

Sports Women and their Relationship with Males at Workplace



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Abstract

Sports have often been conceptualized as a male-dominated area because of its roles in creating and reinforcing beliefs about gender inequalities and distinctions; differential opportunities for males and females to be involved in sports; and differential resources for women and men participating in sports. In worldwide scenario, Women were not allowed to enter into sports. It was only after a long struggle when women started to participate in Games. Indian constitution prohibits any kind of discrimination on the grounds of sex, class, caste and race at workplace. But sports women sometimes experience gender discrimination because of sex. In the domain of sports, the problem of humiliation; harassment, discrimination and exploitation of sportswomen can be witnessed. The present paper attempts to find out the factors which have affected sportswomen's participation and the kind of relationship sportswomen share with male counterparts at workplace.

Keywords: Workplace, Discrimination, Sports Women, Relationship.

Introduction

The practice of sports is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sports, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play (A League of Their Own 1992). Sports have often been conceptualized as a male-dominated area, which facilitates various forms of discrimination against female athletes (Messner & Sabo 1994; Volkwein et al. 1997) In the beginning of the Ancient Olympic Games, women not only in India, but also all over the world were restricted to participate or even to watch the games (Woods 2007). The president of the Modern Olympics, Baron Pierre de Coubertin was strictly against the participation of women in the games by stating that it is "Impractical, Uninteresting, Unaesthetic and Incorrect". He had even stated that the Olympics had no place for women. Indecency, ugliness, and immodesty were found, in Coubertin's opinion, for excluding women from the Olympic Games (Leigh 1974).

In worldwide scenario, Women's entry into sports and games began during 1840-1901. Arrival of Indian women in the Olympics was quite late than that of the women of foreign countries like Europe, America, Africa, Australia and France. Foreign women began to participate in the sports in the beginning of 19th and 20th century. On the other hand, Indian women were still struggling for their right to equality. However, there was no clear information regarding the participation of women in sports. Therefore, after a long struggle, women could participate in the Olympic Games in 1900.

Review of Literature

Women were allowed to play limited games such as tennis, Golf, Yatching and Swimming, volleyball, handball, hockey, shooting, cycling, tennis, softball, curling, tennis, table tennis, ice hockey, biathlon, judo, football, badminton, sailing etc. Some games were banned for women such as wrestling and boxing. As these games represents the masculinity. Only during The London 2012 Summer Olympic Games served as a gender equity milestone; it was the first Olympic Games, In which all, 26 countries sent their female representatives to participate in athletics. (Blyler 2012).

Gender equality in the events of the Winter Olympic Games was achieved only in the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games, where men and women competed for the same number of medals. In 2018, there was an imbalance with 49 competitions for men, 44 for women, and 9 for both males and females which clearly indicated gender inequality (Nunes

2018). In the male dominated society, woman's inferiority is a salient feature because of her singularity and subordination. In a patriarchal society where, there is violence against women, both slight and straight, is created out of the patriarchal values operating in society, force women's conformity to gendered roles. Men are viewed as an undifferentiated group that oppress women. Patriarchy is an extremely pervasive system of power (Connell 1987).

After a long struggle, women are achieving special position in the field of sports, which is an inspiration for other women. On one hand, we celebrate the success of Indian women into sports and on the other hand, they have encountered tragic incidents of harassment, exploitation and violence against women. Therefore, it is very important to understand the kind of relations sportswomen share with their male counterparts at workplace.

Relations with Males at Workplace

Goffman (1961) brought forward by stating that, the nature of interactions is inclined by social categorization, values and norms. Relationship can never be fully understood in isolation from the social context (Hinde 1979). The type of relationship the sportswomen share with their co-sportsmen will be totally different from that with their male coaches and support staff. Further, Social definitions may prohibit women to develop close personal relationship with superiors, which may be a desired thing for males.

The relationship between a coach and a sportsperson is of utmost importance. The kind of relationship the two share some where reflects on the performance of the sportsperson. A positive attitude tends to bring out the best in the person and he/she is motivated while a negative attitude tends to lower the performance and discourage him/her. This is the greatest responsibility of coaches towards their players.

