



Sports and Society: Parental Attitudes towards Female Athletes in Sirsa

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ABSTRACT

This study explores parental attitudes towards female participation in sports in Sirsa, Haryana, a district marked by strong cultural traditions and gender biases. Despite notable success stories like Geeta Phogat and Sakshi Malik, female sports participation at the grassroots level faces resistance. The research surveyed 104 parents, using a self-designed questionnaire, to assess their support for daughters' involvement in sports. The results revealed overwhelming support for the importance of physical education and sports for girls, with a majority encouraging their daughters to participate in both recreational and competitive sports. However, concerns about barriers to female sports participation and limited community opportunities persist. While traditional views, such as prioritizing academics over sports or believing boys are naturally more athletic, remain, there is a growing shift toward gender equality in sports. The findings suggest that while progress is being made, targeted efforts are needed to improve accessibility and inclusivity for girls in sports.

Keywords: - Attitude, Sports, Cultural and Gender

Introduction

Sports play a crucial role in shaping individuals, promoting physical fitness, and fostering social development. However, female participation in sports has historically faced several socio-cultural barriers, particularly in conservative societies (Kane, 2016). In India, gender disparities in sports remain prevalent due to deep-rooted traditional beliefs and societal norms that often limit female engagement in athletic activities (Chopra & Bhatt, 2020). The role of parents in shaping their children's sports participation is significant, as their attitudes and support can either encourage or restrict a girl's involvement in sports (Singh et al., 2018).

District Sirsa in Haryana presents a unique case study due to its strong cultural traditions and historical gender biases. Haryana, despite producing some of India's most accomplished female athletes, such as wrestlers Geeta Phogat and Sakshi Malik, still experiences resistance towards female sports participation at the grassroots level (Sharma, 2021). Parental attitudes in Sirsa are influenced by factors such as societal expectations, safety concerns, and economic constraints, which often result in limited opportunities for girls in sports (Yadav & Mehta, 2019).

This study aims to explore the perspectives of parents in Sirsa regarding their daughters' participation in sports. It seeks to understand the extent of encouragement or discouragement, the cultural and economic barriers influencing parental decisions, and the changing dynamics with increased awareness and government initiatives. By analyzing parental attitudes, this research will contribute to the broader discussion on gender equality in sports and highlight the steps needed to create a more supportive environment for female athletes (Deswal, 2022).

Understanding parental perspectives is essential for promoting female sports participation, as their support can play a crucial role in empowering young girls to break stereotypes and pursue athletic careers.

Methodology

The objective of this study was to assess parental attitudes toward female participation in sports. To achieve this, a self-designed questionnaire was developed to collect relevant data that could be utilized for various

analytical purposes. The study involved gathering information from multiple sources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of parental perspectives. A total of 104 participants, including both male and female parents from rural and urban areas of Sirsa, Haryana, were selected for this investigation. The random sampling method was employed to ensure an unbiased representation of the population.

The questionnaire was specifically designed to evaluate parental attitudes toward female sports participation in both rural and urban settings. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, with options ranging from:

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

To analyse the collected data, percentage and frequency methods were applied to determine the distribution of parental opinions. This approach helped quantify the level of support or resistance toward female participation in sports, providing deeper insights into the societal and cultural factors influencing parental attitudes.

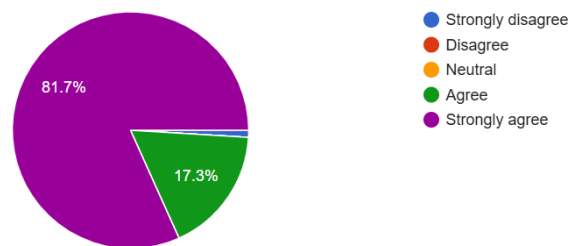
Analysis and Interpretation of Data

To assess parental attitudes toward female participation in sports, the percentile method was employed for data analysis. This approach provided a clear statistical representation of parental perspectives. The findings, based on responses from both rural and urban parents in Sirsa, Haryana, highlight varying levels of support and resistance toward female involvement in sports. The data has been systematically organized and presented in the table below, offering insights into the influence of cultural, social, and economic factors on parental attitudes. These results contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and progress in promoting gender inclusivity in sports.

Fig No-1

Physical education and sports are important for girls.

