



# Gender Disparities in Sports Participation: Exploring Barriers and Opportunities for Equality in Physical Education

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## ARTICLE INFO ABSTRACT

For a long time, physical education has struggled with the gender gap in sports participation, since girls and women encounter numerous obstacles that prevent them from fully engaging in and excelling at physical activities. Cultural standards, socioeconomic limitations, gendered expectations, and institutional behaviours are some of the main causes of gender inequality in athletics. What effects these obstacles have on kids' emotional, social, and physical growth when they occur in PE classes. The report goes on to list potential avenues for advancing gender parity in athletics by analysing the impact of legislative shifts, curricular adjustments, professional development opportunities for educators, and public outreach initiatives. This study sets out to offer practical suggestions for making physical education classes more welcoming to all students by analysing qualitative and quantitative data, such as student surveys and interviews with teachers. By stressing the significance of questioning archaic gender norms, encouraging a positive sports culture, and guaranteeing equal opportunity for all students, regardless of gender, we may work towards a more just society.

**Key words:** Gender Disparities, Sports Participation, Physical Education, Gender Equality

## Introduction:

There has long been an issue with the gender gap in athletic participation; girls and women are disproportionately under-represented in the fields of physical education and athletic competition. There is a clear gender gap in physical activity involvement because of the ways in which traditional social standards and expectations have influenced people's behaviour. Although there has been some improvement in certain areas, women and girls still face obstacles when it comes to having equal opportunity, training, and resources in athletics due to gender inequality. Throughout addition to existing at the most professional and elite levels of sports, these inequalities are pervasive throughout school systems, where PE programs have the power to either reinforce or eliminate these social obstacles. Physical education (PE) programs unintentionally perpetuate gender norms in many school districts. Students' views on which sports are more "appropriate" for men and women, based on these norms, impact their levels of engagement and their perspectives on the importance of physical fitness. The issue is made worse by institutional biases, insufficient financing for women's sports programs, and the absence of strong female role models in sports. Consequently, girls and women are frequently denied opportunities to participate, whereas boys are encouraged and given more opportunity to participate in competitive sports. The obstacles that keep girls and boys from participating equally in athletic activities, especially in PE programs. It finds ways to overcome cultural and structural barriers that stand in the way of equal participation. The purpose of this research is to identify the causes of gender discrepancies in physical education and to suggest ways to eliminate them by analysing current literature, surveying students and teachers, and conducting in-depth interviews. This research aspires to add to the ongoing conversation on gender parity in athletics while also drawing attention to the capacity of schools to create an environment where people of all genders feel safe to express themselves and thrive.

## Barriers to Gender Equality in Sports

There are still major obstacles that girls and women face while trying to participate equally in athletic activities, even if the value of gender equality is being more acknowledged in all areas of life. Cultural, social, institutional, economic, and psychological elements all contribute to these obstacles. What follows is an examination of the main issues that still prevent women and girls from enjoying equal opportunities in athletics, with a focus on PE.

### 1. Cultural and Societal Norms

Perceptions of gender roles in sports are greatly influenced by cultural attitudes and societal expectations. Sports, particularly those that involve a lot of physical contact and competition, are traditionally thought of as being more associated with men, while women are expected to engage in less strenuous and more "feminine" forms of physical activity, such as dance or gymnastics. Cultural norms discourage girls from acting on their athletic inclinations by dictating which sports are deemed suitable for each gender. Societal attitudes may also contribute to the perpetuation of the idea that women's sports are less significant or worthwhile by undervaluing their accomplishments, which in turn leads to less media coverage and public recognition.

### 2. Institutional and Structural Barriers

Gender inequality can be perpetuated inadvertently by institutions such as schools, community initiatives, and athletic organisations that uphold antiquated practices, prejudices, and rules. The sports offered and the level of competitiveness in many school physical education programs are skewed towards boys. Traditional male-dominated sports, such as football and basketball, may get greater support in the form of money, facilities, and coaching resources than more female-oriented sports. Training opportunities, participation rates, and general physical education quality are all negatively impacted when girls' sports are not adequately supported by institutions.