At workplace, sportswomen have to deal with male counterparts; male coaches, co- sportsmen as well as support staff. Sportswomen experience different kind of problems at workplace. Fasting and Knorre (2005) described relationship between sportswomen and male coaches and observed unwanted physical contact between a female athlete and her coach and many sportswomen knew about many female athletes who had sexual relationship with their male coaches. An attempt has been made in the study to find out relationship that sportswomen have with their male coaches, co - sportsmen and support staff at workplace.

Relations with Male Coaches

Sports have been considered as male dominated sphere. Studies have shown maximum occupancy of male coaches as compared to female coaches. The male coaches have the highest status in the sports field. The nature of human interactions is influenced by social definitions as well as by the position of that the person occupy. The sportswomen and their relationship with male coaches is very important. Burke (2001) coach- athlete interactions has been described as a situation in which the coach's control is absolute.

During Seoul Olympics in 1988 there were 92 percent male coaches and only 8 percent were female coaches (Singh 2005). Miller (1998) has labeled the top authority individuals as a 'highly-conscious' group. The top authority individuals are not only self conscious but conscious of their 'self dignity'. Their ethnocentrism leads them to believe that they have special gifts and attributes not generally shared by the commoners. Essentially, a perpetrator (already in a position of relative power) may seek to establish a relationship with the victim which appears to be built on trust and mutual objectives. Male coaches at the top of the supervisory structure are vested with the right, of decision making and commanding. It is therefore, but natural that they develop a dominant personality in their behavior to deal with the women players. It is the obligation of women players to receive orders from their super ordinates and execute them as per rules. The treatment they get from their superiors is an indicator of the pattern of discrimination or otherwise, shown to them. Newton and Duda (1999) described the negative attitude of coach towards athletes. Athletes had experienced physical punishment due to poor performance. Fasting and Knorre (2005) described relationship between coach and athletes and analyzed that 11% athletes were slap on their face, head or ears by a member of sport support staff. 36% had observed unwanted physical contact between a female athlete and her coach. 74% knew about any female athlete who had sexual relationship with their coach. 86% respondents said that they had heard rumors about sexual relationship between a female athlete and her coach. Grokce and Celik (2016) described that women players had faced bullying during their tournaments by their coaches and directors of sports. Some of them had faced violent behavior and humiliation by their coaches in the presence of other players. Women experienced violence, humiliating words, injustice and unnecessary restrictions and throwing up any sport equipment on players.

Relations with Co-Sportsmen

The members of co-sportsmen group have almost the same status. They interact with each other as equals. They cooperate with each other as well as work for the goals of the organization for which they play as team members. Co- sportsmen group is almost equal to each other, they are expected to plan their actions together and for the attainment of goals they are required to co ordinate their activities and strategies for success.

Maintaining relations with male co-sportsmen is another major issue. Those who have equal status may be envious of women if they are successful as they are not ready to see women exceeding in sports. Theoretically, a woman player in a work place is equal to any male player in identical position with regard to powers and privileges as well as performance and prerogatives. However, in actual practice, this may be distorted by the prevailing notions about women. In Norway, it was found that the female sportspersons had faced sexual harassment in sports by authorities and peer athletes (Fasting et al. 2004). If society

considers women as inferior to men, her position in the workplace will be influenced by male chauvinism no matter what are her legal rights and actual capabilities are. In other words, her claim to equality greatly depends upon how the co-sportsmen at the workplace treat sportswomen. Alexander et al. (2011) examined that mostly female athletes experienced emotional harm including humiliation, negative self and body image and self-harm by the peers.