104 responses

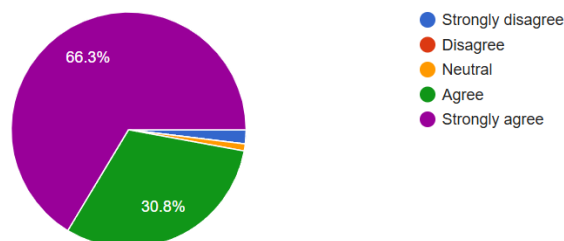


The pie chart presents the responses of 104 participants to the statement, "Physical education and sports are important for girls." The data shows that 81.7% of respondents strongly agree, indicating a vast majority who firmly support the importance of physical education and sports for girls. Additionally, 17.3% agree, further reinforcing the consensus on the significance of these activities. The remaining percentage accounts for neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree responses, which are minimal and barely visible in the chart.

Fig No-2

I encourage my daughter to participate in physical education and sports.

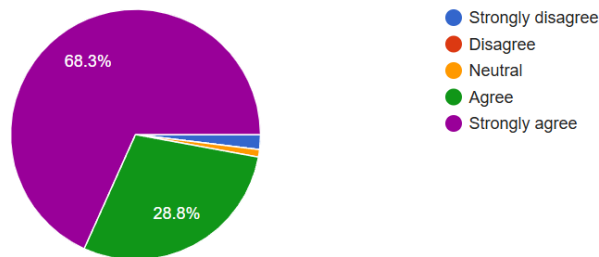
104 responses



The pie chart illustrates the responses of 104 participants to the statement, "I encourage my daughter to participate in physical education and sports." The data reveals that 66.3% strongly agree, while 30.8% agree, indicating that a majority of respondents support and actively encourage their daughters to engage in sports and physical activities. A very small percentage of respondents selected neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree, which suggests that opposition to the idea is minimal.

Fig No-3**Girls should be encouraged to play competitive sports**

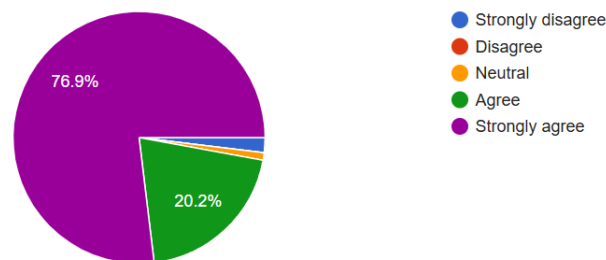
104 responses



The pie chart presents the responses of 104 participants to the statement, "Girls should be encouraged to play competitive sports." The data shows that 68.3% strongly agree and 28.8% agree, making up a combined total of 97.1% in favour of encouraging girls to participate in competitive sports. A very small percentage of respondents selected neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree, indicating minimal opposition.

Fig No-4**Sports have a positive impact on a girl's personal development (confidence, leadership, etc.).**

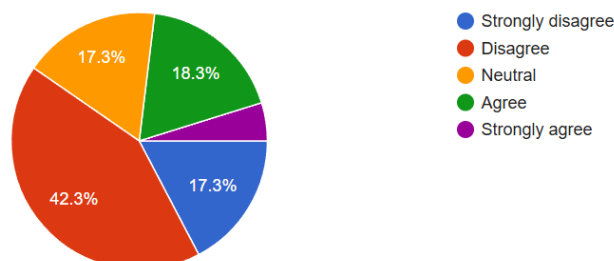
104 responses



The pie chart presents the responses of 104 participants to the statement, "Sports have a positive impact on a girl's personal development (confidence, leadership, etc.)." The data shows that 76.9% strongly agree and 20.2% agree, making up a combined total of 97.1% in favour of the statement. A very small percentage of respondents selected neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree, indicating minimal opposition.