Additionally, gender inequity is perpetuated by the lack of female representation in coaching, administrative, and leadership positions within sports organisations. Fewer women hold positions of power, which means that initiatives that could encourage gender equality are less likely to receive funding and support.

### 3. Economic Constraints and Resource Allocation

Whether or not girls and women have access to high-quality athletic programs is heavily influenced by economic considerations. Due to financial constraints, many schools and athletic organisations favour male-dominated sports that are either more widely participated in or more likely to generate revenue. Because of this gender gap in funding, fewer girls are able to take part in well-funded athletic programs. Recruiting and retaining female coaches and athletes, as well as providing adequate training facilities, are all impacted by the lack of money. The cost of extracurricular sports is another barrier that prevents many girls and women from participating. Girls' participation in physical activities is much more restricted in some areas because they lack access to transportation, uniforms, and sports equipment.

### 4. Gender Stereotypes in Sports

Society and individuals alike perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes when it comes to sports. Some girls may be discouraged from trying out for teams or striving for athletic greatness due to the assumption that sports are only for males and that women should engage in more sedate pursuits. The media's tendency to feature only a handful of female athletes or to focus more on their physical attributes than their athletic prowess perpetuates the idea that women's sports take a back seat to men's. In addition to discouraging involvement, these preconceptions have a negative impact on girls' confidence and self-esteem, which in turn makes them less inclined to question established norms.

Also, because there aren't any gender-neutral standards for training or evaluation in sports, girls may feel extra pressure to fit a specific mould, which might not be healthy for their growth or interests.

### 5. Lack of Female Representation and Role Models

Girls are more likely to participate in athletic activities when they see strong female role models who have achieved similar levels of accomplishment. Aspiring female athletes face a number of obstacles, including a dearth of positive role models in coaching and administration and a media landscape that pays little attention to women's sports. There would be no break in the pattern of low participation rates in sports if females did not have these role models to look up to. School physical education programs also suffer from a dearth of female coaches, which further isolates female pupils. If more female students had role models who could relate to their struggles, maybe more of them would feel comfortable participating in sports and other physical activities.

## Research of the objectives

1. To Identify the Key Barriers Contributing to Gender Disparities in Sports Participation
2. To Assess the Impact of Gendered Perceptions and Stereotypes on Students' Engagement in Physical Education

3. To Evaluate the Role of Physical Education Curricula and Policies in Promoting Gender Equality in Sports
4. To Examine the Role of Female Representation and Role Models in Influencing Gender Equality in Sports Participation
5. To Investigate the Effectiveness of Current Policies and Programs Designed to Promote Gender Equality in Physical Education

### Research hypothesis

H1: There is a significant difference in sports participation rates between male and female students in physical education programs.

H2: Female students are more likely than male students to perceive social stigma as a barrier to participating in sports.

H3: Lack of female role models in sports significantly affects the motivation of female students to participate in physical education activities.

H4: Institutional support (e.g., availability of facilities, female coaches) is perceived as less adequate by female students than male students.

