



Assessing Gender Equality in Cricket and Ways Forward: A Sociological Study of Bichpuri Block of Agra District

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, cricket is considered as one of the male-dominated sports. It seems to be true. It was limited to men's cricket, and women's cricket was often not taken as seriously as men's sports. Over the years, women have faced many challenges in the sport of cricket, such as access to cricket sports activities, recognition, participation, willingness to take decisions, access to resources, salaries, financial incentives, proper sports facilities, media coverage, and organizational culture of sports bodies etc. Additionally, the impact of the recent COVID-19 pandemic has further increased gender inequality in this field of the sports. However, there is no doubt that recent years have seen an unprecedented rise in the popularity of women's cricket worldwide, including India. Many initiatives have also been taken to promote women's cricket, such as the Women's ICC World Cup, the Senior Women's T20 World Cup, the launch of Women's Indian Premier League, and the announcement of a Pay Equity Policy by the Board of Control for Cricket etc. However despite these efforts, is women's cricket really able to close the gap with men's cricket? Women's cricket continues to have a long struggle to achieve gender equality with men's cricket because even today, gender inequalities in sports persist at the individual and societal level. There is an urgent to investigate this problem assessing gender equality in cricket & way forward.

Keywords: Cricket, Gender Equality, Participation Level, Way Forward & Egalitarian Society.

Introduction

Cricket is one of the popular sports globally, with a growing number of participants, viewers and fans. It is true that cricket is a male dominated sport and men have always had excellent performance and popularity in the sport of cricket. But in recent years, as women are performing well every where, including space, they have also increased their interest and popularity in cricket. It is fact that male and female cricketers differ in terms of morphological and physical characteristics such as strength, physical abilities. They differ in the ways of playing cricket, and that's why they also react differently in match and training situations. However, various research related to gender equality in sports have been conducted, but in societies where gender stereotypes and male dominance are prevalent in cricket, there is a need to investigate the related issues in an appropriate manner.

Gender Equality and Gender Inequality

To concepts of gender equality and inequality complement to each other. In the absence of one, we cannot discuss the other aspect. Sport and gender equality are interrelated in different manners. Sport is a social and cultural activity in which social constructions of masculinity and femininity play a key role (Council of Europe, 2023). Gender equality is the process of being fair to women, men and all others. The overall objective of gender equality is to create an egalitarian society in which women, men and all others have equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities in all spheres of life. Gender equality in sports breaks down all the stereotypes

that make women less likely to participate in sporting activities. Many efforts have been made to popularize women's cricket. Today, most women's international sports such as Test cricket, One Day Internationals or T20 Internationals are telecasted live. The success of the women's national teams of many countries, including Australia, England, India and New Zealand, has contributed to the growth of the sport. Many tournaments in cricket changed the One Day International to T20 pattern. Which has helped in increasing the popularity of cricket among cricketers of both genders (Nair, 2023). Sociologists study how different sports help to produce ideas of masculinity and femininity. Feminist studies focused on how sports reproduce gendered ideas and practices related to sexuality, physicality and the body. Feminist theorists also take social action by challenging those aspects of sports that systematically privilege men over women (Coakley 2001). Gender equity depends on seeing and doing sports that reflect the values and experiences of everyone, including women and the men who don't identify themselves in terms of the dominant definition of masculinity. The major challenges faced by women's cricket are limited media coverage, lack of funds, limited opportunities, gender biasness, lack of role models, lack of women's rights and safety etc. If we look from a sociological point of view, generally in Indian society, gender inequality in sports emerges during the process of socialization right from childhood or even before birth. In Indian families, parents consider the selection of children's name, clothes, games, sports and toys etc. on the basis of gender before and after birth. They communicate and mold the behaviour of children. Similarly, in schools also, girls are often included in games like hopping, kho-kho or jumping, while boys are asked to play cricket, kabaddi, catching and running games.

Shantanu Chakraborty (2020) stated in an article that “our research shows that attitudes towards women and women's sport in India are complex, contradictory and counter-intuitive.” Chakraborty (2020) in a project found that a big gender difference is visible in cricket. In this project it was explained that only 15% of Indian women play cricket, while 25% of men play cricket. The status of women players in cricket is still a struggle as women's cricket is given much less attention than men's cricket at the national and international level. For example, the ICC Women's T20 World Cup Final in 2020 between Australia and India was watched by more than 86 million viewers. While the Men's T20 World Cup Final was watched by over 1.6 billion viewers. Similarly, if we look at the prize money in cricket, a prize money of \$4 million is offered in the Men's Cricket World Cup, whereas only \$2 million is offered in the Women's Cricket World Cup. Thus the gap in sponsorship for women's cricket has been seen to be wide (Bakshi, 2023).

