



Issues Faced by Females in Sports

Prelims: Sexism, Gender Disparity, Women Safety.

Mains: Issues Faced Females in Sports.

Why in News?

Recently, some sportspersons made allegations of sexual harassment against **WFI (Wrestling Federation of India)** president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.

- Sports Ministry demands **explanation from WFI within 72 hours**, if WFI fails to furnish the reply, the Ministry will proceed to initiate action against the Federation in terms of the provisions of the **National Sports Development Code, 2011**.

What is the Scenario of Such Allegations?

- According to **RTI (Right to Information)** Data, between 2010 to 2020, there were **45 complaints of sexual harassment to the SAI (Sports Authority of India)**, of which 29 were against coaches.
- In several of these reported cases, the accused were let off leniently, with punishments that consisted of transfers to a meager cut in pay or pension.
- Some of the cases have not seen the end of the tunnel with many dragging on for years, with no resolutions in sight.
 - Abuse in sports **was a poll issue in Germany in 2021**. The Federal Parliament's Sports Committee hosted a public hearing on emotional, physical and sexualised violence in sports in May 2021.
- It is **about time India discussed the issue** and not wait for athletes to stage protests at Jantar Mantar to be heard.
- Living in the 21st century, where we have devised the technology to monitor robots to do our bidding, there's still one aspect where **we fall grossly short when it comes to progress — gender equality**.

What are the Issues Faced by Sportswomen?

- **Funding and Budget:**
 - Sportswomen face a lack of equal **funding compared to men's athletics**, making it difficult for them to compete and run consistent programs.
- **Buoyant Sexism:**
 - Women are made to face the **barrels of buoyant sexism** on a daily basis, be it at work or even at home. They are monitored and **judged by the way they dress, by the way they speak**.
- **Gender Disparity:**
 - Despite women's efforts to **advocate for their social rights**, they still **do not receive the same level of respect or recognition on the professional front**, particularly in

the sports industry, as their male counterparts.

▪ **Lack of Access and Costlier:**

- Lack of physical education in schools and limited opportunities to play sports in both high school and college mean **girls have to look elsewhere for sports** -which may not exist or **may cost more money**.
- Often there is an **additional lack of access to adequate playing facilities** near their homes that makes it more difficult for girls to engage in sports.

▪ **Safety and Transportation Issues:**

- Sports require a place to participate – and for many girls, especially in dense urban environments, that means traveling to facilities through unsafe **neighborhoods or lacking any means to get to a good facility miles away**.
- And if there isn't a safe option like carpooling with other families, the only **option for a girl and her family may be to stay home**.
 - For example, Manipur is a sporting powerhouse, **but 48% of female athletes travel over 10 km** to reach the practice facility.

▪ **Social Attitudes and Disfigurement:**

- Despite recent progress, discrimination based on the real or **perceived sexual orientation and gender identity of female athletes persists**.
- Girls in sports may experience **bullying, social isolation, negative performance evaluations, or the loss of their starting position**.
- During socially fragile adolescence, the **fear of being tagged “gay” is strong enough to push many girls out of the game**.

▪ **Decreased Quality Training:**

- The facilities are not **as good as the boys' venues** and the playing times may not be optimal.
- The availability of quality, trained coaches **may be lacking in their community or these coaches may be more focused on the boys' programs** that have more money for training.
- Equipment, and even uniforms **aren't funded for many girls' programs at the same levels as boys** so their ability to grow and enjoy the sport is diminished. In short, sports just aren't “fun” any more.

▪ **Lack of Positive Role Models:**

- Today's girls are bombarded with images of **external beauty, not those of confident, strong female athletic** role models.
- Peer pressure **can be hard for girls at any age**; when that pressure isn't offset with strong encouragement to participate in sports and healthy physical activity, the results may lead girls to drop out altogether.

▪ **Limited Media Coverage:**

- Women's sports are often **underrepresented in the media**, which can make it harder for female athletes to gain recognition and sponsorship opportunities.

▪ **Pregnancy and Maternity:**

- Female athletes often face challenges balancing **motherhood and their sports careers**.
- This can affect the training and **competing opportunities for female athletes**.

Why is it Important for More Women Participation in Sports?

▪ **Physical and Mental Health:**

- Sports can have a positive impact on **physical and mental health for both men and women**.
 - Girls active in sports during adolescence and young **adulthood are 20% less likely to get breast cancer later in life**.

▪ **Gender Parity:**

- By providing equal opportunities and resources for women in sports, we can **help to break down barriers and stereotypes that limit women's potential** and participation in other areas of life.
 - Sport in its most basic form **encourages balanced participation and has the capacity to promote gender equality** (SDG Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls)

▪ **Economic Empowerment:**

- Women who participate in sports often have more opportunities for education and employment, which can lead to greater economic empowerment.
- **Rectify Societal Connotations:**
 - Women's participation in sports can also help to **change societal attitudes towards women** and their capabilities.
 - By seeing women excel in sports, it can **inspire more women to pursue their own goals** and aspirations, and challenge stereotypes about what women are capable of achieving.
- **Representation:**
 - Women's participation in sports can help to provide **better representation for women in leadership roles**, including coaching and administration.
 - It can also serve as an inspiration for young girls to pursue sports as a career.
- **Community Building:**
 - Sports can bring people together and promote greater understanding and respect between different groups within society.
 - By promoting greater participation in **sports among women, we can help to build stronger and more inclusive communities.**

What are the Safeguard Measures for Sexual Harassment?

- **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.**
- [Protection of Women from Sexual Harassment \(POSH\) Act, 2013.](#)
- [Sexual Harassment electronic Box \(SHe-Box\).](#)
- [National Commission for Women \(NCW\).](#)
- [The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences \(POCSO\), 2012](#)

Way Forward

- Women's participation in sports in India has been traditionally low **due to cultural and societal attitudes**. However, in recent years there have been **efforts to promote and encourage women's participation in sports**, such as the implementation of policies to increase funding and resources for female athletes, and the creation of programs to encourage girls to participate in sports from a young age.
- Despite these efforts, there is **still a long way to go in terms of achieving gender parity in sports participation** and representation in India.
- Sports in India is in the process of development. To accelerate this rate of development, a holistic approach should be adopted. **Efforts are required in developing infrastructure, identifying sports talents, organising regular sports events, and generating awareness at the grass-root level.**

[Source: TH](#)