their depression level, anxiety and loneliness. Sports can be very helpful for women by enhancing their psychological well-being. Sports contribution is widely acknowledged in promoting the psychological well - being, which can be an immense support for females.

Cultural Empowerment

Gender discrimination in a traditional patriarchal society has relegated women to secondary status within the household and workplace. This drastically affects women's health, educational access, income resource and political involvement (Punzoo, 2017). Prakash (1990) on the issue of women and sport once wrote in her article that the myth about biological inferiority of women can be most effectively demolished in the sports arena as it is mostly demonstrated through sports. She also mentioned that the social construction of women's biological inferiority deny the social sanction to the physical expression of emotion and

making it as one of the most powerful ideological tools employed to 'keep women in their place'. Especially in India, housewives are always being at their home and have very few opportunities for physical expression of their emotion.

Apart from being the advocacy and awareness raising platform for gender equality and addressing abuse and gender - based violence within or out of sport, a sport can also help to reduce culturally discriminative norms that exclude women and girls from sport. Sport can help in challenging constricting gender norms, stereotypes and discrimination which prevent girls in entering in sports and bring a positive shift in the society (Punzoo, 2017). Therefore it is a vehicle to promote gender equality and women empowerment to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

Political Empowerment

The women participation in decision making at various levels of democracy is the mirror of political empowerment of women. Sport participation can be the medium to develop leadership quality among women and girls. The Goal 5 of SDGs is directed towards achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls (UNOSDP, 2016). In order to be a good leader women and girls must acquire the management and negotiation skills to take better - decision in emergency situations.

The equal presentation of girl in women in sports means their presence at all level of sports i.e. in participation, performance and also in leadership level. Men and boys can also be engaged in achieving gender equality in and through sport and so in turn sport can promote better gender relations and cooperation in the society with its value generation among youths.

Legal empowerment

Sports create merits of inspiration, faith, hope and courage in its participants. Sports can raise awareness on equal rights of women in economic life, right to an adequate standard of living, the right to social security (UN DAW DESA, 2007). Many time mega sports events are based on themes to address various issues. Physical fitness is the most important feature for a sports person. For participation in sports they required right to adequate food. These rights information will help women to be legally empowered.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The main objectives behind the development of this paper are to present the ways of sports arena through which SDGs can be achieved, and the connection between women sports participation and their empowerment. The paper also attempts to present the situation of women participation in sport in India and the related policies for this.

This paper is based on the secondary sources. These includes UN and its different agencies reports, SDGs documents, WHO reports, articles from many reputed journals like International Journal of Academic Research, International Journal online of Sports Technology & Human Engineering, Journal of Culture, Society and Development etc., Indian ministries reports and their policies related to women empowerment.

FINDINGS

Many works has been carried out to illustrate the impact of sports participation on empowerment process. It is also acknowledged by the Government and mentioned in their policies and programs. But when it comes to implementation, the sports development area is still treated as the last priority sector. This section is representing the facts and figures related to the Indian Government policies and programs for sports development and the real scenario.

Research findings indicate that positive effects of physical activity on the ability to concentrate; on problem solving skills. A high correlation is found between high standardized test scores and high fitness scores (UN DAW DESA, 2007). Sports participation is always suggested as first medium to stay fit and healthy. Participation in sports during childhood has a long term effect and it may help in preventing osteoporosis among women. It is claimed in a report of Journal of Bone and Mineral Research published in 2012 that by spending just 04 hours a week on sports activities during the teens and 20s can increase the bone mass (Surender, 2017).

The non-communicable diseases account for more than 60% of global deaths and 66% of it is reported in the developing countries. An active life-style since childhood is desired to be free from chronic diseases in later life. Sports can help in reducing infant, child and maternal mortality and in improving the post-natal recovery by increasing personal fitness of mothers and contributing to the prevention of play related deaths (WHO, 2007).

Indian National Health Policy 2017 pointed out that for prevention and control of non-communicable diseases 'life - style modification' is an important aspect. They have set the indicator for this that how many people modified their life - style and the awareness session, role of ASHA workers. But there is no provision under the health policy of budget for the improvement or making of infrastructure and other facilities available to the people (GOI MoHFW, 2017).

It is mentioned in The National Policy for Women 2016, that there is social practices and physical differences between men and women so in sports a separate but equal facilities will be made available to girls and women in terms of sports equipment, scientific support, medical support, diet/nutritional support, financial support and competition exposure" (GOI MoWCD, 2016).

As per news published by Press Information Bureau of India (GOI MoYAS, 2015), The Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Youth Affairs and Sports has said in Rajya Sabha that primary responsibility for promotion and development of sports including in schools and colleges is that of States, as 'Sports' is a State Subject. He also mentioned about the provisions for sports related activities in Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 as:

- a) A play ground for each school; b) A part time instructor for physical education in upper primary school; c) Supply of play material, games and sports equipment, as required, to schools.