Gender Inequality in Indian Sports

Gender inequality is one of the major concerns of Indian society. It seems in all walk of life. It is considered difficult for women to participate in Indian sports due to male dominance in sports, socio-cultural norms, gender biasness etc. Due to which women and girls are institutionally deprived from benefits of mainstream development in sports. As a result,

institutional inequality in sports is increasing. It is visible in most of the sports like cricket, wrestling, boxing, kabaddi etc. Its main cause is unequal distribution of resources and their unequal consumption. This situation is more serious in rural communities than in urban communities. Many efforts have been made to encourage and ensure to equal participation of women in cricket. But unless and until there is a change in the basic social structure, these various types of welfare and development related efforts will also not be successful. Therefore, it is necessary to understand gender equality in cricket in the context of Indian society.

Objectives of the study:

- To study the socio-economic status of female cricketers,
- To study the participation levels and sports facilities of female cricketers, and
- To identify ways forward for gender equality in cricket.

Materials and Methods

To complete this research work exploratory research design was adopted, facts were explored and results were also discussed. To fulfil the requirements of the objectives 30 female cricketers were selected through convenience sampling methods. In this section, there is an outline of the sample and methodological approach to the research.

Participants

To understand the different ways in which female cricketer's experience, events, challenges, and realities, the structured interview-schedule was constructed to collect primary data with 30 female cricketers from a cricket academy (Chahar Cricket Academy) of Bichpuri Gram Panchayat of Bichpuri block of Agra District (Uttar Pradesh). This academy was selected for the study area as per the Convenience sampling technique.

Tool for Data Collection and Field Work

For the collection of primary data, a structured interview-schedule (tool) were constructed around three key objectives related to gender equality in cricket: (1) the respondent's socio-economic status, (2) the participation level and sports facilities to respondents, and (3) ways forward for respondents. After finalization of the tool, primary data were collected between 10 November 2024 to 30 November 2024. Participants in the study were selected based on the criteria that the sample should: (1) represent female cricketers located at regional/local level, (2) include only female cricketers, and (3) represent female cricketers engaged in different levels local, district, state level. Secondary data were also collected to complete this work from various sources (research papers, articles, books, various reports and newspapers).

RESULT ANALYSIS

The result analysis has been done based on tabulation and percentile methods. The findings of the study are presented as follows:

Table-1

The Socio-Economic Status of Female Cricketers

S.N.	Age (in years)	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	15-18	12	40%
2.	19-25	14	46.6%
3.	26-30	04	13.3%
4.	30<years	-	-
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
Caste of Respondents		Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	General	10	33.3%
2.	OBC	12	40%
3.	Schedule Caste	08	26.6%
4.	Schedule Tribe	-	-
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
Religion of Respondents		Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Hindu	28	93.3%
2.	Muslim	-	-
3.	Christian	02	6.6%
4.	Sikh	-	-
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
Community Background		Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Rural	08	26.6%
2.	Urban	12	40%
3.	Town	10	33.3%
4.	Others	-	-
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
Family Structure		Number of Respondents	Percentage

1.	Nuclear Family	16	53.3%
2.	Joint Family	14	46.6%
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
	Family Monthly Income (Rs.)	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	7000-10,000	05	16.6%
2.	11,000-14,000	07	23.3%
3.	15,000-18,000	10	33.3%
4.	18,000<above	08	26.6%
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
	Marital Status	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Married	-	-
2.	Unmarried	30	100%
3.	Others	-	-
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
	Education Status	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Matric	10	33.3%
2.	Senior Secondary	12	40%
3.	Graduation	08	26.6%
4.	Post graduation	-	-
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00

Source: Primary Data

The socio-economic status of female cricketers as known from table no. 1 that most (46.6%) of the respondents were from the 19-25 years age group, followed (40.00%) by 15-18 years age group and rest (13.30%) of the respondents were from 26-30 years age group. The caste category of the respondents, it was found that 40% of the respondents were from OBC caste category, followed (33.30%) by General caste category and rest (26.60%) of the respondents were from scheduled caste category. As far as religion is concerned 93.3% majority of the respondents were from Hindu religion. The community backgrounds of the respondents, it was found that 40.00% of the respondents were from urban area. Most (53.3%) of the respondents lived in a nuclear family and (46.6%) of the respondents were belonged in joint family. Most (33.3%) of the respondent's family income were (Rs.15,000-18,000) rupees monthly. And all these respondents were found unmarried. In the study, most (40.00%) of

respondents were studying in senior secondary and (33.3%) were studying in matric and (26.00%) of the respondents graduated.

