

Original Research

Received 24 May 2026

Revised 26 June 2026

Accepted 11 July 2026

Natural Resources for Human
Health 2026, Vol. 6 (10s): 1554–1565

KEYWORDS:

Women, Sports, Haryana,
Rajasthan, Socio-Legal, Policy.

Sports Organisations and their Initiatives for Empowering Women: A Comparative Socio-Legal Study of Haryana and Rajasthan

Pooja Sharma^{1*}, Dr Rajshree Mathpal²

¹Ph.D. Research scholar, school of social science, Banasthali vidyapith, Newai (Rajasthan) India.

Email: puja.sharma101097@gmail.com.

²Assistant Professor, Faculty of social sciences, Banasthali Vidyapith, Niwani- (Rajasthan), India.

Email: rajshrimathpal@gmail.com.

ABSTRACT: This paper through a comparative analysis between states of Haryana & Rajasthan aims to conduct a socio-legal analysis of a less discussed framework revolving around sports empowerment for women. To analyse these framework properly, the paper will examine how state policy and cultural norms shapes female athletic participation and success. The paper adopts a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods approach along with doctrinal analysis of state sports policies, review of Khelo India datasets, NGO programme evaluations, media reportage, and peer-reviewed literature. Thus, the research evaluates the extent to which formal policy instruments translate into tangible empowerment in patriarchal settings.

The key findings of the study reveals that Haryana's incentive-driven and performance-centred approach has generated elite-women athlete outcomes while Rajasthan's infrastructure-expansion model has broadened grassroots access but it requires sharper gender-targeted pathways to elite sport. However, across both states there are various constraints which includes inadequate female coaching representation, uneven safety and welfare mechanisms, and sociocultural resistance in rural spaces.

Against this finding, the paper proposes enforceable reforms, including statutory gender-mainstreaming clauses, female-coach quotas, menstrual and maternal sports-medicine integration, and mandatory district-level athlete-tracking. The study contributes to Indian sports-governance scholarship by establishing a policy-culture-infrastructure and calling for longitudinal, intersectional research to evaluate women's mobility through sport at state-level.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, India has witnessed a remarkable rise in the public visibility of women athletes. From Olympic podiums to wrestling akharas and the rapidly expanding ecosystem of grassroots academies, women have begun to claim space in an arena historically dominated by men. As it is said a coin has its two sides, behind this encouraging narrative of women empowerment and sports. There lies a more complex social reality. In a country like India, there is presence of patriarchal structures remain deeply embedded which naturally becomes part of all the states and their socio-cultural fabric. Even though these factors looks distant from a subject like sports and participation, however in cases of women it leads to limiting access to sport, nutrition, and institutional support.¹ Despite the presence of national campaigns such as Khelo India and the National Sports Policy's. The progress remains uneven to date, frequently influenced by local socio-economic norms and state-specific

¹ Shireen J and Zeba S, "Revisiting Women's Empowerment and Contraception" (2024) 50 Population and Development Review 597 <https://doi.org/10.1111/padr.12688> accessed November 18, 2025)

policy strategies.

The two states Haryana and Rajasthan which this paper intends to analyse both through legal and social lens, offers a very distinct yet interesting models on this subject. Haryana can be called as a powerhouse of elite women athletes, particularly in combat sports such as wrestling and boxing. Scholars often attribute this to a unique mix of state incentives, rural sporting traditions, and a highly competitive sporting culture.² However there is still issues of gender hierarchies, deeply conservative family structures, and the policing of female bodies, raising questions about whether athletic achievement alone translates into sustainable empowerment.³ In contrast, Rajasthan represents an emergent model by prioritising institutional infrastructure expansion, school-sport linkages, and academy development, but have not yet produced proportional elite-women sporting outcomes.⁴ Its strategy reflects a developmental rather than performance-centric orientation, suggesting a policy space still in formation.

1.1 Research Gap and Rationale

Despite the significant policy experimentation occurring at the state level, scholarly enquiry in India continues to concentrate on national initiatives. Comparative sub-national studies, particularly those scrutinising gender outcomes, still remain sparse.⁵ Furthermore, existing literature tends to treat women's participation as a social phenomenon or a policy aspiration, rather than analysing how legal norms, state incentives, institutional capacity, and socio-cultural practices converge to shape opportunity. The lack of a sociological-legal perspective is particularly evident in Haryana and Rajasthan, where both sport and patriarchy operate through deeply localised power structures. This paper therefore addresses a clear academic gap by interrogating these two models through a socio-legal lens, grounded in contemporary state policies and institutional practice.

1.2 Research Objectives and Hypothesis

This paper aims to firstly, critically examine the framework revolving women & sports of Haryana and Rajasthan, with particular attention to gender-responsive mandates, resource allocation, and structural accountability mechanisms. Secondly, it evaluates the institutional and community-level interventions undertaken by sports authorities, federations, academies, and non-government actors. Finally, it analyses the sociological barriers including kinship norms, caste dynamics and safety concerns that continue to structure women's access to sport.

