

Participation in Sport as an Assessment of Women Empowerment

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Abstract

According to National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) section 6.2 'A holistic approach to women's health which includes both nutrition and health services will be adopted and special attention will be given to the needs of women and the girl at all stages of the life cycle'. The present study examines empowerment of women through games and sports keeping in view the physical, mental and social health. One hundred and fifty college going female subjects, age ranging between 18 and 25 years with a mean and SD of 21.26 ± 2.07 from different District of Gwalior, India were administered a self developed questionnaire. The various responses received were analysed using percentage. Study shows that participation in games and sports makes them physically active (44%), improve their health (42%), positive feeling of well being (45%), prevention of chronic disease (45%), prevention of osteoporosis (41%). Further, sports and games relieves emotional strain (58%), makes them to think logically (36%), reduces anxiety, depression and stress (38%), enhance decision making, organisational and management skill over time (46%), foster self-esteem and empowerment (30%), offers more freedom in comparison to past (58%), opportunities for leadership and achievement (56%), economic and social development (61%), encourages women to form clubs and hence have a career in sport (48%). Majority of the women had a favourable attitude towards participation in games and sports thus helping to improve their physical, mental, and social health. Gender violence (68%) and discrimination (56%) can be reduced if more and more females participated in sports. Further, sports helps in providing equal status to women

KEYWORDS: sport, Women Empowerment

Introduction

"Bicycling has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world. I stand and rejoice every time I see a woman ride on a wheel. It gives women a feeling of freedom and self-reliance."

(Susan B. Anthony, suffragist, 1896)U.N-2007

Women of ancient societies to the present day had been actively contributing to different economic activities. But due to social discrimination Indian women are divided into cast, region, religion and class. Therefore it is very difficult to talk about them as a homogeneous category and they bear multiple burden of inequality. According to the World Bank (Washington, DC) "Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes" and the empowerment of women occurs in reality, when women achieve increased control and participation in decision making that leads to their better access to resources, and therefore, improved socio-economic status.

According to National policy for the empowerment of women (2001) section 6.2 "A holistic approach to women's health which includes both nutrition and health services will be adopted and special attention will be given to the needs of women and the girl at all stages of the life cycle". According to World Health Organization, Health was defined the ability to lead a "socially and economically productive life". One needs to understand that women's empowerment is not really a linear progression but helical/spiral and circular along with being interconnected. Thus, in the present article an attempt was made to provide a basic platform for empowerment of girls and women through games and sports keeping in view the Physical, mental and social health. Sports play a vital role in the enhancement of one's personality by being a source of exercise and entertainment. Looking back at the history Bell stated that certainly, women engaged in sport three millennia ago. Homer, 800 B.C., relates the story of Princess Nausicaa playing ball with her handmaidens and women participating Olympic in the year 1900 Paris Summer Games.

Women's Physical Health

Duane F. Alexander stated that a relatively small number of physical disorders are unique to women, are more prevalent or serious in women, or require special prevention or intervention strategies in women. Among the earliest of these to appear developmentally are precocious puberty, for which an effective treatment has recently been developed, and anorexia and bulimia, which are increasing in frequency among young women without effective treatment. Arthritis, diabetes, lupus erythematosus, gallstones, and osteoporosis are other diseases in this category.

W.H.O revealed that cardiovascular diseases account for one-third of deaths among women around the world and half of all deaths in women over 50 years old in developing countries. Diabetes affects more than 70 million women in the world and its prevalence is projected to double by 2025. Osteoporosis is a disease in which bones become fragile and more likely to break and is most prevalent in post-menopausal women. Breast cancer is the mostly commonly diagnosed cancer in women.

Overweight and obesity have been recognized as major public health concern throughout the world. Lack of physical activity, through its impact on energy balance, has been identified as an important modifiable risk factor for obesity. Physical inactivity and obesity are also important risk factors for a variety of chronic diseases.

Participation in games and sports reduces the risk of dying from coronary heart disease and of developing high blood pressure, colon cancer, and diabetes. It also helps to maintain healthy bones, muscles, joints, control weight, build lean muscle, reduce body fat, and control joint swelling and pain associated with arthritis. Sports and games may also enhance the effect of estrogen replacement therapy in decreasing bone loss after menopause, reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression and fosters improvements in mood and feelings of well-being.

Women's Psychological Health

WHO reported that up to 20% of those attending primary health care in developing countries suffer from anxiety and/or depressive disorders. Depressive disorders account

for close to 41.9% of the disability from neuropsychiatric disorders among women compared to 29.3% among men. Leading mental health problems of the elderly are depression, organic brain syndromes and dementias. A majority are women. An estimated 80% of 50 million people affected by violent conflicts, civil wars, disasters, and displacement are women and children. Lifetime prevalence rate of violence against women ranges from 16% to 50%.

Participation in sport and physical activity can also facilitate good mental health for women of all ages, including the management of mental disorders such as Alzheimer's disease. It can promote psychological well-being through building self-esteem, confidence and social integration, as well as help reduce stress, anxiety, loneliness and depression. Sport provides women and girls with an alternative avenue for participation in the social and cultural life of their communities and promotes enjoyment of freedom of expression, interpersonal networks, new opportunities and increased self-esteem. It also expands opportunities for education and for the development of a range of essential life skills, including communication, leadership, teamwork and negotiation.

Women's Social Health

“The practice of physical education and sport is a fundamental right for all.” —
UNESCO International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, article...

Women are integral to all aspects of society and they bear the burden of responsibility associated with being wives, mothers and careers of others and also women are becoming an essential part of the labour force and in one-quarter to one-third of households they are the prime source of income.