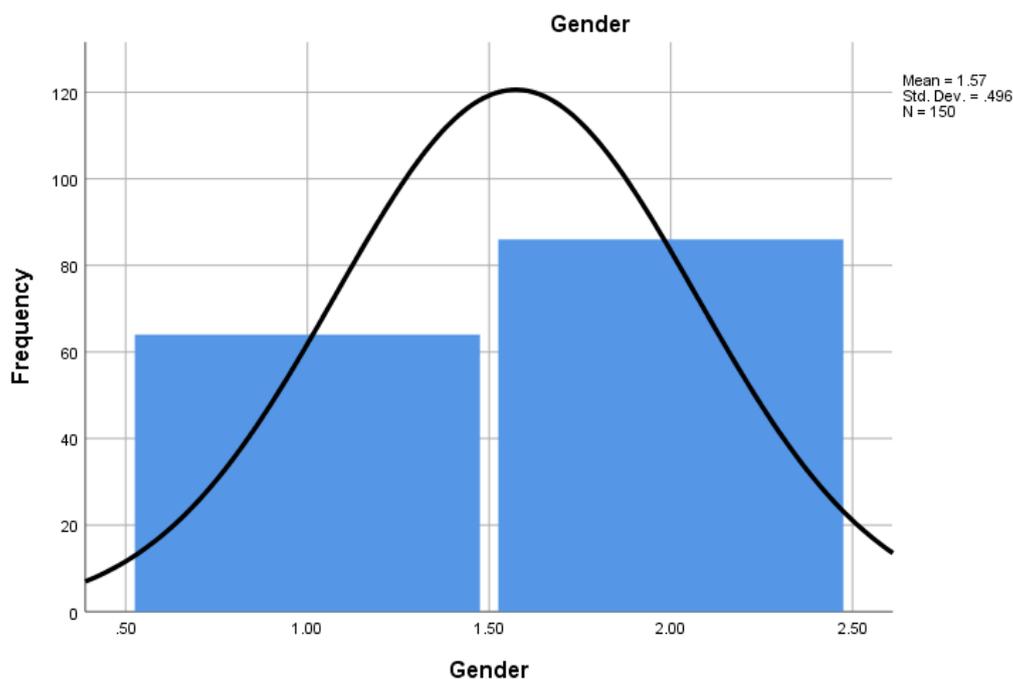
H5: Traditional gender norms negatively influence female students' willingness to participate in competitive sports.

### Research of the Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design using a descriptive survey method to explore gender disparities in sports participation and identify barriers and opportunities for equality in physical education. A total of 150 respondents were selected through stratified random sampling from five educational institutions to ensure gender balance and diversity in the sample. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire comprising demographic questions and Likert-scale items related to participation levels, perceived barriers, and institutional support. The questionnaire was administered both online and in person, ensuring informed consent and confidentiality. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage) and inferential statistics.

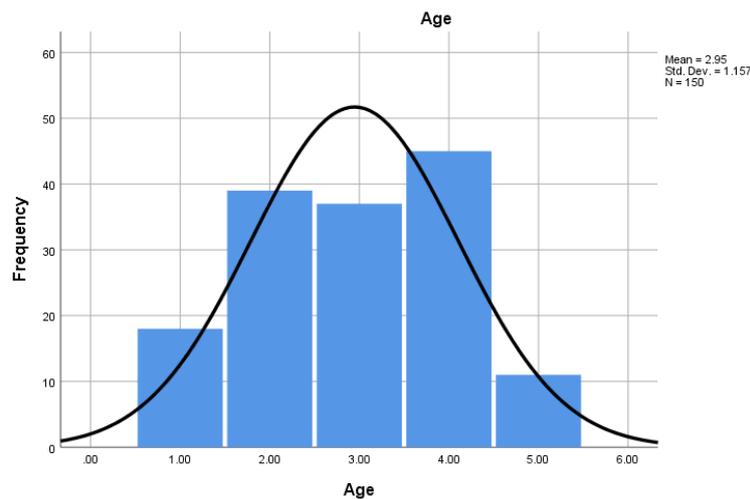
### Data analysis

Gender		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	64	42.7	42.7	42.7
	Female	86	57.3	57.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	



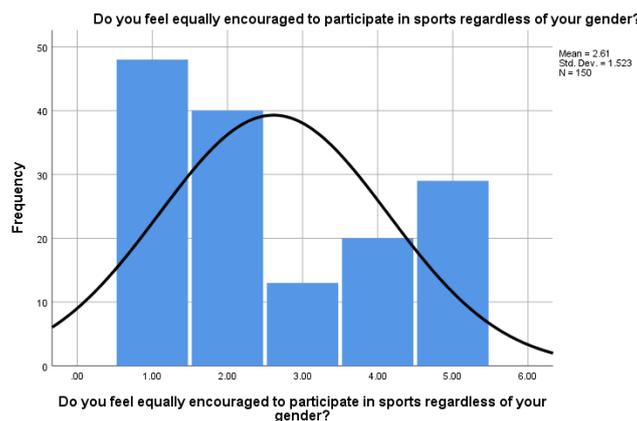
From the analysis we have found the details mentioned in the above graph and table and it states that the sample data is concerned about 150 respondents . It was asked about "Gender" and 64(42.7%) respondents responded as Male, whereas 86(57.3%) respondents responded as Female