Accordingly, the study advances the hypothesis that Haryana's high-performance model has generated exceptional elite-women representation but remains constrained by issues such as patriarchal norms. While Rajasthan's infrastructure-expansion model enhances grassroots participation yet risks limited elite representation without the support of dedicated gender-focussed interventions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical and Sociological Frameworks

A comprehensive literature on the sociology and its intersection with sports provides a foundation for examining women's athletic participation in India. Feminist sport scholarship has continuously propounded that modern sport remains structured through patriarchy, gendered labour expectations, and institutional bias that glorifies masculinised athleticism and undervalues women's sporting ambitions. In South Asian contexts, feminist theorists highlight the intersection of gender with caste, family honour, and community pressure which creates a layered restrictions on women's bodily autonomy and ambitions.⁶

² Adesh, "View of Women and Girls' Participation in Sports in Haryana State | International Journal of Physical Education & Sports Sciences" <https://ignited.in/index.php/ijopess/article/view/3674/7144> accessed November 18, 2025.

³ Oza R, "Wrestling Women: Caste and Neoliberalism in Rural Haryana" (2018) 26 Gender Place & Culture 468 <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369x.2018.1502162>.

⁴ "Draft Rajasthan Sports Policy 2024" (Government of Rajasthan 2024) <https://www.rssc.in/images/DRAFT-RAJASTHAN-SPORTS-POLICY-2024.pdf> accessed November 18, 2025.

⁵ Savani DP, "Indian Sports Policy And The Politics Of Women's Sports And Women In Sports" [2025] International Journal Of Progressive Research In Engineering Management And Science https://www.academia.edu/128037167/INDIAN_SPORTS_POLICY_AND_THE_POLITICS_OF_WOMENS_SPORTS_AND_WOMEN_IN_SPORTS.

⁶ Kaur MJ, "The Caste and Gender Dynamics in the Functioning of Youth Sports Clubs" (2025) 08 International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Review 716 <https://doi.org/10.37602/ijssmr.2025.8538>

Bourdieu's theory of capital is also relevant in this study as it conceptualises sport not merely as physical performance but as deployment of cultural, social, and physical capital.⁷ Female athletes from patriarchal rural areas often tend to lack inherited sports cultural capital, norms, mentors, traditions, and aspirational role models. At the same time also facing deficits in economic capital, thereby restricting access to coaching and infrastructure.

The third strand of literature deals with state–society interaction in patriarchal systems, where state policies may aim to empower women but are mediated by family dynamics, social discipline, and community perception. Scholars argue that sports policies cannot be effective without addressing informal norms that affects women's participation, such as notions of honour and marriage priorities.⁸ These theories also forms an important ground for this study to examine how Haryana and Rajasthan's policies interact with socio-cultural hierarchies.

2.2 Gender and Sports Governance in India

The policy literature on gender mainstreaming in sports propounds that legal frameworks must move beyond formal equality and towards more substantive empowerment through targeted safety protocols, menstrual health support, and equitable representation in leadership. Yet Indian sports governance has historically prioritised medal-centric outcomes over structural inclusion.

National programmes such as Khelo India emphasise on infrastructure and talent identification but have been critiqued for inconsistent gender mapping data and limited rural female outreach.⁹ Similarly, the National Sports Code has created accountability on sports federations but still struggles to ensure gender-balanced leadership and transparent athlete welfare mechanisms.¹⁰

State-specific literature on Haryana presents a paradox that is despite the presence of rampant patriarchy, evident from sex-selective practices, and preference for male heirs. The state has produced several elite female athletes in wrestling, boxing, and shooting.¹¹ These can be attributed to targeted incentives and sports hostels, yet caution that these successes exist despite structural patriarchy, not because it has been dismantled.

In contrast, literature on Rajasthan shows that there is an emergent ecosystem characterised by incremental capacity building, municipal-rural sports infrastructure, and drives to promoted grassroots-level women participation. However, there is a presence of significant asymmetry in resources available to such women across districts and persistent social conservatism, which limits elite-level outcomes.¹² There is a lack of comparative academic work between the two states, especially linking legal-policy frameworks with socio-cultural dynamics.

2.3 Role of Non-State Actors and CSR-Driven Interventions

Recent literature propounds the influence of private academies, sport NGOs, and CSR platforms in enhancing women's participation, particularly where state systems are slow or uneven. It also imposes great importance on grassroots programmes that provide safe play spaces, menstrual health education, and community sensitisation tailored for first-generation female athletes.¹³

⁷ Bourdieu P, "Sport and Social Class" (1978) 17 Social Science Information 819 <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847801700603>.

⁸ Chowdhry P, *Contentious Marriages, Eloping Couples: Gender, Caste, and Patriarchy in Northern India* (2010) http://bvbr.bib-bvb.de/8991/F?func=service&doc_library=BVB01&local_base=BVB01&doc_number=016163421&sequence=000001&line_number=0001&func_code=DB_RECORDS&service_type=MEDIA.

⁹ "Khelo India-National Programme for Development of Sports | Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports | Government of India" <https://yas.nic.in/sports/khelo-india-national-programme-development-sports-0> accessed November 18, 2025.

¹⁰ "National Sports Development Code of India 2011 | Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports | Government of India" <https://yas.nic.in/sports/national-sports-development-code-india-2011>

¹¹ *Gender and Patriarchy in Haryana: Why an Alarming Concern* (2023).

¹² Sharma S, "Unpacking Frailty and Gendered Rules of Sport: Women Cricketers' Experiences of Practice and Play in Rajasthan, India" (2023) 73 Sociological Bulletin 46 <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380229231212891>.

¹³ Simply Sport Foundation, "BREAKING BARRIERS FOR WOMEN IN SPORTS" (2022) <https://sports-society.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Simply-Sport-Foundation-Women-in-Sport-Report-2022.pdf>.

