
An Investigation on Challenges Faced by Senior Female Athletes from Pune City

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the various aspects of the challenges faced by senior female athletes from Pune City, A descriptive survey technique was used in the study. 59 senior female athletes from all over Pune city responded to the opinionnaire send by preparing on Google form. Researcher tried to reach maximum population of the study. Questions based on various aspects of challenges; Social, Psychological, Physiological, Competition, Economical, Training and Coaching related Challenge. Statistical analysis of frequency was done to interpret data. It was concluded that there are social problems like attitude, discourage by society and media discrimination is more prevalent among athletes than social, psychological, economical, training and coaching related challenges.

Keywords : Challenges, Senior Female Athletes

Introduction

Sports participation for women dates back to ancient Greece, but faces obstacles like popularity gaps, prejudice, misogyny, and unfair financing. Despite these challenges, women continue to make significant strides in achieving gender equality. Women's sport history began in the 19th century, with the first female athletes participating in the modern Olympic Games in 1900. Despite the gap decreasing, challenges like balancing athletic career and personal life persist. Professional team sports in women's sports still face financial struggles, and female sports leagues are underfunded and exposed. Ancient civilizations held women's athletic events, such as the Heraean Games. After the classical period, women began participating in men's

athletic festivals, with Plato supporting women in sports. The 19th and early 20th centuries saw a shift in women's sports from recreational to sport-specific activities, with the Amateur Athletic Union and Women's Amateur Athletic Association holding national championships for women. Social changes encouraged increased female participation, leading to the modern Olympics featuring female competitors. The Fédération Sportive Feminine Internationale was founded in France to promote women's participation in international sports. The women's sport landscape is rapidly evolving globally, with professional women's leagues and international female athletes. Indian government and commercial stakeholders are interested in women's sport, but barriers persist. Successful campaigns in Australia and England can be applied to promote female participation. Women's sports participation has grown, despite challenges like lack of funding, sexism, and limited opportunities, including physical education, transportation, and media representation. Balancing motherhood and sports careers can hinder female athletes' growth and enjoyment, with challenges like low earnings, objectification, and limited access. Despite progress, gender equality remains a challenge, with a significant gap between men and women's bonuses. A study by Schaal et al. (2011) revealed that 17% of French elite athletes suffer from psychological issues, with GAD being the most prevalent. The study aims to standardize reporting and address sexism in sport, gender stereotyping, and female participation. The paper discusses the disparity in social and economic support for female athletes, despite increased participation. It aims to promote a more inclusive sports environment for women, highlighting the misconception that female athletes are inferior to men, and the International Olympic Committee's refusal to allow women to compete in long-distance events. Gender disparities in sports have been present since the 1900s, but progress has been slow.

Despite advancements, women's participation remains challenging due to unequal media coverage, funding disparities, and lower remuneration. Women are also underrepresented in sport organizations. Research shows girls between the ages of 6 and 9 have equal interest in sports, but by age 14, they drop out six times higher than boys. Support for young female athletes is crucial for their development, just as it is for boys. The study by Das, Kumar, Dixit, and Vivek (2023) identifies several barriers to women's participation in sports in India, including sociocultural hurdles, knowledge gaps, lack of athletic infrastructure, lack of job options, and economic constraints. The research uses micmac analysis and ISM multi-criteria decision-making techniques. The purpose of the study is to investigate the various aspects of the challenges faced by senior female athletes from Pune City.

Methodology and Process

This study aimed to examine the challenges faced by senior female athletes from Pune City, using a descriptive research method. An opinionnaire was used to collect data from 100 senior female athletes who participated in track and field competitions for two to five years. The researchers used convenient sampling technique and purposive sampling in select cases to contact as many female athletes as possible. Data from 59 female athletes was gathered under the direction of an expert. The study focused on social, psychological, physiological, training and coaching, competition and economical challenges experienced by senior female athletes from Pune. An opinionnaire was prepared and checked by three experts, and a link to the Google form was provided to the senior female athletes. The information was collected and analysed through frequency analysis. The study's quality and accuracy depend on the research design and methodology.