Relations with Support Staff

An individual is expected to play his /her role keeping in view the position he / she is occupying in workplace. During practise hours the sportswomen are expected to keep a permissible distance from their support staff. Fasting et al. (2007) examined that many sportswomen reported sexual harassment incidents involving male authorities (coaches, supports managers, and masseur). However, there is a general hesitation that if sportswomen became friendly with the support staff, they would neither be able to get the work done from their support staff nor could exercise authority over them. It is, therefore, demanded that the sportswomen should maintain a reasonable distance from the support staff. When sportswomen are in the higher position and gives orders to male support staff, how readily her orders are accepted and appreciated by male support staff is a question that needs addressal. Support staff may not be readily disposed to accept the authority of women. In that case sports women do not get a fair deal from their support staff. Studies described that sportswomen had experienced slap on their face, head or ears by a member of support staff (Fasting and Knorre 2005).

Theoretical Framework

A variety of theories have been developed to describe problems experienced by sportswomen at workplace. For the present paper Duluth's Power and Control Wheel model has been applied which clearly pays emphasis on abusive eight items :(1) Intimidation (2) Emotional abuse(3) Isolation, laying (4) Economic abuse (5) Male privilege(6) coercion& threats (7) Children as victims. (8) Minimizing, Denying, & Blaming. Sports are institutions for the embodiment of masculinity. This showed that male power over women come naturalized and linked to the social distribution of violence (Connell 1987).

The Power and Control Wheel model clearly lays emphasis on power and the way it is misused in harassing the victims. Similarly, it can be observed that power is one of the main strategies in the field of sports used against sportswomen by the harasser to an extent that it leads to emotional, psychological, professional, physical as well as economic setbacks.

Objectives of the Study

The present paper focuses on the following two objectives:

1. To explore the factors that has affected sportswomen's decision for playing sports/ games outside their hometowns.
2. To find out the kind of relationship women have with male counterparts at workplace i.e. with coaches, co- sportsmen and support staff

Methodology

The study was conducted in the state of Punjab. For the present research, a purposive sample of 210 sports women, who were playing sports under professional training institutes and were pursuing games as their career at district, national and international level were taken. Different games like Basketball, Volleyball, Kabbaddi, Judo, Cycling, Handball, Athletics, Weightlifting, Hockey, Football, Gymnastics, Wrestling, Swimming, Badminton, Table Tennis, Boxing etc were included in the study. The research design for study was partially exploratory and partially descriptive. An interview schedule was constructed to collect in-depth information for the present study.

Results

To understand the nature of the social grouping as well as the quality of interrelationship that exists among respondents and their male counterparts, it is important to understand their demographic background. Socio-economic background of the respondents is given below:

Table 1 Background Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age (in years)		
15-20	147	67.61
20-25	67	31.91
25-30	1	0.48
Level of game		
State level	72	34.28
National	131	62.38
International level	7	3.34
Form of game		
Indoor	34	16.19
Outdoor	91	43.33
Both	85	40.48
Caste		
Upper	130	62
Middle	28	13
Lower	52	25
Education		
B.A	188	89.52
M.A	14	6.66
Professional	8	3.82
Religion		
Hindu	94	44.77
Sikh	114	54.28
Muslim	2	0.95
Family type		
Nuclear	145	69.5
Joint	65	30.95

Table1 shows that Majority of the sportswomen in the sample i.e.67.61 were in the age group of 15-20 years and 62.38 percent were found to be national level/interuniversity level players. 43.33 percent sportswomen were engaged in outdoor games. It includes hockey, football, athletics, basketball, volleyball, korfbal, softball and handball. Most of the women in the study i.e. 130 belonged to the upper caste.

The educational background of the respondents indicates that 89.52 percent of the total

respondents were pursuing graduate degrees and 6.66 percent were pursuing post graduate degrees. There were only 3.82 percent of the total respondents who were pursuing professional degrees i.e.B.P.E.d, M.P.E.d, etc. It was assumed that women with higher educational qualification are aware about their rights at their workplace. Majority of the respondents were Sikhs as the study was conducted in the state of Punjab. The research clearly reveals the dominance of nuclear family in the sample. The nuclear family perpetuates more open and healthy interaction between the family members. It is believed that respondents discuss their problems with family members to find out solutions.