Fig No-5**Girls are naturally less athletic than boys.**

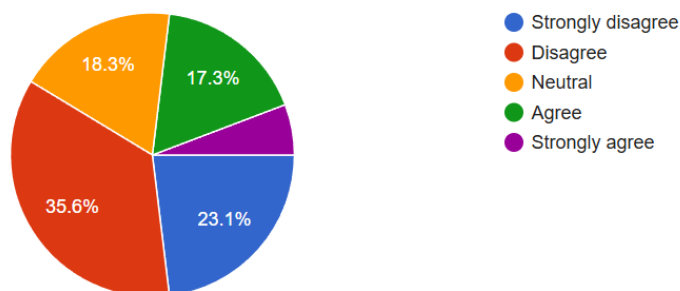
104 responses



The pie chart illustrates the responses of 104 participants to the statement, "Girls are naturally less athletic than boys." The data reveals a diverse range of opinions on this topic. A significant 42.3% of respondents disagreed, while 17.3% strongly disagreed, indicating that a majority do not believe in an inherent athletic disparity between boys and girls. However, 17.3% remained neutral, suggesting uncertainty or a balanced perspective on the matter. On the other hand, 18.3% agreed with the statement, and a small percentage strongly agreed, reflecting the presence of traditional beliefs regarding gender differences in athletic ability. These results highlight the ongoing debate about gender and sports, emphasizing the need for continued awareness and equal opportunities for girls in athletics.

Fig No-6**Girls should focus more on academics than sports.**

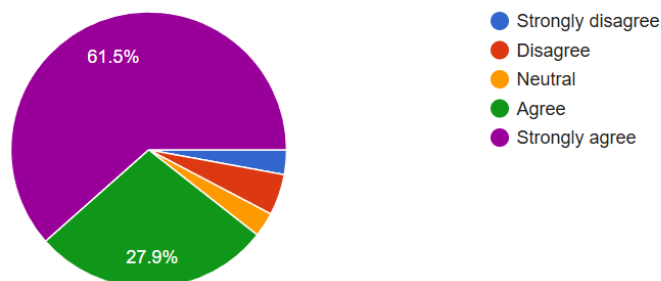
104 responses



The pie chart represents the responses of 104 participants to the statement, "Girls should focus more on academics than sports." The data reveals diverse perspectives on the topic. A significant portion of respondents, 35.6% disagreed and 23.1% strongly disagreed, indicating that the majority believe girls should balance both academics and sports rather than prioritizing one over the other. Meanwhile, 18.3% remained neutral, suggesting that some respondents see merit in both perspectives or do not hold a strong opinion. On the other hand, 17.3% agreed, while a smaller percentage strongly agreed, implying that a segment of respondents believes girls should place greater emphasis on academics. Overall, the majority of participants oppose the notion that academics should take precedence over sports for girls, reflecting a growing recognition of the significance of sports in a girl's overall development.

Fig No-7**Girls and boys should have equal opportunities to participate in sports and physical activities.**

104 responses

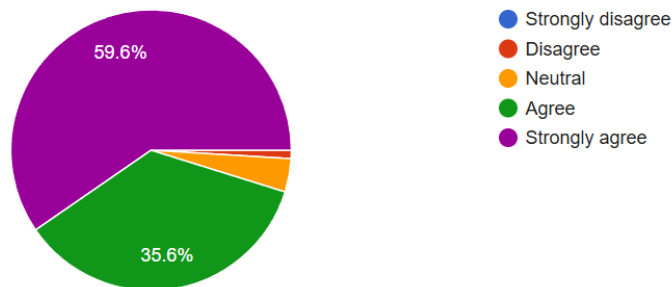


The pie chart illustrates the responses of 104 participants to the statement, "Girls and boys should have equal opportunities to participate in sports and physical activities." The data strongly reflects a broad consensus in favour of gender equality in sports. A significant majority of respondents, 61.5% strongly agreed and 27.9% agreed, indicating overwhelming support for equal participation opportunities for both genders. A small percentage remained neutral, suggesting that some participants might believe there are specific conditions where opportunities could differ. Meanwhile, only a minor fraction disagreed or strongly disagreed, signifying that opposition to equal opportunities in sports is minimal. Overall, the results emphasize strong public support for gender equality in sports, reinforcing the idea that both girls and boys should have the same chances to engage in physical activities.

Fig No-8

I would support my daughter if she wanted to pursue a career in professional sports.

104 responses

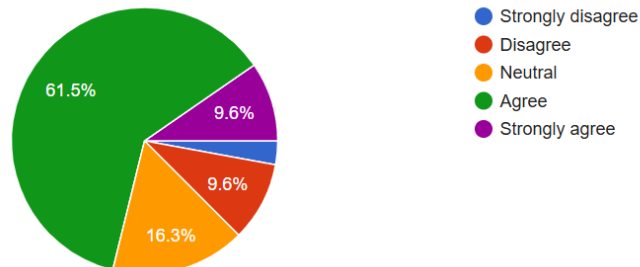


The pie chart illustrates the responses of 104 participants to the statement, "I would support my daughter if she wanted to pursue a career in professional sports." The results demonstrate a strong inclination toward supporting female athletes in their career aspirations. A majority of respondents (59.6%) strongly agreed, while 35.6% agreed, indicating that an overwhelming proportion of participants are in favour of encouraging their daughters to pursue professional sports. A small percentage remained neutral, suggesting some hesitancy or uncertainty regarding such career choices. Only a minor fraction disagreed or strongly disagreed, reflecting minimal opposition. Overall, the data highlights a progressive shift in attitudes, showing broad parental support for girls seeking careers in professional sports.