But the reality is that 02 out of every 05 elementary schools in India are not having even the basic playground according to the District Information System for Education (DISE) report 2015-16. The DISE report is based on the survey of 19 crore children belonging to the 1.5 million primary schools in 680 districts across the states. In analyzing DISE report from 2010-11 to 2015-16 on 'State-wise Percentage of Schools having Playground' it has been found that in 11 states less than 50% of schools are having playground and importantly in 12 states schools show decline in school playground. In 2010-11, only 32.13% schools in Mizoram were having playground but states made a drastic improvement i.e. almost 100% increase as in 2015 - 16 it is reported that now 64.16% schools of Mizoram are having playground.

Indian Comprehensive Sports Policy 2007 noted down the deficiencies regarding participation of girls and women in physical education and sports is far below that of boys and men (GOI MoYAS, 2007). All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2015-16 also reported that based on actual response there are only 4 universities in India specialized for Sports/Yoga/Physical Education. The same report also pointed out that only 87% of Universities, 90% of Colleges and 91% of Standalone Institutions are maintaining playground (GOI MHRD, 2016).

The women participation in sports administrative bodies is negligible compared to their performance. The survey report covering the 27 recognized Sports Associations (SAs) in India revealed that 8 SAs do not have any women representation on their Governing bodies. Indian women won the medals in Olympics in boxing and weightlifting but Indian Weightlifting Federation, and Indian Amateur Boxing Federation does not have any women in governing bodies. In the 14 other SAs, women constitute only about 2% - 8% of the Governing bodies. However, it is only the Hockey India having the highest women representation with 34% of the members as women (InGovern Research Services, 2016).

When it comes to the financial spending of resources on the development of sportsperson, India spends even less than Jamaica. India spends only 3 paise a day per person while the US spends Rs 22 a day per person, the UK 50 paise a day and even Jamaica paying more than India with 19 paise a day for sportsperson development (Deccan Herald, 2016).

DISCUSSION

India is the country of the second highest population in the world and it has been ranked 135 out of 147 countries on women's empowerment in UN HDI ranking 2015. The three indices to determine HDI are health, knowledge, and standard of living and to measure progress towards sustainable development 03 indices are used as economic efficiency, environmental integrity and social equity. But when it comes to the status of women on these indices we are still far behind from our set targets. Women faced gender-based discrimination fuelled with stereotypes when it comes to their participation in competitive sports and in sports organizations along with sports journalism (UN DAW DESA, 2007).

In India most of the women put forward the needs of their family members before their own needs. They are always involved in caring the others with her resources of time and energy.

Self-care is the basic idea of physical embodiment approach which is lacking in the life-style of Indian women. They save very less personal time and space for themselves which prevent the positive interaction of their mind, body and spirit. The balance between caring for themselves and others is the most critical aspects while respecting your own body. Sports participation develops the sense to care for their own body among the adolescent girls which encourages them to delay sexual activity and it helps in reduction in cases of teen pregnancy (Sabo, Don & Miller, 1998).

Sports widely recognizes as a vehicle for gender equality and women empowerment, it makes the first duty of Government is to end the gender inequalities in sports arena (Gayathramma, 2015). It starts with making the sport infrastructure and accessories friendly for women participants also because they were primarily designed and developed only for the use of men. For the first time baseball gloves were designed specifically for women by Spalding Sports in 1996. Socio-economic conditions are also became constraint for women and girls when it comes to affording the appropriate sporting attire.

CONCLUSION

Many indicators of women empowerment and development like level of health, education, employment, social inclusion, political development, peace and security are directly influenced by sports participation. Being a fundamental right of human, sports can be used as a catalyst/tool /strategy to enhance the conditions of women. Women sports program showed real and immense impact for gender equality and towards the empowerment of women and girls.

Our patriarchal society still has the pigeonhole of women's physical abilities and social roles. This attitude constrained the women participation and leadership in sports. There is inequalities and discrimination within the sport as well. Women participant receive lower value than their counter male part in terms of inadequate resources and unequal wages and prizes. But Sports can make many positive developments in society as it can provide alternative norms, values, attitudes, knowledge, capabilities and experiences to the participant women. These women can further contribute in leadership positions, which can bring diversity and alternative approaches in traditional male domains and enhance the opportunities for women talent base in areas of sports journalism, sports event management and coaching.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In India many ministries worked through different agencies for women empowerment and accept that sports participation of women must be increased. It is reflected through their policy documents like National Youth Policy, National Women Policy and National Health Policy etc. But when it comes to measure the women empowerment sports participation is ignored. Being a fundamental right, sport is far behind from the focus of government policies as compared to education, skill development, financial status and health indicators of women.

It is notable that the Sports and Youth Ministry budget is increased by Rs. 258.19 crore for 2018-19 i.e. a total allocation of Rs 2196.35 crore (Indian Express, 2018). Although

Government of India launched 'Khelo India' program and CBSE released the guidelines for sports period in schools but government also need to focus on playground condition and availability of coaches and trainers for a specific sport. Women participation in sports needs special separate attention like education system starting from elementary school level team to the sports club level team. Government should consider sports as a complementary universal approach with special measures for women empowerment. Government should make provisions for separate playground for girls in residential area, security at playgrounds and separate trainer at schools for girls, special scholarship programs for women sports persons, additional food supplements for them and to increase awareness about sports participation regular competitive events especially for women should be held at block level.

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