Similarly, case studies on targeted CSR models such as the Udaan programme that supports girls from low-income backgrounds very convincingly shows how mentorship, nutritional support, and parental engagement significantly reduce dropout rates.¹⁴ These frameworks create trust networks and reduce family resistance thus helps in complementing the efforts of the state-level government initiatives. However, there is a lack of scalability through these models due to absence of regulatory clarity and reliance on philanthropy.

2.4 Participation, Drop-out Patterns, and Empirical Gaps

Empirical studies have highlighted multiple barriers such as safety concerns, lack of toilets and changing facilities, menstrual taboos, scarcity of female coaches, and limited female-centric sport pathways. Qualitative work also emphasises on family control and early marriage pressures as determining factors when it comes to choices of the women to discontinue sports ambitions.¹⁵

Despite growing attention to these issues and existence of literature on this subject, the present paper still identifies two gaps. First, India's gender-sport statistics remain fragmented across ministries, federations, and independent organisations, complicating comparative assessment. Second, there is minimal socio-legal comparative research examining how state policies interact with patriarchal norms to shape women's sport outcomes. These shortcomings highlight the necessity of policy analysis contextualised by sociological insights which is precisely the aim of this study.

2.5 Outcome of the Literature Review

Collectively the discussed literature shows that women's sport participation in India is shaped by intertwined legal frameworks and social hierarchies. The absence of systematic comparison between Haryana's elite-performance paradigm and Rajasthan's infrastructure-first model creates a research void which the present study aims to fill.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

To analyse the structure and allied factors subsisting in both the states, this paper adopts a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods approach. It is premised upon the notion that participation of women in sports is not merely a function of infrastructure and funding but also deeply affected by cultural norms. Since this study also have a social analytical lens it also adopts a doctrinal analysis of policy documents to understand how legal texts operate within the grassroots level where these women actually live.

The approach of this study is to perform a doctrinal examination of state sports frameworks in Haryana and Rajasthan. The analysis of these primary texts are supplements by sociological analysis rooted in feminist theory and Bourdieu-inspired capital frameworks. This approach is taken to ensure that formal policy commitments are interpreted against structural constraints such as gendered mobility control, family-hierarchy, and rural patriarchal expectations. Therefore, the mixed-method approach is not dominantly statistical in nature, rather it uses qualitative approach to capture complexity in the policy-society interface.

3.2 Data Sources

Primary material includes the Haryana Sports and Physical Fitness Policy 2015 and the Draft Rajasthan Sports Policy 2024. The study also includes government portals particularly the Khelo India athlete dashboard and state youth-sports department repositories to understand the participation and scheme-beneficiary figures.

Secondary data comprises Press Information Bureau releases, state media announcements, and newspaper reports to consider various policies, athlete outcomes, and public discussion around women athletes. Peer-reviewed scholarship and contemporary sport sociology studies also offer context and empirical data. NGO evaluation reports provides and important grassroots datasets capturing micro-level issues.

¹⁴ Journal C, "CSR News: Udaan – A Sports for Development Initiative Launched to Empower Youth" (*The CSR Journal*, April 9, 2025) <https://thecsrjournal.in/csr-news-udaan-sports-development-initiative-empower-youth/> accessed November 18, 2025.

¹⁵ Selvaraj J, "Pooja, 18, Leaps into History as India's Youngest Asian Champion, Aims Even Higher" (*Sportstar*, May 31, 2025) <https://sportstar.thehindu.com/athletics/pooja-high-jump-gold-medal-asian-athletics-championships-2025-backstory-interview-bosti-haryana-fatehbad/article69639102.ece> accessed November 18, 2025.

3.3 Limitations

The study is limited due to its reliance on limited publicly available dashboards and official datasets, which may not be very accurate and tend to under-report female participation or lack disaggregated rural-urban segmentation. Additionally, the Draft Rajasthan Sports Policy 2024 remains subject to modification, and interpretation rests on its current form. Field-based ethnographic interviews could enrich future work by capturing athlete narratives and community feedback, but the present study remains grounded in doctrinal-sociological analysis suited to a policy-focused study.

4. GENDER-EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SPORTS POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

4.1 State Policy Instruments

The level of gender empowerment in sport is deeply shaped by state-level policy commitments and the extent to which they intend to include the national sport development mandates as a part of their policies. Haryana's Sports and Physical Fitness Policy 2015 represents an assertive, performance-driven model that prioritises international podium success through direct cash incentives, recruitment guarantees, and a dense network of rural training centres.¹⁶ The policy explicitly mentions its approach that medal acquisition is a state priority. This aim is further supported by the presence of structured financial rewards and employment opportunities for female across various international and national level competitions. The very tone of the policy shows that it views sporting excellence as both a developmental tool and a tool for prestige.

The Draft Rajasthan Sports Policy 2024 is in contrast to the approach of the approach of Haryana. It reflects a growth-phase of the women sports that provides greater importance to other factors like an infrastructure, long-term athlete pathways, and inclusive sports culture, to improve women participation.¹⁷ The policies place a high reliance on a district-level sports hubs, residential academies, and grassroots outreach program with special attention to girl athletes and rural girls' access to training.

It is also significant to see that the draft policy incorporates the segments aligned with gender mainstreaming. The policy highlights the need of hostel facilities for girls, targeted scholarships, and women's safety protocols. However when the effectiveness of these policies when compared with the realities of sports, it is seen that Rajasthan in current status lacks Haryana's aggressive podium-oriented commitments for female athletes. While this does not denote that there is absence of gender concern, it shows the approach of Rajasthan's strategic emphasis on widening participation before aggressively chasing the elite outcomes as Haryana.