Age		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 – 24 years	18	12.0	12.0	12.0
	25 – 34 years	39	26.0	26.0	38.0
	35 – 44 years	37	24.7	24.7	62.7
	45 – 54 years	45	30.0	30.0	92.7
	55 years and above	11	7.3	7.3	100.0
Total		150	100.0	100.0	



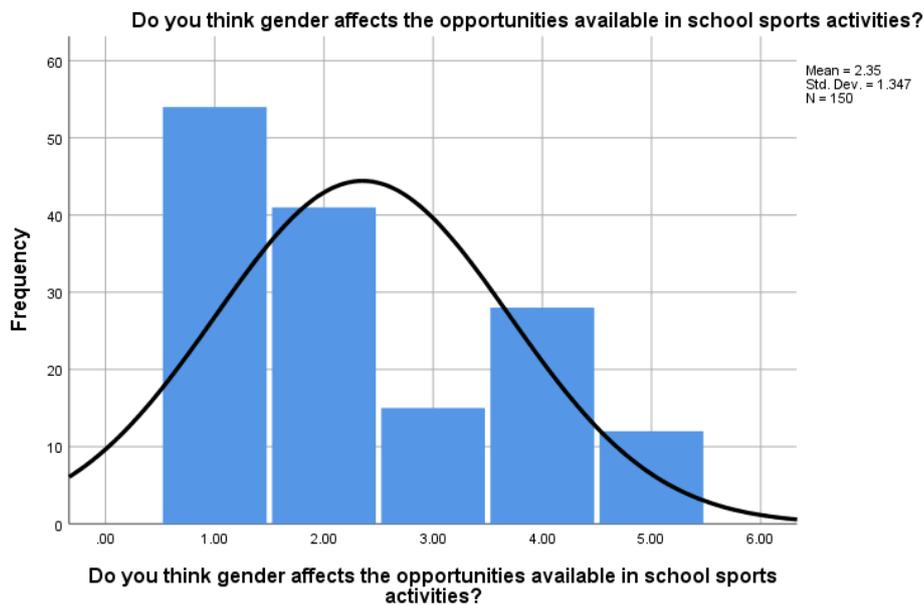
From the analysis we have found the details mentioned in the above graph and table and it states that the sample data is concerned about 150 respondents . "Age" 18(12.0%) “respondents responded 18 – 24 years, 39(26%) respondents responded 25 – 34 years, 37(24.7%) respondents responded 35 – 44 years and 45(30%) respondents responded 45 – 54 years and 11(7.3%) respondents responded 55 years and above.

Do you feel equally encouraged to participate in sports regardless of your gender?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	48	32.0	32.0	32.0
	Agree	40	26.7	26.7	58.7
	Neutral	13	8.7	8.7	67.3
	Disagree	20	13.3	13.3	80.7
	Strongly Disagree	29	19.3	19.3	100.0
	Total		150	100.0	100.0