Analysis and Discussion

Table No. 1.1 : Summary of Frequency of Responses Given by Senior Female Athletes on Training and Coaching Related Challenges

Rating	Opinion	Fr. of Opinion about Q1.	Fr of Opinion about Q2.	Fr of Opinion about Q3
0	Strongly Disagree	30	1	55
1	Somewhat Disagree	4	2	2
2	Quite a bit Disagree	4	0	0
3	Very little Disagree	3	1	1
4	Somewhat Neutral	4	3	0
5	Neutral	4	4	1
6	Somewhat Neutral	5	1	0
7	Very little Agree	1	5	0
8	Quite a bit Agree	2	9	0
9	Somewhat Agree	0	4	0
10	Strongly Agree	2	29	0
	Total	59	59	59

From the above Table 1.1 shows that senior female athletes do not generally deal with coaches' favouritism for male athletes. The majority of respondents disagreed with the statement, indicating that they did not think male athletes receive greater affection from their coaches. The majority of senior female athletes are happy with their coaches. The majority of respondents concurred with the coaching satisfaction statement. Senior female athletes almost never experience sexual exploitation from their coaches. The majority of respondents strongly disagreed, with none strongly agreeing to having been the victim of sexual exploitation.

The survey's overall findings present a favourable image of the senior female athlete coaching environment. It's crucial to remember that these are only survey findings and that certain cases of bias or exploitation could exist but go overlooked.

Table 1.2 : Summary of Frequency of Responses Given by Senior Female Athletes on Psychology Related Challenges.

Rating	Opinion	Fr. Of Opinion about Q4.
0	Never	14
1	Somewhat Never	3
2	Quite a bit Never	3
3	Very little Never	1
4	Somewhat Neutral	4
5	Neutral	9
6	Somewhat Neutral	5
7	Very little Always	8
8	Quite a bit Always	4
9	Somewhat Always	4
10	Always	4
	Total	59

From the above Table 1.2 shows that a significant number of athletes face stress while balancing their participation in sports with other responsibilities. Still, many of them say they don't feel anxious. To understand the causes behind these variances in stress levels, more research may be required. The results of the questionnaire as a whole indicate that a mixed number of athletes report feeling stressed out about their other

duties in addition to athletics. A smaller percentage of athletes constantly experience stress, while most do not.

To understand the causes behind the variations in stress levels, more research may be required.

Table 1.4 : Summary of Frequency of Responses Given by Senior Female Athletes on Social Challenges.

Rating	Opinion	Fr. of Opinion about Q9.	Fr of Opinion about Q10.	Fr of Opinion about Q11
0	Strongly Disagree	19	11	47
1	Somewhat Disagree	4	2	2
2	Quite a bit Disagree	3	2	1
3	Very little Disagree	6	3	0
4	Somewhat Neutral	7	7	1
5	Neutral	6	11	4
6	Somewhat Neutral	2	4	3
7	Very little Agree	5	3	1
8	Quite a bit Agree	2	6	0
9	Somewhat Agree	2	4	0
10	Strongly Agree	3	6	0
	Total	59	59	59

From the above Table 1.4 shows that, not everyone in society has the same views about women participating in sports. There is disagreement about whether more women participating in sports is a bad thing and if female athletes ought to be treated equally in society. It is widely held, still that women shouldn't be limited to housewives' responsibilities. Despite these differences, most people feel that gender stereotypes shouldn't discourage women from participating in sports rather, they should promote it.

According to the report, women should be inspired to play sports.

Table No. 1.4 (a) : Summary of Frequency of Responses Given by Senior Female Athletes on Social Challenges.

Rating	Opinion	Fr. of Opinion about Q12.	Fr of Opinion about Q14.	Fr of Opinion about Q15.
0	Strongly Disagree	18	45	37
1	Somewhat Disagree	4	4	3
2	Quite a bit Disagree	0	1	1
3	Very little Disagree	3	0	1
4	Somewhat Neutral	3	2	4
5	Neutral	11	3	2
6	Somewhat Neutral	2	0	1
7	Very little Agree	2	3	4
8	Quite a bit Agree	5	0	3
9	Somewhat Agree	4	0	0
10	Strongly Agree	7	1	3
	Total	59	59	59

From above Table 1.4(a) shows that, many respondents to this investigation appear to have the opinion that discrimination of female athletes and obvious bias against male athletes do not exist. The survey results show a clear shift away from gender discrimination with regard to of financial support for athletes, parental views of female participation, and the rise of sports. In addition, male brothers who perform sports rarely get greater financial assistance from their parents.

Table No. 1.4 (b) : Summary of Frequency of Responses Given by Senior Female Athletes on Social Challenges.