Both the states have propounded such a frameworks that align with national policies, like the National Sports Development Code of India 2011.¹⁸ Additionally, the initiatives like Khelo India programme acts as a tool for harmonising individual state policies of multiple states and prevents them to act against each other. It establishes standardised talent identification systems, also support for sports science interventions, and institutional linkages across state academies.¹⁹ Haryana's disproportionate representation at Khelo India youth events, particularly in wrestling, boxing, and athletics, shows that there is effectiveness in its approach of targeted investment strategy, whereas the Rajasthan's improving medal tally at Khelo India reflects that there is increase in grassroots development yet still indicates that their talent-to-podium ratio for female athletes is at a very initial stage.²⁰

4.2 Institutional Ecosystem for Women

The administrative ecosystem surrounding women athletes shows commitment on the part of state to achieve the goal of gender-inclusivity. Haryana has developed a very specific network of district sports academies, village-level akharas, and state-supported

¹⁶ "Haryana Sports and Physical Fitness Policy 2015." (Government of Haryana 2015) <https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s3e069ea4c9c233d36ff9c7f329bc08ff1/uploads/2023/02/2023022787.pdf> accessed November 18, 2025.

¹⁷ *Supra* note 4.

¹⁸ *Supra* note 10.

¹⁹ *Supra* note 9.

²⁰ Nayse S, "Rajasthan Win 60 Medals to Finish Third in Khelo India National Youth Games" *The Times of India* (May 15, 2025) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/rajasthan-win-60-medals-to-finish-third-in-khelo-india-national-youth-games/articleshow/121192040.cms#:~:text=Rajasthan%20won%2060%20medals%20in%20the%202025,KIYG%20held%20in%20Tamil%20Nadu%20last%20year.>

training hubs supported by specialist coaches and nutrition programmes.²¹ The model is historically tied to wrestling and athletics this reflecting the socio-cultural prominence of physical strength and rural competitive communities. All of this is further complemented by generous pensions, performance-linked promotions, and reservation benefits in public service roles for athletes. This ecosystem provides effective long-term incentives for women to pursue sport professionally.

On the other hand Rajasthan's institutional developments is expanding through large-scale initiatives such as proposed district sports complexes, new residential academies, and state partnerships with private operators under the "Mission Olympics 2028" initiative.²² Rajasthan's strategy focuses a lot on the participation breadth, with special attention to school-level sport promotion, rural outreach camps, and facilities in historically underserved districts, which also includes the Shekhawati and tribal belts.²³ Schemes for girls include hostel expansion, scholarship allocation, and travel support. These factors though seem ineffective however they are very significant in a state where mobility restrictions continue to shape educational and sporting aspirations.²⁴ However, direct financial incentives and employment pipelines, compared to Haryana, remain comparatively moderate in Rajasthan.

Across both states, welfare mechanisms such as pensions, insurance, and scholarship funding exist in policy and black & white texts. However, the depth of gendered protection varies a lot. For instance, Haryana's approach of including incentives like structured cash awards and job quotas create clear security for the women athlete. On the other hand, the Rajasthan's focus is infrastructural mobilisation but its gender specific provisions to support women athletes are still gaining operational clarity. National institutional alignment through the Sports Authority of India facilities, the Khelo India Academy grid, and centralised funding, acts as a levelling mechanism, but gender-specific safety regulations still lack in these policies and it needs to be addressed since it directly affects the sporting choices in the women athletes.²⁵

4.3 Socio-Cultural Dynamics

The implementation of sports policy in India cannot be interpreted without understanding the sociological context in which women athletes have to negotiate their choices and aspiration. Haryana presents a paradox as highlighted earlier that despite the patriarchal hierarchies and documented resistance to girls' public mobility, the state has produced an army of world-class female athletes, particularly in wrestling, boxing, and weightlifting. Scholars have attributed this phenomenon to a mix of local prestige economics, family honour narratives tied to national representation, and the performative masculinity associated with physical dominance that paradoxically enables women to transgress gender boundaries through sport.²⁶ Repeated visibility of female champions, media narratives celebrating rural daughters, and the state's material reward system have collectively recalibrated gender norms in select rural clusters.²⁷ Nevertheless, contested spaces remain: concerns over female athlete harassment, coaching misconduct, and familial backlash persist, as widely reported in recent media accounts and athlete testimonies.²⁸

Rajasthan's sociocultural trajectory differs. With historically lower female sports participation, the state's women athletes have emerged through slower incremental shifts driven by school exposure programmes, NGO-supported sport leadership initiatives,

²¹ CSR Box "Sports Excellence and Structured Physical Education Programs under the HCL Uday initiative" https://csrbox.org/India_organization_project_Uttar-Pradesh,Haryana-Sports-Excellence-and-Structured-Physical-Education-Programs-under-the-HCL-Uday-initiative-_10308 accessed November 18, 2025.

²² Shalya M, "Rajasthan Govt Announces Mission Olympics 2028" *The Times of India* (February 9, 2024) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/sports/more-sports/others/rajasthan-govt-announces-mission-olympics-2028/articleshow/107542372.cms> accessed November 18, 2025.

²³ "Sports Minister Shri Anurag Singh Thakur Inaugurates 33 Khelo India Centres across Rajasthan" <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1951416> accessed November 18, 2025.

