

## Sports participation to enhance girls self esteem

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### Abstract

Sport is widely regarded as a social good – something that contributes to both the health and social capital of young people. In recent years, sport and physical activity as a strategy for the empowerment of girls and women has been gaining recognition worldwide. Sport and physical activity have not yet been used on a large scale as a strategy within women's movements. Women's increased involvement in sports can promote positive development in sport by providing alternative norms, values, attitudes, knowledge, capabilities and experiences. Many researches show that girl's sports participation helps them to develop self-esteem and make them to be psychologically fit in all the aspects. Women in India are still unable to take a stand for themselves. A society, which does not allow a girl to do something simple as primary education, is unlikely to let her participate in sport without any hurdle. It is possible only with the co-operation and motivation of the family, proper guidance and facilities from the educational institutions, encouragement from the Government and sports authorities and mainly psychological readiness of the girls.

**Keywords:** women, sports, self-esteem, empowerment, society etc.

### Introduction

*To awaken the people, it is the woman who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family, moves, the Village moves, the nation moves*

-Jawaharlal Nehru

Female participation in sport has come a long way. Efforts have been and are being made in getting more females to participate in sports. However, a lot more effort is still required to generate greater female participation in the world of sport. Attitudes regarding female sport participation are changing, as there are females who have made sport part of their daily lives. Participation in sport and physical activity can provide a wide range of physical, psychological and social benefits for women and girls. Studies of women's and girls' experiences of sport suggest that positive experiences can contribute to a sense of empowerment for participants and the development of a sense of ownership of their bodies. Positive sport experiences can contribute to the full inclusion of girls and women by enhancing their health and well-being; fostering their self-esteem and empowerment; facilitating their social inclusion and integration; changing gender norms; and providing opportunities for female leadership and achievement. (Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, 2008, p25). Participation in sports can decline as girls become teenagers, decreasing opportunities for physical fitness and socialization. The Women's Sports Foundation reports that if a girl does not participate in sports by the time she is 10, there is less than a 10 percent chance that she will be participating when she is 25. Overcoming barriers to sports participation can increase the number of teenage girls active in individual and team sports.

In recent years, sport and physical activity as a strategy for the empowerment of girls and women has been gaining recognition worldwide. Girls and women face a disproportionate number of life challenges, which reduce their

ability to achieve their full potential. Involvement in sport and physical activity can, for example, build life skills, confidence and body awareness may create social networks, which result in dramatic positive life changes for participants. It is believed that participating in sports results in mental wellbeing of a person. It happens with a chain i.e., one who plays develop the ability of focusing on a task and it improves self-confidence. Once self-confidence is improved, most of the negative qualities like depression, stress, anxiety are removed. It results in developing self-esteem as one can take good decision according to the situation.

Sports psychology is the sport science that helps to understand psychological and mental factors that affect performance in sports, physical activity and exercise. It will help to improve sports performance with reference to psychological aspects. Sports psychology is now so important to performance at the top level of sport and for beginners too to get in to sports field. Most elite sporting clubs and individuals employ sports psychologists to work with them.

Self-esteem is one of the psychological factors and known as confidence in one's own worth or abilities or self-respect. Self-esteem is defined by the degree of worth and competence that we attribute to ourselves. Through sport, one can enhance self-esteem by having a positive image of bodies and the physical skills and abilities that he develops. Feeling of positive self-worth is possible through the recognition received from family and friends. This kind social relationship will be developed as a result of involvement in sports or physical activity. Self-esteem is fundamental to psychological wellbeing. It is regarded as a key indicator of emotional stability and adjustment to life demands. High self-esteem is associated with a number of positive characteristics such as independence, leadership, adaptability and resilience to stress and health-related behaviors. On the other hand, low self-esteem is associated with mental illness such as depression and anxiety. A positive self-esteem is key to psychological

well-being. Children who have a positive self-esteem are better able to cope with wins and losses in sport and life. Girls and women who play sports have higher levels of confidence and self-esteem and lower levels of depression. • Girls and women who play sports have a more positive body image and experience higher states of psychological well-being than girls and women who do not play sports.

A study in Switzerland found those adolescents who participated in sports clubs had greater well-being, including being better socially adjusted, feeling less anxious, and generally being happier about their lives. Similar findings were reported in a study of Latino students, where participation in school sport was found to be significantly associated with self-esteem. A number of studies offer support to the claim that sports and other physical activities can contribute to the development of self-esteem. For example, Canadian scientists found that sixth grade student's boys and girls who were more physically active had considerably higher levels of self-esteem.

Self-esteem, a young woman's perception of self-worth develops gradually as she matures and interacts with others. The younger years in a child's life are critical for producing positive self-esteem and may be influenced by personality, parenting techniques and role modeling. Adolescence is another critical period for development and preservation of positive self-esteem especially for young women. If parents, teachers, coaches and others communicate approval, liking and respect, a child develops positive feelings of self-confidence and self-worth. Conversely, if significant others belittle a child and communicate that she is not worthwhile in her own right, he will tend to view herself as unworthy. While self-esteem is most strongly developed at a young age, individuals and society continue to affect and influence self-esteem throughout our lives. It is never too late to alter one's perspective and encourage positive self-worth. Low levels of self-esteem in young women may be the result of discrimination, sexism, inequities in all aspects of life, harassment, abuse, dysfunctional family life, a lack of female role models, poor parenting or the portrayal of women in the media. Adolescent women with low self-esteem are more likely to suffer mental health problems (such as depression and eating disorders); to engage in high-risk behaviours; to have problems in school and in their relationships; to have negative body images and obsessions with weight, body size and shape; and to drop out of physical activity.

**Parents, coaches, and trainers are, in many ways, responsible for nurturing an athlete's self-esteem. Do's and Don'ts to develop self-esteem among girls**

**Do's**

- Guide them properly to learn a game or skill. Becoming master in one skill also helps to develop self-confidence.
- Have a clear vision, mission and goals for each work and see that everyone's involvement is dedicated.
- Practice psychological skills to overcome stress during practice and competition.
- Respect each athlete/player and treat them equally.
- Take advice from them so that they feel proud.
- For any decision have open discussion with the players.
- Appreciate for each and every work though it is small.
- Create opportunities for easy positive outcomes in the beginning. Later on can give them tough competitions.

- When girls are taking part in sports, coach/physical education teacher must encourage and educate family members. Once family members support girls automatically their self-esteem develops.
- Praise girls for their efforts rather than the performance.

**Don'ts**

- As girls are very sensitive in nature, don't embarrass them.
- Don't get anger on girls and shout on them in front of others.
- Don't pressurize a player to go beyond their caliber.
- Never make comment or criticize girls on their physical appearance.
- Don't encourage any situation which degrades her interest, confidence and motivation level.

**Conclusion**

Through sport, one can enhance self-esteem by having a positive image of bodies and the physical skills and abilities that he/she develops. Self-esteem, a young woman's perception of self-worth develops gradually as she matures and interacts with others. Sports and physical activities are the right media to develop self-esteem. So schools, colleges and community must provide right platform for girls to take part in sports in their early ages itself. Government must take necessary steps to involve girls in sports activities to make them physically, mentally and emotionally fit to survive in this competitive world.

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