Age at the Time of Starting Sports/Games

Mostly women starts playing at young age for their physical as well as mental development. Australian Bureau Statistics (2002) described that women aged 18 years and above had participated in sports or physical activities at least once in their life. Therefore, it is important to know at what age respondents started playing sports. The following table represents the clear information regarding age of the respondents at the time of starting the sports/games.

Table 2 Age at the Time of Starting Sports/Games

Age(in years)	Frequency	Percent
5-10	19	9.05
10-15	106	50.50
15-20	83	39.5
Above 20	2	0.95
Total	210	100

For the purpose of analysis, the age at which the respondents started playing was divided into four categories. Table 2 clearly indicates that 50.50 percent of the total respondents started playing in the age group of 10-15years.39.5 percent of the respondents started playing in the age group of 15-20 years. There were 9.05 percent of the respondents who started playing in the age group of 5-10 years. There were only two respondents, who started playing after the age of 20 years. Thus, it was found that maximum percentage of the respondents started playing when they were very young.

How Women Joined Sports?

Women's participation in sports can create a substantial contribution to social life and tradition development. Studies described that even if a girl plays, she faces hurdles regarding her chances of continuing to play sports. After high school, physical activity decreases by almost 50% among females (Han et al. 2008). For the purpose of analysis, it is necessary to know how women joined sports.

Table 3 How Women Joined Sports?

How sports was joined	Frequency	Percent
Family support	82	39.04
Influences of peers	21	10
Through school activities	76	36.20
All of the above	31	14.76
Total	210	100

The data revealed that majority of the respondents, i.e. 39.04 percent respondents joined sports because their family members wanted them to join. The family members of these respondents were

well educated and at least one family member was from sports background (either as a player or as a D.P.E. teacher). Therefore, they wanted their child to be into sports. 36.20 percent respondents were involved in sports because they got exposure in school, which were already promoting sports in their schools. Their school teachers found them to be physically fit and agile for sports and therefore motivated them to join sports. Only 10 percent respondents played sports because of their peer pressure and 14.76 percent respondents found all the above mentioned factors to be responsible for joining sports. Findings show that majority of the respondents participated in games with the support of their family members and school authorities.

Reasons behind Joining Academies

At the beginning of ancient times of India, only men were allowed to participate in most of the games and sports, women were not allowed to participate or even to watch the games (Coakley2009). As Indian women started involving themselves in sports, they faced various types of problems during their sports career such as physiological, psychological, familial, social, sexual and so on (Ahmed 2015). Such issues prevent women either from involving themselves in sports or from training. In spite of these challenges in this career option, respondents managed to join sports academies. Therefore, It is important to discuss what motivated women to join these sports academies. Some prominent reasons are discussed below:

Table 4 Reasons behind Joining Academies

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
To support the family economically	92	43.80
To receive education	42	20
To secure career in sports	28	13.33
To achieve goal/ambition in sports	36	17.15
To maintain good health	12	5.72
Total	210	100

Table 4 reveals that 43.80 percent respondents joined sports academies because they were financially poor. These women were physically fit for sports and wanted to improve their economic condition as these academies provide them shelter, food, sports equipment etc.20 percent respondents wanted to receive further education because these academies provide them scholarships for education as well. 13.33 percent respondents were interested to secure their career in sports because through sports they could get better jobs in any field like railway, banking, coaching centers, as sports director etc. 17.15 percent of total respondents wanted to be international players and earn name and fame in sports field. Findings showed that majority of respondents joined sports academies because respondents belonged to economically weaker families. They joined the academies to financially support their families and themselves.

Number of Male Counterparts at Workplace

Before understanding the relationship of sportswomen with male counterparts at workplace, it is important to discuss the number of male coaches,

co- sportsmen and support staff. Table 5 presents the distribution of number of male coaches, co-sportsmen and support staff at workplace.