Rating	Opinion	Fr. of Opinion about Q13.	Fr. of Opinion about Q16.
0	Never	34	41
1	Somewhat Never	3	4

2	Quite a bit Never	2	3
3	Very little Never	3	2
4	Somewhat Neutral	5	0
5	Neutral	5	3
6	Somewhat Neutral	0	2
7	Very little Always	1	0
8	Quite a bit Always	2	1
9	Somewhat Always	1	0
10	Always	3	3
	Total	59	59

From the above Table 1.4(b) shows that, it seems that most family members support female athletes and have favourable views of spending money on female athletes' participation in sports. On the other hand, there is a little bias for family members to discourage female athletes from participating in sports-related training.

Overall, data indicates that family members have an encouraging view of women who participate in sports.

Table No. 1.5 : Summary of Frequency of Responses Given by Senior Female Athletes on Economical Challenges.

Rating	Opinion	Fr. of Opinion about Q5.	Fr. of Opinion about Q6.	Fr. of Opinion about Q8
0	Strongly Disagree	18	9	5
1	Somewhat Disagree	2	5	0
2	Quite a bit Disagree	3	5	1
3	Very little Disagree	2	6	2
4	Somewhat Neutral	5	2	3
5	Neutral	11	9	6
6	Somewhat Neutral	4	11	1

7	Very little Agree	3	6	7
8	Quite a bit Agree	6	2	5
9	Somewhat Agree	3	2	9
10	Strongly Agree	2	2	20
	Total	59	59	59

From the above Table 1.5 shows that, there is no clear majority opinion in the survey results on the sponsorship and salary preferences of male athletes, hence the findings are unsatisfactory. Many individuals agree, disagree, and disapprove while disagreeing.

There are multiple opinions on the significance of financial standing in sports. There isn't a definite consensus on the survey questions, so further research is required to find out what the consensus is on all of them.

Table 1.5 (a) : Summary of Frequency of Responses Given by Senior Female Athletes on Economical Challenges.

Rating	Opinion	Fr. of Opinion about Q7.
0	Never	37
1	Somewhat Never	7
2	Quite a bit Never	3
3	Very little Never	0
4	Somewhat Neutral	1
5	Neutral	4
6	Somewhat Neutral	1
7	Very little Always	3
8	Quite a bit Always	1
9	Somewhat Always	0
10	Always	2
	Total	59

From the above Table 1.5(a) shows, that a significant number of respondents feel that female athletes may miss out on scholarships and awards because of their gender. It means that the distribution of these opportunities may involve gender bias. To ensure fairness in the awarding process, more research on these issues may be required. While the majority claimed that female athletes never miss out on awards because of their gender, a greater number responded that it does happen sometimes.

This shows how important it is to address any potential discrimination based on gender in the selection process.

Table 1.6 : Summary of Frequency of Responses Given by Senior Female Athletes on Physiology Related Challenges.

Rating	Opinion	Fr. of Opinion about Q17.	Fr. of Opinion about Q18.
0	Never	6	6
1	Somewhat Never	4	3
2	Quite a bit Never	7	5
3	Very little Never	1	3
4	Somewhat Neutral	4	3
5	Neutral	6	10
6	Somewhat Neutral	7	3
7	Very little Always	4	5
8	Quite a bit Always	9	8
9	Somewhat Always	3	5
10	Always	8	8
	Total	59	59

From the above Table 1.6 indicates that, the impact of hormone imbalances and menstruation on female athletes' performance is not entirely agreed upon. Most respondents believe that the effects of menstruation are "Somewhat Never" to "Somewhat Always," while hormone imbalance follows a similar trend. Further research is needed to understand the specific effects of these factors on each athlete.

The evidence suggests the complexity and individual variability of these effects on female athletes' performance, necessitating further investigation.

Table No. 1.7 : Summary of Frequency of Responses Given by Senior Female Athletes on Competition Related Challenges.

Rating	Opinion	Fr. of Opinion about Q19.
0	Strongly Disagree	40
1	Somewhat Disagree	4
2	Quite a bit Disagree	3
3	Very little Disagree	1
4	Somewhat Neutral	0
5	Neutral	3
6	Somewhat Neutral	1
7	Very little Agree	3
8	Quite a bit Agree	0
9	Somewhat Agree	3
10	Strongly Agree	1
	Total	59

From the above Table 1.7 shows that, the majority of respondents think that both genders receive food that is probably fair and equal. It's significant not to forget though, that a significant number of respondents expressed confusion or differing opinions.

This emphasises the importance for more research to make sure that meal offerings for athletes are without bias based on gender.

Table No. 1.7(a) : Summary of Frequency of Responses Given by Senior Female Athletes on Competition Related Challenges.