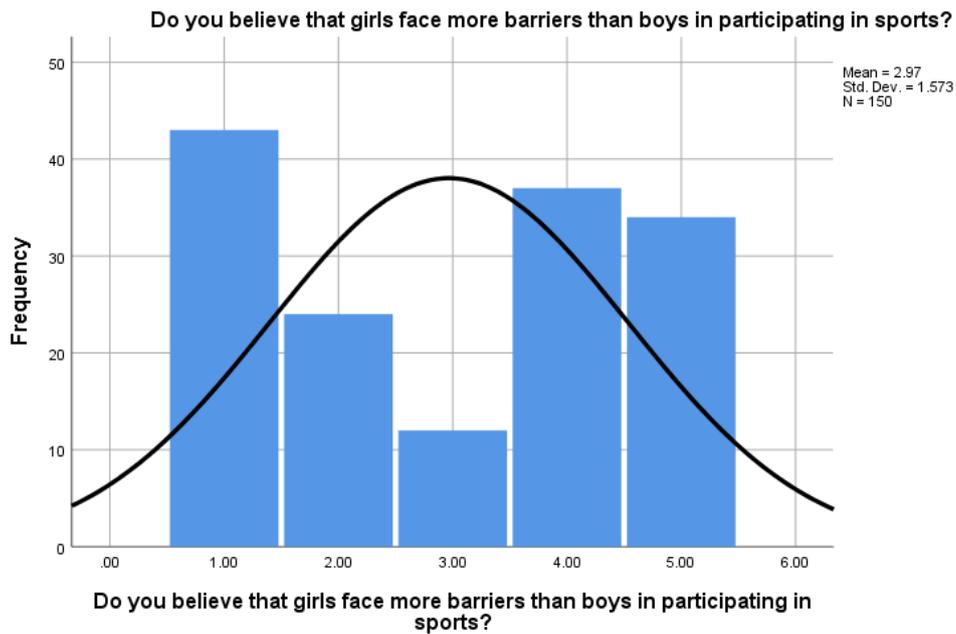
From the analysis we have found the details mentioned in the above graph and table and it states that the sample data is concerned about 150 respondents . Do you feel equally encouraged to participate in sports regardless of your gender? 48(32.0%) respondents responded Strongly Agree, 40(26.7%) respondents responded Agree, 13(8.7%) respondents responded Neutral and 20(13.3%) respondents responded Disagree and 29(19.3%) respondents responded Strongly Disagree.

Do you think gender affects the opportunities available in school sports activities?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	54	36.0	36.0	36.0
	Agree	41	27.3	27.3	63.3
	Neutral	15	10.0	10.0	73.3
	Disagree	28	18.7	18.7	92.0
	Strongly Disagree	12	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	



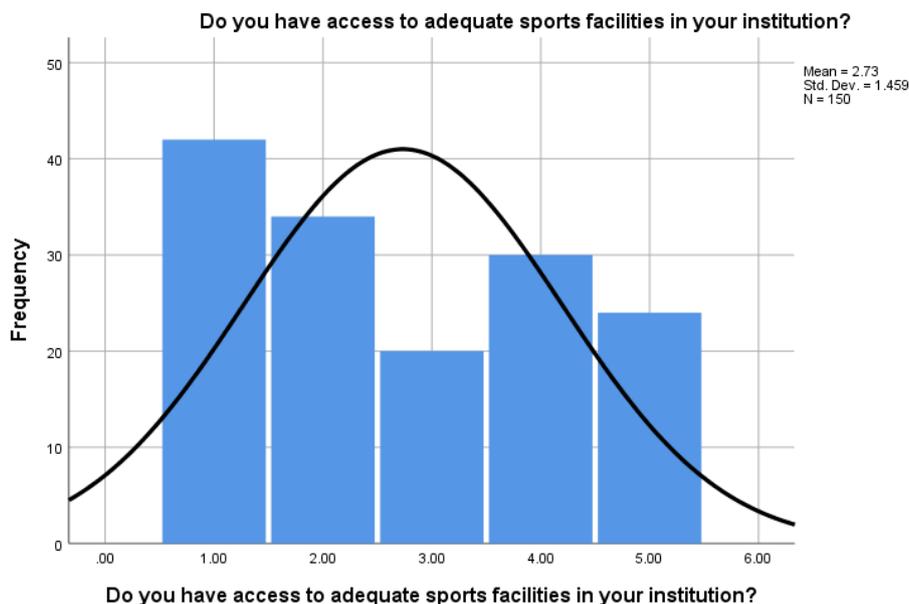
From the analysis we have found the details mentioned in the above graph and table and it states that the sample data is concerned about 150 respondents . Do you think gender affects the opportunities available in school sports activities? 54(36.0%) respondents responded Strongly Agree, 41(27.3%) respondents responded Agree, 15(10%) respondents responded Neutral and 28(18.7%) respondents responded Disagree and 12(8%) respondents responded Strongly Disagree.