Table-2

The Participation Levels and Sports Facilities of Female Cricketers

S.N.	Inspirer of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Family	12	40%
2.	Community Members	-	-
3.	Teachers	06	20%
4.	Sports Coaches	12	40%
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
Role Model in Family			
	Role Model in Family	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	18	60%
2.	No	12	40%
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
Firstly Played Cricket (Age group in years)			
	Firstly Played Cricket (Age group in years)	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	10-12	08	26.6%
2.	13-15	16	53.3%
3.	16-19	04	13.3%
4.	20<years	01	3.3%
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
Achievement Levels			
	Achievement Levels	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Local level	19	63.3%
2.	District level	09	30%
3.	State level	02	6.6%
4.	National level	-	-
5.	International level	-	-
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
Practice Mode			
	Practice Mode	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Regular	24	80%
2.	Frequently	06	20%

	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
	Gender of the Coach	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Male	30	100%
2.	Female	-	-
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
	Availability of Equipment and Space	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	18	60%
2.	No	12	40%
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
	Opportunities to Participate Events	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	16	53.3%
2.	No	14	46.6%
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
	Transportation Facilities	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	09	30%
2.	No	21	70%
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
	Encouragement to Male than Female	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	15	50%
2.	No	15	50%
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
	Discouragement from Family & Community	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	16	53.3%
2.	No	14	46.6%
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
	Equality of Awards & Honors	Number of Respondents	Percentage

1.	Yes	17	56.6%
2.	No	13	43.3%
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
	Benefit from Policies & Programs	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	16	53.3%
2.	No	14	46.6%
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00
	Media Coverage	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Yes	14	46.6%
2.	No	16	53.3%
	Total	Number of Replies 30	100.00

Source: Primary Data

Table no. 2 shows the participation level and sports facilities of female cricketers. In the study, it was found that 40% of the respondents were inspired by family and 40% of the respondents were inspired by sports coaches and rest (20%) by their teachers, majority (60%) of the respondents answered that they have cricket role models in their family. In the study, when respondents were asked in which age group they played cricket for the first time, majority (53.3%) majority of the them answered that they played cricket for the first time at the age of 13-15 years and 26.6% respondents 10-12 years of age. In the study, most (63%) of the respondents were local level cricketers, 30% were district level cricketers and 6.6% of the respondents were state level cricketers. Most (80%) of the respondents were found to be regular cricket practitioners. In the study, most (100%) of the respondents answered that their coach is male. And majority (46.6%) respondents answered that they do not get opportunities to participate in cricket events time to time as a male cricketers. Most (70%) of the respondents reported that they didn't get any facility for transportation to home from their sports academy. In the study it was found that 50% of the respondents reported that male players get more encouragement than that of female cricketers. The study found that most (53.3%) of the respondents feel a sense of discouragement especially from the community members. The most (43.3%) of the respondents reported that they do not get equal awards and honors in events as male players. The study found that 53.3% of the respondents have received benefits from government and non-government policies and programs and 46.6% reported that they have not received any benefits. In the study 53.3% of respondents reported that they get equal time and space by the press and media and rest (46.6%) of the respondents do not get adequate media coverage.

Ways Forward for Gender Equality in Cricket

- Children of both genders interested in cricket should get positive support and environment from the family. From childhood, parents and other family members should not discriminate in sports and gender roles.
- Women's cricket sport events should be organized at the schools, colleges and local community and girls should be encouraged to participate more in them. Schools should organize felicitation ceremonies for talented sportswomen of all levels.
- Sports camps and programs should be organized at time to time to encourage female cricketers in rural areas.
- Along with this, women's cricket events taking place at the local level should be encouraged and promoted so that the participation of spectators provides a more positive environment to them.
- Biological and socio-cultural misconceptions related to women and cricket should be removed. There should be adequate funding, training facilities and coaching staff, particularly female coaches, to support women's cricket at all levels.
- To deal with the lack of media coverage, sports coaches should try to correct biological misconceptions.
- Encourage mixed-gender teams at the grassroots level and create a welcoming atmosphere for all participants.
- Conduct educational campaigns to promote gender equality and challenge stereotypes related to women's participation in sports.
- Establish clear reporting systems for incidents of sexism and misogyny, empowering individuals to speak out against inappropriate behaviour.
- Implement policies that support both men and women in balancing work and family responsibilities, promoting shared care and reducing barriers to career progression.

Conclusion

The present study assessed gender equality in cricket, by studying the participation levels of female cricketers and sports facilities, to explore further strategies. Based on the facts obtained from fieldwork in the study, it was found that female cricketers who had low socio-economic status and were rural residents faced more obstacles and difficulties. It was also found that 40% of the female cricketers felt that they received less resources, opportunities and community discouragement in cricket which affected their performance in cricket. In the study 50% of female cricketers reported that male cricketers get more support than female cricketers. Female cricketers who have a sound family background and community are achieving more success. The finding suggests there are still challenges to achieving real gender parity in

cricket at the local level. Though female cricketers face many difficulties and obstacles to play cricket, yet still they are moving forward by bearing/facing these difficulties with strength. There is a need to provide adequate encouragement and a positive environment at the local level.

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