²⁴ *Supra Note 13*.

²⁵ "Annual Report 2023-2024" (Sports Authority of India) https://sportsauthorityofindia.nic.in/sai_new/assets/uploads/annual_reports/1739970873_SAI%20Annual%20Report%20-2023-2024%20Ops.Div.%20Part-18=-6-24.pdf accessed November 18, 2025.

²⁶ Devi N and Parihar A, "Khaps in Haryana, Gender and Honour: A Field Study" (2021) 51 *Social Change* 379 <https://doi.org/10.1177/00490857211013593> accessed November 18, 2025.

²⁷ Tribune News Service, "Woman Power: Five Women, Having Beaten All Odds, and One Man Will Look to Add to India's Medal Haul in Wrestling - The Tribune" *The Tribune* (July 23, 2024) <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/parisolympics2024/woman-power-642542/> accessed November 18, 2025.

²⁸ Basant K, "The Dark Side of Haryana's Sports Success Story" (*Newslaundry*, September 25, 2024) <https://www.newslaundry.com/2024/09/25/the-dark-side-of-haryanas-sports-success-story> accessed November 18, 2025.

and growing urban middle-class acceptance of girls' athletics. The rise of role-models in athletics and shooting, increasing media promotion of female sporting icons, and state-backed campaigns highlight shifting attitudes, yet deep-rooted norms around modesty, travel restrictions, and academic prioritisation continue to temper widespread change. Unlike Haryana, where sport increasingly carries aspirational economic value, Rajasthan's sporting culture for women is still transitioning from recreational participation towards professional legitimacy.²⁹

4.4 Role of Sports Bodies and Civil Society

The ecosystem for female athlete empowerment in both states is not purely state-driven; federations, civil society groups, and CSR interventions play catalytic roles. In Haryana, initiatives such as the 'Udaan' programme launched in partnership with Pro Sport Development have introduced structured gender-sensitive grassroots coaching, leadership training for girls, and safe-sport education at school and community levels.³⁰ Similar support structures from successful professional franchises and academies have reinforced mentorship networks and exposure opportunities for rural girl athletes.³¹

Rajasthan demonstrates a growing civil-society sports movement, with organisations such as Simply Sport Foundation working to dismantle socio-economic barriers and provide menstrual health support, nutritional training, and on-ground mentorship to first-generation girl athletes. Partnerships between panchayats, self-help groups, and school authorities have helped normalise sports participation for girls at village levels, particularly through local competitions and scholarship channels.³² CSR actors, banks, telecom companies, and mining industries, have begun funding academies, sports science interventions, and community outreach tournaments, offering early-stage scaffolding for grassroots sport ecosystems.³³

However, governance fragmentation remains a challenge. Federation accountability, transparent athlete grievance protocols, and equitable resource distribution are still emergent across both states, and the absence of statutory 'Safe Sport Codes' leaves women athletes vulnerable to abuse without guaranteed institutional protection.

5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: HARYANA & RAJASTHAN

5.1 Participation & Allied factors

Indicator	Haryana	Rajasthan
Khelo India female participation as per Khelo India Dashboard	1,371 girls out of total athletes 2,853	497 girls out of total athletes 1,169
Institutional academies	Dense network of training hubs, hostels, performance pathways	Expanding infrastructure: new district academies, residential hostels in policy draft
Cultural factors	Patriarchal yet sport-aspirational strong rural "wrestling culture" despite gender norms	Conservative mobility norms but urban growth beginning to shift attitudes in selected districts

5.2 Strengths & Weaknesses

Haryana emerges as a state with exceptional elite-women sports outputs. Female athletes from Haryana have got gold medals,

²⁹ BI K and others, "Empowerment of Women through Sports: A Review," vol 11 (IJPESH, 2024) <https://www.kheljournal.com>

³⁰ Hariom A, Haryana Steelers and Pro Sport Development launch 'Udaan' – A sport for development initiative to empower youth (Sports and Dev, April 15, 2025) <https://www.sportanddev.org/latest/news/haryana-steelers-and-pro-sport-development-launch-%E2%80%9998udaan%E2%80%9999-sport-development-initiative> accessed November 18, 2025.

³¹ Bhargavi N, "Playing for a Cause: CSR Initiative In Indian Sports - A Study" (Indian Journal of Integrated Research in Law Volume IV Issue I) <https://ijirl.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/PLAYING-FOR-A-CAUSE-CSR-INITIATIVE-IN-INDIAN-SPORTS-A-STUDY.pdf> accessed November 18, 2025.

³² MediaBrief, "Rajasthan Education Dept and STAIRS Foundation Launch Sports Education Program 'Bounce of Joy'" (MediaBrief, February 6, 2024) <https://mediabrief.com/sports-education-program-bounce-of-joy/> accessed November 18, 2025.

³³ "CSR in India: Sector-Wise Allocation, Trends & Challenges (2024)" <https://proteantech.in/articles/current-sector-wise-allocation-in-csr-05112024/> accessed November 18, 2025.

national championships and Olympic representation despite their presence of social indicators that suggest gender disadvantage. Their incentive culture, strong state backing and the presence of rural talent pipelines create a performance ecosystem. However, this elite orientation also carries some drawbacks which includes, the pressure to perform every time. There are media reports which raise concerns about athlete welfare and the sustainability of sport participation among girls who may not reach the “winning” threshold.³⁴ This focus on outcomes may sideline broader participation for non-elite girls.