Fig No-9

There are significant barriers preventing girls from participating in sports.

104 responses

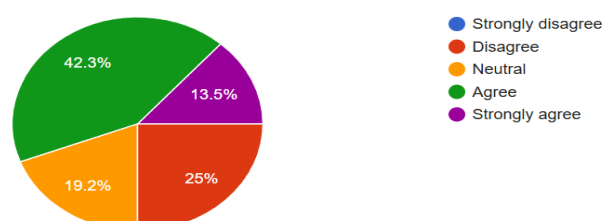


The pie chart presents the responses of 104 participants to the statement, "There are significant barriers preventing girls from participating in sports." The data reveals a strong consensus acknowledging the challenges faced by girls in sports. A majority of respondents (61.5%) agreed that significant barriers exist, while a smaller percentage (9.6%) strongly agreed, reinforcing this perspective. Meanwhile, 16.3% remained neutral, indicating that some respondents might recognize both challenges and opportunities for female athletes. On the other hand, 9.6% disagreed, and a small fraction strongly disagreed, suggesting that a minority believe that barriers are not a major issue. Overall, the results highlight the prevailing perception that girls continue to face obstacles in sports participation, emphasizing the need for further efforts to promote inclusivity and equal opportunities.

Fig No-10

There are enough sports opportunities for girls in my community.

104 responses



The pie chart illustrates the responses of 104 participants to the statement, "There are enough sports opportunities for girls in my community." The data reveals a mixed perception regarding the availability of sports opportunities for girls. A significant portion (42.3%) agreed, indicating that many believe their community provides adequate opportunities. However, 19.2% remained neutral, suggesting some respondents see both opportunities and limitations. On the other hand, a considerable percentage (25%) disagreed, and 13.5% strongly disagreed, highlighting concerns that girls may still face challenges in accessing sports opportunities. Overall, while a majority perceive the availability of opportunities as sufficient, a notable percentage remains skeptical, emphasizing the need for further improvements in sports accessibility for girls. The survey results highlight a strong consensus on the importance of sports for girls, with an overwhelming majority agreeing that physical education enhances their development, boosts confidence, and should be encouraged. Most respondents actively support their daughters' participation in sports and believe in equal opportunities for both genders. However, there are mixed views regarding the availability of sports opportunities for girls in their communities. While 42.3% agreed that sufficient opportunities exist, 25% disagreed, and 13.5% strongly disagreed, indicating notable concerns. Additionally, a significant portion acknowledges barriers preventing girls from participating in sports, reinforcing the need for improvements in accessibility and inclusivity. Despite progress, traditional beliefs persist, with some respondents agreeing that girls should focus more on academics or that boys are naturally more athletic. However, the overall trend reflects a positive shift towards gender equality in sports, with strong parental and societal support for girls pursuing athletics professionally.

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal a largely positive shift in parental attitudes toward female participation in sports, reflecting growing awareness of the importance of physical education and athletics for girls. A strong majority of respondents recognize the benefits of sports in building confidence, leadership, and overall personal development. Parents largely encourage their daughters to engage in both recreational and competitive sports, with significant support for equal opportunities between boys and girls. Additionally, most respondents express willingness to support their daughters in pursuing professional sports careers, highlighting a progressive change in mind-set.

However, the study also identifies existing challenges. While many parents believe there are sufficient sports opportunities for girls, a notable percentage disagrees, emphasizing the need for improved accessibility. Traditional beliefs persist among some respondents, with lingering perceptions that girls should prioritize academics over sports or that boys are naturally more athletic. Furthermore, a significant proportion acknowledges barriers that hinder girls' participation, reinforcing the necessity of targeted interventions to promote inclusivity.

Overall, the results indicate a strong parental endorsement of gender equality in sports, with growing support for female athletic participation. Continued efforts are needed to address cultural and structural barriers, ensuring that all girls have equal access to sports opportunities and the freedom to pursue their athletic aspirations.

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