Table 5 Number of Male Coaches, Co- Sportsmen, and Supporting Staff at Workplace

No. of males	Male coaches	Co - Sportsmen	Supporting Staff
1-5	130 97.14%	32 16.67%	210 100%
5-10	74 2.86%	38 19.79%	
10+		122 63.54%	
TOTAL	204	192	210

*For male coaches number is 204, 6 respondents did not have male coaches * for co sportsmen number is 192, 18 respondents did not have co – sportsmen. For supporting staff number is 210.

It was observed that 97.14 percent of the total respondents had 1-5 male coaches. 63.54 percent respondents answered that they had more than 10 co-sportsmen and all the respondents had supporting staff ranging from 1-5. It was also found that sportswomen were playing with co-sportsmen to improve their skills and to increase their stamina in games. Thus, it is clear from the data that women had maximum number of co -sportsmen followed by coaches and support staff.

Relationship with Male counterparts; Male Coaches, Co- Sportsmen and Support Staff

The present study highlights the relationship between a male coach and a female sportsperson which is of paramount importance. The kind of relationship the two share somehow reflects on the performance of the sportswomen. A positive attitude tends to bring out the best in the person and he/she is motivated while a negative attitude tends to lower the performance and discourage him/her. Studies revealed relational maltreatments and non-relational maltreatments. Relational maltreatments include neglect, physical, sexual and emotional abuse and non-relational maltreatments include abuse or assault, child labour, institutional maltreatment, corruption, bullying and harassment, which occur within noncritical relationship (Stirling 2009).Therefore it is important to discuss relationship between sportswomen and their male counterparts at workplace. Further, an attempt was made to understand the relationship of sportswomen with their male coaches, co- sportsmen and support staff at workplace.

Table 6 Relationship with Male Counterparts; Male Coaches, Co- Sportsmen and Support Staff

Relationship	Male coaches	Co-sportsmen	Support staff
Cordial	27	36	63
Normal	19	44	118
Uncordial	158	112	29
Total	204	192	210

*Six respondents did not have male coaches. Eight respondents did not have co sportsmen.

Since one of the objectives of the study was to find out the kind of relationship sportswomen have with male counterparts at workplace, it was found that

maximum number of respondents. 158 had uncordial relations with male coaches because women were humiliated in front of other members on a regular basis. In addition to this, they also faced physical punishment, verbal abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, physical contact. Such situation clearly reflects power relations at workplace. There were 112 respondents who had uncordial relations with co-sportsmen because of bullying as men were not ready to accept women in male dominated area. Co-sportsmen used to feel as if entry of women into sports is a threat to chauvinism thus depicting patriarchal attitude prevalent in the society. It was also observed that maximum respondents had normal relationship with support staff i.e. 118, because the support staff basically had to help and assist them and more importantly women used to maintain a reasonable distance from them so that their orders could be taken without any hassle. Very few respondents had cordial relationship with male coaches, co-sportsmen as well as with support staff which clearly supports the power and control wheel model that has been used in the present research.

Summary and Conclusion

Such findings clearly depict that sportswomen are not given respect and status at the workplace which their male counterparts enjoy. Male counterparts doubt their capabilities as good players. Men are not ready to accept females in male dominated areas. There was not much difference in the attitudes of co sportsmen, male coaches. These men viewed sportswomen first as women and then as players. The tendency of male counterparts to treat sportswomen at workplace as an object of sexuality results in discrimination and inequality. Sportswomen are subject to bias because of sex, in spite of numerous laws and regulations that prohibit discrimination targeting women. Further, Power and Control Wheel Theory has been found quite proficient in the present context. Findings indicated that level of game has not changed the status of sportswomen at workplace. They are still looked down upon and discriminated in the sports academies, and continue to hold a subordinate position in the work place. Bradley (1999) stated positional power as the male dominance of their positions-which they are holding such as managers, authority, supervisors and employers at the workplaces. This resistance comes out of a feeling that sportswomen are inferior and as such cannot perform as efficiently as men. The present paper observes the influence of power by male coaches, administration and patriarchal values operating in society for the existence and perpetuation of problems faced by sportswomen at workplace.

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