Rajasthan, meanwhile, presents a different broader picture. The state’s infrastructure expansion, inclusive policy and emerging grassroots programmes indicate promising situation for increasing women’s access to sport. But this model is still in its nascent phase with fewer elite women athletes, less visible performance outcomes, and slower transitions from participation to podium. Weaknesses include fewer female-specific pathways, limited historical sporting culture for women in many rural areas, and slower institutionalisation of female-coach pipelines and welfare safeguards.

5.3 Policy-Practice Gap

When the policy texts are analysed, the actual realities of the grassroot level has to be tested and this is where the actual differences come. In both states the formal policy texts articulate gender-sensitive provisions like scholarships, girls’ hostels, training pipelines, but in implementation there are noticeable lacunae.

- **Funding utilisation:** Both states declare budgetary allocations for sport, yet evidence of gender-specific tracking of funds (especially for girl athletes in rural districts) remains scarce. This gap is more acute in Rajasthan, where infrastructural promises are yet to fully translate into operational programmes.
- **Coach quality & female coach numbers:** Haryana enjoys stronger coaching networks, but the number of female coaches remains low and many training centres are male-dominated, which may inhibit girl athlete comfort and retention. Rajasthan’s coach deployment is still ramping up, and female-coach metrics are not clearly disclosed.
- **Grassroots outreach & school programmes:** While Haryana has established competitive junior pipelines, the outcome focus may overshadow mass participation and continued retention. Rajasthan’s school and rural programmes show promise, but scale and continuity are variable across districts.
- **Monitoring and evaluation absence:** Neither state appears to have a robust gender-disaggregated monitoring mechanism publicly documented, i.e., tracking how many girls drop out after initiation, how many transition to elite levels, or how many benefit from welfare schemes. This absence weakens accountability and policy-learning loops.

5.4 Hypothesis Evaluation

The hypothesis proposed in this study stated: H_1 – Haryana’s high-performance model produces greater elite-level women athletes, while Rajasthan’s infrastructural expansion model improves grassroots participation but lags in elite women representation unless accompanied by targeted gender programmes.

Empirical evidence partly validates this. Haryana’s female athlete participation in Khelo India (1,371 girls) significantly exceeds that of Rajasthan (497 girls) as of latest dashboard data.³⁵ The state’s medal tallies and elite outputs for women further cement the first part of the hypothesis. Rajasthan, on the other hand, shows moderate participation and emerging medal outcomes, but fewer elite pipeline successes thus far. However, the data also indicate that structural gender equity remains evolving in both states. Despite the presence of Haryana’s elite model along with underlying patriarchal controls, this potentially limits wider women-athlete retention and empowerment beyond the performance sphere. Rajasthan, while expanding access, must accelerate female-specific institutional pathways like separate coaching and welfare to realise elite outcomes. Thus, the hypothesis is upheld if seen in broad terms but there are presence of some caveats to be considered while stating the validity of presented hypothesis, this includes (a) performance success does not automatically equate to deep gender empowerment, and (b) infrastructure expansion without gender-centric targeting may not convert to elite women representation.

³⁴ *Supra* note 28.

³⁵ Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, “Participation in Khelo India Games” (October 2025) <https://dashboard.kheloindia.gov.in/participation-khelo-india-games/%3D%3DAUVVEeWtWOHJmRZpXTWJVU> accessed 10 November 2025.

6. POLICY REFORMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations integrate statutory-style precision with programmatic feasibility.

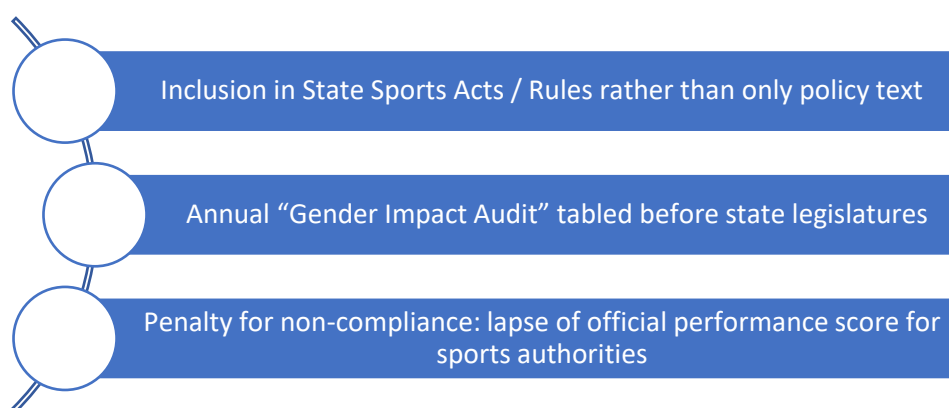
6.1 Embedding Gender-Mainstreaming as a Statutory Obligation

Current policies speak to inclusivity but lack binding mandates, enabling discretion-based implementation. To shift from rhetorical commitment to enforceable obligation, state sports policies should adopt a legal-operational gender clause.

Model Clause for Gender-Mainstreaming Mandate:

“All sports schemes, budgets, recruitment processes, facility allocations and performance review frameworks under this Policy shall be gender-mainstreamed. A minimum of 30% of annual sports budget, facility time allocation, and athlete scholarships shall be ring-fenced for female athletes, progressively rising to 40% within five years.”

Implementation Pathway:



6.2 Strengthening Women-Centric Sports Workforce and Safety Architecture

Representation within sports administration and coaching remains limited, reinforcing structural exclusion. While quotas are debated, targeted affirmative pathways are necessary to accelerate parity.