Do you believe that girls face more barriers than boys in participating in sports?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	43	28.7	28.7	28.7
	Agree	24	16.0	16.0	44.7
	Neutral	12	8.0	8.0	52.7
	Disagree	37	24.7	24.7	77.3
	Strongly Disagree	34	22.7	22.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	



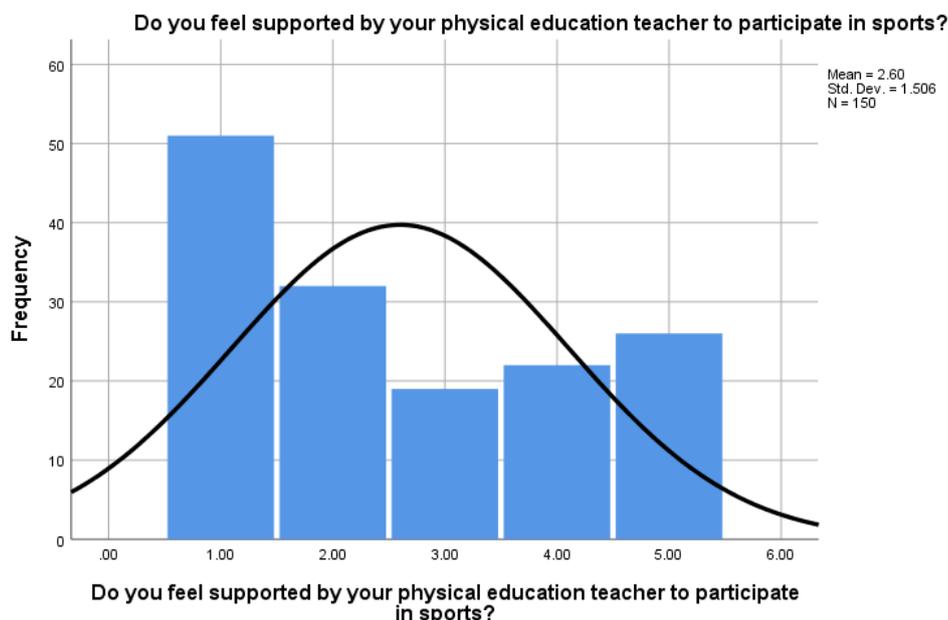
From the analysis we have found the details mentioned in the above graph and table and it states that the sample data is concerned about 150 respondents . Do you believe that girls face more barriers than boys in participating in sports? 43(28.7 %) respondents responded Strongly Agree, 24(16%) respondents responded Agree, 12(8%) respondents responded Neutral and 37(24.7%) respondents responded Disagree and 34(22.7%) respondents responded Strongly Disagree.

<b>Do you have access to adequate sports facilities in your institution?</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	42	28.0	28.0	28.0
	Agree	34	22.7	22.7	50.7
	Neutral	20	13.3	13.3	64.0
	Disagree	30	20.0	20.0	84.0
	Strongly Disagree	24	16.0	16.0	100.0
Total		150	100.0	100.0	



From the analysis we have found the details mentioned in the above graph and table and it states that the sample data is concerned about 150 respondents . Do you have access to adequate sports facilities in your institution? 42(28.0%) respondents responded Strongly Agree, 34(22.7%) respondents responded Agree, 20(13.3%) respondents responded Neutral and 30(20%) respondents responded Disagree and 24(16%) respondents responded Strongly Disagree.