If women participating in some kind of physical/recreational activity they develop new society and wider friendship circle and empower them within their communities, provide positive health and welfare outcomes. These days they This then would contribute to overall development (economic, social and political)

Methods

The aim of this study is to assess women empowerment through participation in games and sports. For this study it was decided to use women empowerment questionnaire as the tool. The subjects in this study were randomly selected. A total of One hundred and fifty (150) female subjects from different Gwalior District pursuing in Post Graduation in different colleges were selected for the purpose of study. The age group of the subjects was 18- 30years.

Construction of the Questionnaire

Questionnaire was prepared in below mentioned sections

1. Empowerment of women in relation to physical health through sports.
2. Empowerment of women in relation to mental health through sports.
3. Empowerment of women in relation to social health through sports.
4. Empowerment of women in relation to gender violence through sports.

Scholar developed a bank of questions to enable females to produce multi-item scales, which are more reliable than single questions. Scholar selected 30 worded questions which covered the topics for use in the preliminary questionnaire. Scholar used a balanced Likert five point scale (strongly disagree, Disagree, Undecided, Agree and strongly agree) to record responses. To recheck content validity scholar asked female physical educationist, female sports psychologists and clinical psychologists who were not otherwise involved in the development of the questionnaire in Gwalior to review the components indicated by the principal components analysis (Physical, mental, social and gender violence. They judged whether these were coherent and reflected the issues important to females and also suggested few questions related to overall satisfaction.

Statistical Analysis

The various responses received in terms of participation in sports as an assessment of women empowerment was analyzed using percentage.

Results

The findings with regard to the present study have been presented in four sections.

PHYSICAL HEALTH	Response	Frequency	Percent
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity makes me physically active	Strongly agree	67	44.7
Participating /Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity improve my health	Strongly agree	64	42.7
Participating/ Participation in some kind of sports and Physical activity give me a feeling of well being	Agree	68	45.3
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity involves risk of injury	Agree	66	44.0
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity are the most sustainable way to tackle non-communicable diseases	Undecided	61	40.7
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity Prevents chronic diseases	Agree	68	45.3
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity Prevents osteoporosis in later life	Agree	62	41.3
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity Improves access for girls to reproduction health information and services	Agree	70	46.7
- MENTAL HEALTH			
Participating / Participation in some kind of	Agree	87	58.0

Sports and Physical activity relieves me of emotional strain			
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity makes me to think logically	Agree	55	36.7
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity reduces anxiety, depression, and stress.	Agree	58	38.7
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity enhance decision making, organizational and management skill over time.	Strongly agree	69	46.0
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity Foster (cultivate) self-esteem and empowerment	Strongly agree	45	30.0
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity increase college attendance and achievement	Agree	73	48.7
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity offers present day women more freedom in comparison to past	Strongly agree	88	58.7
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity Act as a highly effective communications tool	Strongly agree	66	44.0
<u>SOCIAL HEALTH</u>			
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity providing opportunities for leadership and achievement	Agree	85	56.7
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity Plays a significant role in economic and social development	Agree	92	61.3
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity Encourages women to form clubs and hence have a career in sport	Agree	72	48.0
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity Enjoy their social freedom and realize their full potential in sport	Agree	69	46.0
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity Helps in Freedom of expression	Agree	94	62.7

Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity Improves upon their Social network	Agree	80	53.3
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity Provides better employment opportunities	Strongly agree	55	36.7
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity Allows women to be aware of violence against girls and take precaution	Agree	102	68.0
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity bring gender equity and equality in society	Strongly agree	60	40.0
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity Minimizes the sexual harassment	Agree	60	40.0
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity Reduces discrimination	Agree	84	56.0
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity is not being preferred by my parents as they are against wearing sports wear	Agree	48	32.0
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity Helps women to enjoy equal tenure and property rights along with men regardless of their civil status	Agree	100	66.7
Participating / Participation in some kind of Sports and Physical activity Allows me to face the media and demand equal weight age for female sport participation	Strongly agree	73	48.7

Discussion and conclusions

Today women are players in business, politics, science and sports. They are smart, ambitious and ready for action. The challenge now is for women to move from excellence to significance. Women must reach a critical presence, make their voices heard, and transform society in partnership with men into a gender just arena. Then societies will greatly benefit from women co-shaping the positive trends in their countries/ societies. Women need strength and confidence for leadership roles. The regular playing of sports creates healthier bodies and stronger minds. Better circulation helps them to think clearer, react faster and cope better with stress.

In the present study most of the girls were of the opinion that participation in games and sports makes them physically active(44%), improve their health (42%), a

positive feeling of well being (45%), helps in the prevention of chronic disease (45%), helps in the prevention of osteoporosis (41%) etc. Further , the study also reveals that sports and games relieves emotional strain (58%), makes them to think logically (36%), reduces anxiety, depression and stress (38%), enhance decision making, organizational and management skill over time (46%), Foster (cultivate) self-esteem and empowerment (30%), offers more freedom in comparison to past (58%), Providing opportunities for leadership and achievement (56%), Plays a significant role in economic and social development(61%), Encourages women to form clubs and hence have a career in sport(48%), etc. Diane Beruldsen, president and founder of the International Women's Flag Football Association states that that 'When I play football I become brave, just at that moment when I enter the field, and I want to win, I feel excited and happy!'

46%, 62% and 53% of girls reveals that by participation in games and sports they enjoy their social freedom, Freedom of expression and Improves their Social network. Asked how they (girls) felt while playing, one girl replied "I feel free", indeed their perspectives had totally changed.

Conclusions

Within the limitations, of the study the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The study has indicated that a majority of the females had a favorable attitude towards participation in games and sports and believe that games and sports improves their physical , mental, social health.
2. Females were also of the opinion that gender violence (68%) and discrimination (56%) can be reduced if more and more females participated in sports.
3. Further, sports helps in providing equal status to women's.

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