Rating	Opinion	Fr. of Opinion about Q20.	Fr. of Opinion about Q21.	Fr. of Opinion about Q22.
0	Never	11	12	8
1	Somewhat Never	2	6	4
2	Quite a bit Never	1	5	6

3	Very little Never	1	7	5
4	Somewhat Neutral	5	4	6
5	Neutral	10	8	6
6	Somewhat Neutral	1	3	6
7	Very little Always	2	4	3
8	Quite a bit Always	5	1	1
9	Somewhat Always	5	2	4
10	Always	16	7	10
	Total	59	59	59

From the above Table 1.7(a) shows that regarding the availability of hygienic facilities, sufficient housing, and transportation for female athletes traveling great distances, the survey results are not entirely consistent.

Accurate assessments of transportation amenities, hygienic bathrooms, and lodgings depending on distance require more information and investigation.

Discussion

- **Gender Bias in Sports Coaching** : Research has consistently shown disparities in coaching opportunities and treatment based on gender. Male coaches often dominate leadership roles in sports, leading to a lack of representation and support for female athletes. This bias can manifest in various forms, including unequal access to resources, less encouragement and feedback, and limited career advancement opportunities for female coaches. Further research is essential to understand the root causes of this bias and develop strategies to promote equality in coaching.
- **Athletes' Dissatisfaction and Practice Adaptation** : Athletes' dissatisfaction can arise from various factors, including coaching style, team dynamics, and training methods. It's crucial for coaches to continuously assess and adapt their practices to meet the needs and preferences of their athletes. Open communication channels, regular feedback sessions, and flexibility in training approaches can help address dissatisfaction and enhance performance outcomes.
- **Stress Faced by Female Athletes** : Female athletes often experience unique stressors, including societal pressure, body image concerns, and balancing athletic commitments with other responsibilities. Providing resources such as time

management skills training, stress reduction techniques, and mental health support services is essential to promote overall well-being and performance among female athletes.

- **Gender-Based Pay Disparities and Sponsorship** : Disparities in pay and sponsorship opportunities based on gender remain prevalent in sports. Male athletes typically receive higher salaries, endorsement deals, and sponsorship contracts compared to their female counterparts, despite comparable performance levels. Research is needed to investigate the root causes of these disparities and advocate for fair compensation and sponsorship practices in sports.
- **Family Support in Female Athletes' Training** : Family support plays a significant role in the success and well-being of female athletes. Parents and caregivers can provide crucial emotional, logistical, and financial support throughout an athlete's career. Recognizing and nurturing this support system can contribute to athletes' resilience and long-term success.
- **Impact of Menstruation on Athletic Performance** : Menstruation can affect female athletes' performance due to hormonal fluctuations, menstrual symptoms, and associated discomfort. Coaches and sports organizations should acknowledge and accommodate the physiological needs of female athletes during menstruation, including access to menstrual hygiene products, modified training schedules, and understanding attitudes towards menstrual health.
- **Availability of Transport Facilities for Female Athletes** : Access to transportation can be a significant barrier for female athletes, particularly in areas with limited public transportation options or safety concerns. Providing reliable and safe transport facilities can ensure equal opportunities for female athletes to attend training sessions, competitions, and other sporting events, ultimately promoting participation and performance in sports.

Conclusion and Further Research

The study found that most respondents disagreed with coaches showing more affection towards male athletes, suggesting fair treatment. They were satisfied with their coaching, with some expressing minor dissatisfaction. Most respondents disagreed with sexual exploitation by coaches, indicating safety and trust. Senior female athletes may need additional support, and some see more women playing sports as a sign of gender equality.

The majority of respondents disagree with the idea that women should stay home and participate in sports, with some believing male athletes receive more support. They do not believe funding female sports is a waste of money, and they do not discourage

female athletes from training. They also disagree with the notion that male athletes receive higher remuneration compared to female athletes, and the preference of sponsors for male athletes. However, a small minority strongly agrees, suggesting a bias in sponsorship opportunities. The study reveals mixed perceptions about gender inequality and financial disparities in sports. Some respondents disagree with the perception of female athletes missing out on awards or scholarships, while others highlight talent and dedication over financial resources. The study also reveals mixed perceptions about the impact of menstruation and hormonal imbalance on female athletes' performance, suggesting that these factors may not be universally affecting performance.

The survey shows male athletes receive better food during competitions, while female athletes face lack of transportation, hygienic toilet facilities, and accommodation. The results highlight the complex connections between institutional policies, cultural views, and personal experiences.

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