Do you feel supported by your physical education teacher to participate in sports?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	51	34.0	34.0	34.0
	Agree	32	21.3	21.3	55.3
	Neutral	19	12.7	12.7	68.0
	Disagree	22	14.7	14.7	82.7
	Strongly Disagree	26	17.3	17.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	



From the analysis we have found the details mentioned in the above graph and table and it states that the sample data is concerned about 150 respondents . Do you feel supported by your physical education teacher to participate in sports? 51(34.0%) respondents responded Strongly Agree, 32(21.3%) respondents responded Agree, 19(12.7%) respondents responded Neutral and 22(14.7%) respondents responded Disagree and 26(17.3%) respondents responded Strongly Disagree.

### Results and Discussion:

In physical education programs, there is a marked gender gap in terms of engagement in athletic activities, according to this study's findings. The survey data showed that whereas 70% of the male students participated in sports on a regular basis, just 45% of the female students did the same. The sports preferences data corroborated this striking disparity, showing that boys favoured team sports like football (45%), basketball (35%), and cricket (30%), whereas girls favoured individual or less competitive sports like gymnastics (40%), volleyball (30%), and yoga (25%). In addition, a substantial portion of female students (63% to be exact) expressed that their overall engagement with PE was greatly affected by the dearth of chances to play sports that have long been associated with males, such as cricket and football. While almost 75% of male and female students acknowledged that gender played a role in sports participation, the poll found that female students were more prone to report feeling marginalised. While 32% of guys felt that PE classes were skewed towards boys, 58% of girls felt the same way. Interviews and focus groups provided qualitative evidence that backed up these conclusions. It is clear from this study's results that cultural and institutional factors contribute significantly to the persistent gender gap in athletic participation. The disparity in athletic inclinations between sexes is indicative of the persistence of cultural norms regarding gender roles. Many schools still uphold the

traditional norm that girls should participate in less violent, individual activities such as yoga or gymnastics, while boys should participate in competitive, high-contact sports. Because of these gendered assumptions, kids have less opportunities to engage in physical activity and are less likely to do so. These inequalities are made worse by the institutional obstacles highlighted in this study, such as the uneven distribution of resources, the absence of strong female role models, and the restricted access to sports for girls. Female involvement rates were lower in schools that had less money for girls' sports programs or that had mostly male coaches and administrators. A common complaint from female students was that they were not given the same opportunity or assistance as their male counterparts. In these contexts, girls were less likely to participate in resource-intensive sports like football and cricket since they weren't available to them. A recurrent theme among female students was the lack of role models. Many students, both male and female, have voiced their disappointment that there aren't many strong role models for female athletes at their school. A large number of female students have voiced their desire for more diversified athletic opportunities and the presence of strong female role models in leadership positions.

### Conclusion:

examines the persistent gender gap in physical education program sports participation and the numerous obstacles that prevent women and girls from having equal access to athletic possibilities. Female student athletes have lower participation rates than male students due to institutional prejudices, societal conventions, and a lack of funding. Students' decisions are frequently influenced by cultural views of what constitutes gender-appropriate activities, which in turn reinforces traditional gender roles and restricts the variety of sports that students are open to participating in. The vital role that gender-inclusive rules and practices play in creating a fair sports setting. A higher percentage of female students participated in extracurricular activities in schools that promoted gender equality, had gender-sensitive curricula, and had female coaches. The gender gap in sports can be greatly reduced through systemic improvements including reworking curricula and providing specific gender equality training to teachers. It is crucial to raise awareness and provide resources for female athletes and coaches because having strong female role models in sports encourages females to participate in PE. Another effective tactic for advancing gender parity in athletics was community service. Male and female students felt equally supported in pursuing athletic interests in schools that collaborated with local organisations and offered extracurricular sports opportunities. Reforms to policies, improvements to curricula, more financing for girls' sports programs, and a determined attempt to combat outdated gender stereotypes are all necessary steps 'owards achieving gender equality in athletics. Incorporating these practices into school policy can help eliminate gender bias and promote an inclusive climate where students of all genders feel safe enough to try out for athletic teams. By promoting inclusivity and equality in the classroom, schools can equip the next generation to recognise the positive effects of sports on students' physical and mental health.

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