To support safe participation, states must operationalise a **Sports-Specific Gender-Safety Code**, integrating:

- Mandatory female welfare officers in training centres.
- POSH-compliant grievance redressal committees with athlete representation.
- GPS-enabled transport protocols for rural athletes.
- Anonymous reporting helplines and athlete legal-aid desk.

6.3 Athlete Lifecycle Support: Medical, Educational, and Social Security

Policies often emphasise medals but neglect long-term female athlete welfare, particularly concerning menstrual health, pregnancy-related support, and career transitions.

Integrated Athlete-Care Framework:

- Menstrual health rooms in every district sports facility.
- Mandatory menstrual, reproductive and mental-health modules in coaching curriculum.
- Continuity scholarships for girls returning post-childbirth or injury.
- Tie-ups with women's colleges for hostel-linked training pathways.
- Sports insurance covering maternity and rehabilitation.

Model Clause on Continuity Protection:

“Female athletes shall not face scholarship suspension due to maternity-related absence up to twelve months, subject to medical certification; training re-integration plans shall be provided.”

6.4 Grassroots-to-Elite Pipeline for Rural and Marginalised Girls

Both states must pursue bottom-up talent development, balancing elite pathways with mass participation.

Community-Anchored System Design:

Panchayat-level girl athlete registrar
and mobility pass system

School-cluster sports academies with
residential weekend camps

Annual “Rural Girls Sports Fellowship”
funded jointly by CSR and state budgets

6.5 Monitoring, Transparency, and Accountability

Good governance is the bedrock of equitable sport development. Both states should establish public dashboards tracking:

- Budget spent vs earmarked for women.
- Number of women coaches and sports medicine staff.
- Athlete drop-out ratios disaggregated by rural-urban and socio-economic backgrounds.
- Safety complaints and resolution rates.
- Para-women participation and medal counts.

7. CONCLUSION

The foregoing sections brings us to conclusion that women’s participation in sports in India is not merely an athletic aspiration rather it shall be considered as a constitutional, developmental, and feminist aspiration as well for each woman. Sports act as a tool which increases the mobility, bodily autonomy, and public visibility for women. This in turn helps the women to act against the social evils deep-rooted in patriarchal society which ultimately results in improved educational retention, enhanced health indicators, and community-level shifts in gender biasness. Yet athletic empowerment for women cannot be simply rely solely on symbolic victories or medal winnings. It demands a structural change which includes (a) policies that are enforceable, (b) cultures that are supportive, and (c) infrastructures that are accessible and gender-responsive.

The paper therefore propounds that there is a need for creating a synergy between policy, culture and infrastructure as these cannot be seen in separation to each other and can never help in achieving the ultimate goal if the reforms are done keeping these notions on separate footings. These imperatives extend beyond Haryana and Rajasthan as it also offers a blueprint for national level sport governance in India which promotes welfare of women.

Future research this topic must conduct empirical research by focusing on analysis of long-term athlete-tracking, micro level village-sport studies, and intersectional analyses particularly across caste, class, and rurality. The said approach in future scholarships can illuminate how sport evolves from individual triumph to systemic transformation, ensuring that women’s athletic aspirations are not anecdotal exceptions but well-established national norm.

REFERENCES

- [1] “Annual Report 2023-2024” (Sports Authority of India) https://sportsauthorityofindia.nic.in/sai_new/assets/uploads/annual_reports/1739970873_SAI%20Annual%20Report%20-2023-2024%20Ops.Div.%20Part-18=-6-24.pdf accessed November 18, 2025.
- [2] “CSR in India: Sector-Wise Allocation, Trends & Challenges (2024)” <https://proteantech.in/articles/current-sector-wise-allocation-in-csr-05112024/> accessed November 18, 2025.
- [3] “Draft Rajasthan Sports Policy 2024” (Government of Rajasthan 2024) <https://www.rssc.in/images/DRAFT-RAJASTHAN-SPORTS-POLICY-2024.pdf> accessed November 18, 2025.
- [4] “Haryana Sports and Physical Fitness Policy 2015.” (Government of Haryana 2015) <https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s3e069ea4c9c233d36ff9c7f329bc08ff1/uploads/2023/02/2023022787.pdf> accessed November 18, 2025.
- [5] “Khelo India-National Programme for Development of Sports | Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports | Government of India” <https://yas.nic.in/sports/khelo-india-national-programme-development-sports-0> accessed November 18, 2025.
- [6] “National Sports Development Code of India 2011 | Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports | Government of India” <https://yas.nic.in/sports/national-sports-development-code-india-2011>
- [7] “Sports Minister Shri Anurag Singh Thakur Inaugurates 33 Khelo India Centres across Rajasthan” <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1951416> accessed November 18, 2025.
- [8] Adesh, “View of Women and Girls’ Participation in Sports in Haryana State | International Journal of Physical Education & Sports Sciences” <https://ignited.in/index.php/ijopess/article/view/3674/7144> accessed November 18, 2025.
- [9] Basant K, “The Dark Side of Haryana’s Sports Success Story” (Newslaundry, September 25, 2024) <https://www.newslaundry.com/2024/09/25/the-dark-side-of-haryanas-sports-success-story> accessed November 18, 2025.
- [10] Bhargavi N, “Playing for a Cause: CSR Initiative In Indian Sports - A Study” (Indian Journal of Integrated Research in Law Volume IV Issue I) <https://ijirl.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/PLAYING-FOR-A-CAUSE-CSR-INITIATIVE-IN-INDIAN-SPORTS-A-STUDY.pdf> accessed November 18, 2025.
- [11] BI K and others, “Empowerment of Women through Sports: A Review,” vol 11 (IJPESH, 2024) <https://www.kheljournal.com>
- [12] Bourdieu P, “Sport and Social Class” (1978) 17 Social Science Information 819 <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847801700603>.
- [13] Chowdhry P, Contentious Marriages, Eloping Couples: Gender, Caste, and Patriarchy in Northern India (2010) http://bvbr.bib-bvb.de:8991/F?func=service&doc_library=BVB01&local_base=BVB01&doc_number=016163421&sequence=000001&line_number=0001&func_code=DB_RECORDS&service_type=MEDIA.
- [14] CSR Box “Sports Excellence and Structured Physical Education Programs under the HCL Uday initiative” https://csrbox.org/India_organization_project_Uttar-Pradesh,Haryana-Sports-Excellence-and-Structured-Physical-Education-Programs-under-the-HCL-Uday-initiative-_10308 accessed November 18, 2025.
- [15] Devi N and Parihar A, “Khaps in Haryana, Gender and Honour: A Field Study” (2021) 51 Social Change 379 <https://doi.org/10.1177/00490857211013593> accessed November 18, 2025.
- [16] Gender and Patriarchy in Haryana: Why an Alarming Concern (2023).
- [17] Hariom A, Haryana Steelers and Pro Sport Development launch ‘Udaan’ – A sport for development initiative to empower youth (Sports and Dev, April 15, 2025) <https://www.sportanddev.org/latest/news/haryana-steelers-and-pro-sport-development-launch-%E2%80%99%99udaan%E2%80%9999-sport-development-initiative> accessed November 18, 2025.
- [18] Journal C, “CSR News: Udaan – A Sports for Development Initiative Launched to Empower Youth” (The CSR Journal, April 9, 2025) <https://thecsrjournal.in/csr-news-udaan-sports-development-initiative-empower-youth/> accessed November 18, 2025.
- [19] Kaur MJ, “The Caste and Gender Dynamics in the Functioning of Youth Sports Clubs” (2025) 08 International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Review 716 <https://doi.org/10.37602/ijssmr.2025.8538>
- [20] MediaBrief, “Rajasthan Education Dept and STAIRS Foundation Launch Sports Education Program ‘Bounce of Joy’”

- (MediaBrief, February 6, 2024) <https://mediabrief.com/sports-education-program-bounce-of-joy/> accessed November 18, 2025.
- [21] Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, “Participation in Khelo India Games” (October 2025) <https://dashboard.kheloindia.gov.in/participation-khelo-india-games/%3D%3DAUVVEeWtWOHJmRZpXTWJVU> accessed 10 November 2025.
- [22] Nayse S, “Rajasthan Win 60 Medals to Finish Third in Khelo India National Youth Games” The Times of India (May 15, 2025) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/rajasthan-win-60-medals-to-finish-third-in-khelo-india-national-youth-games/articleshow/121192040.cms#:~:text=Rajasthan%20won%2060%20medals%20in%20the%202025,KIYG%20held%20in%20Tamil%20Nadu%20last%20year.>
- [23] Oza R, “Wrestling Women: Caste and Neoliberalism in Rural Haryana” (2018) 26 Gender Place & Culture 468 <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369x.2018.1502162>.
- [24] Savani DP, “Indian Sports Policy And The Politics Of Women’s Sports And Women In Sports” [2025] International Journal Of Progressive Research In Engineering Management And Science https://www.academia.edu/128037167/INDIAN_SPORTS_POLICY_AND_THE_POLITICS_OF_WOMENS_SPORTS_AND_WOMEN_IN_SPORTS.
- [25] Selvaraj J, “Pooja, 18, Leaps into History as India’s Youngest Asian Champion, Aims Even Higher” (Sportstar, May 31, 2025) <https://sportstar.thehindu.com/athletics/pooja-high-jump-gold-medal-asian-athletics-championships-2025-backstory-interview-bosti-haryana-fatehbad/article69639102.ece> accessed November 18, 2025.
- [26] Shalya M, “Rajasthan Govt Announces Mission Olympics 2028” The Times of India (February 9, 2024) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/sports/more-sports/others/rajasthan-govt-announces-mission-olympics-2028/articleshow/107542372.cms> accessed November 18, 2025.
- [27] Sharma S, “Unpacking Frailty and Gendered Rules of Sport: Women Cricketers’ Experiences of Practice and Play in Rajasthan, India” (2023) 73 Sociological Bulletin 46 <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380229231212891>.
- [28] Shireen J and Zeba S, “Revisiting Women’s Empowerment and Contraception” (2024) 50 Population and Development Review 597 <https://doi.org/10.1111/padr.12688> accessed November 18, 2025)
- [29] Simply Sport Foundation, “BREAKING BARRIERS FOR WOMEN IN SPORTS” (2022) <https://sports-society.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Simply-Sport-Foundation-Women-in-Sport-Report-2022.pdf>.
- [30] Tribune News Service, “Woman Power: Five Women, Having Beaten All Odds, and One Man Will Look to Add to India’s Medal Haul in Wrestling - The Tribune” The Tribune (July 23, 2024) <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/parisolympics2024/woman-power-642542/> accessed November 18, 2025