

# Essay

## Women in sports - struggle for recognition

### 1. Introduction

Hook

General statement

Thesis statement Despite their talent and dedication, women in sports have historically faced challenges in gaining recognition due to societal biases, unequal opportunities, and lack of media coverage.

### 2. Main body:

#### A) Historical background

- a) Early involvement of women in sports
- b) Social and cultural obstacles faced by women athletes in the past
- c) Importance of pioneers (e.g. Billie Jean King, Serena Williams) in advocating for equal treatment.

#### B) Gender discrimination in sports

- a) Pay gap between male and female athletes across various sports
- b) Unequal facilities and training opportunities

c) Limited sponsorship and endorsement for women athletes

c) media coverage and representation

a) Comparison of media coverage between men's and women's sports

b) Lack of female representation in sports coaching and leadership roles

c) How biased media coverage affects public perception of women's sports

D) Progress and current state of women's sports

a) Recent advancement toward gender equality in sports (Title IX, increase media coverage, etc)

b) Role of global organisations in promoting women's sports (IOC, FIFA)

c) Success stories of women athletes overcoming obstacles to gain global recognition

E) Challenges that still exist

a) Remaining issues, such as body image pressure, sexual harassment, Lack of visibility for women in certain sports - (Vinesh Phogat)

b) Need for policy changes:

→ increased funding and continued advocacy for women's sports.

## F) Challenges for women's in Pakistan

### a) cultural and social barriers:

- Traditional views on gender roles limiting women's participation
- Social expectation and family restrictions.

### b) Harassment and safety concerns

## G) Conclusion

a) Thesis statement

b) Summary of key points

c) Hopeful outlook for future progress, recognizing that equality in sports reflects a more inclusive society.

"Sports are a universal language, building bridges between people than anything else I know" -

This quote is said by Nelson Mandela, shows how sports can connect people from all backgrounds. It reflects the universal nature of sports and the importance of including everyone, regardless of gender, in this powerful medium. But, women in sports have had a long and challenging journey toward equal recognition. For many years, sports were seen as a male dominated field where female athletes were often <sup>over</sup>looked, underfunded, and underrepresented. However times has changed, so have the rules of women in sports. Today women's sports are gaining more attention but challenges still exist. Despite their dedication, women face obstacles such as gender discrimination, unequal opportunities and limited media representation. This essay explores these issues and the progress women have made in gaining recognition in sports.

women's participation in sports was once discouraged and even forbidden

in some culture social expectations often dedicated that women should focus on family and domestic life instead of athletic pursuits cultural norms often discouraged women from participating, as physical activity was considered "unfeminine" or even harmful to women health. However, some women defied these social expectations and took bold steps. For instance, the 1900 olympics in Paris marked the first time women could participate, but only in five sports, including tennis and golf. These initial steps opened doors, but progress remained slow, with societal views on gender roles limiting opportunities for women. Despite these obstacles key milestone continued to reshape women's role in support sports. In 1972, Title IX was enacted in the United States, mandating equal opportunities for women in educational programs including sports. Moreover, Pioneers like Billie Jean King and Serena Williams played crucial roles in breaking down barriers. Billie Jean King, a tennis legend, not only excelled on the court but also

famously challenged male athlete Bobby Riggs in the "Battle of the sexes" match in 1973, proving women athletes could compete on an equal level. Serena Williams has continued this legacy, dominating tennis and using her platform to speak out on issues like equal pay and racial discrimination. These pioneers inspired many, proving that women can excel in sports and deserve equal recognition, support and respect.

(after historical background, second comes) Gender discrimination in sports is a significant issue that affects women athletes worldwide especially Asian women. For instance, in soccer, the US women's national team has won multiple world cups, yet they have historically earned much less than the men's team. This unequal pay how women's achievements are often undervalued. Another challenge is the limited sponsorship and endorsement available to women athletes. Many companies prefer to invest in male athletes, believing they will attract

viewers. This lack of financial support makes it harder for women to succeed and gain recognition in their sports. For instance, while athletes like Cristiano-Ronaldo have lucrative deals many female athletes struggle to find sponsors willing to back them. Additionally, women often face unequal facilities and training opportunities in many countries sports facilities are mainly built for men, leaving women with fewer resources for training and competition. For example, Female athletes in college do not have access to the same quality of gyms and coaching staff as their male counterparts. These issues highlight the need for change to ensure women athletes receive the same recognition and support as men in sports.

Additionally, media coverage plays a significant role in how women sports are perceived and recognized. Generally, men's sports receive much more attention than women's

Sports. For instance, during major events like the Super bowl or the FIFA world cup, media coverage focuses on male athletes, while women's events often get less airtime and fewer articles in newspaper. And, in this era, only few people read news, so they do not develop interest to allow their daughter for sports. According to media coverage, families allow their son to go for olympics, sooner any game they want, there is no restriction in it. The lack of coverage means that many talented female athletes do not get recognition they deserve. Moreover there are fewer women in sports commentary and coaching. When women are not represented in these areas, it can create a cycle where young girls do not see role models who look like them. There is another biased role of media, biased media coverage can also lead to stereotypes that suggest women's sports are less exciting and competitive than



men's. This affects public perceptions and makes it harder for female athletes to gain support and sponsorship.

Despite these challenges, there has been considerable progress in recent years. One major milestone was the enactment of Title IX 1972, which ensured that women in United States received equal opportunities, in education and support programs. This law has led to more female athletes participating in school and college sports programs. Additionally media coverage of women's has increased, showcasing female athletes' achievements and inspiring young girls to get involved.

For instance 2019 FIFA women's world Cup, millions tuned in to watch, highlighting the growing popularity of women's soccer. Another, Global organizations like the international olympic committee (IOC) and FIFA play important roles in promoting women's sports. The IOC has made efforts to include more women's in olympus,

with female athletes now competing in nearly every sport. Success stories, like those of athletes such as Simone Biles and Megan Rapinoe, show how women can achieve greatness. Biles has become a global icon in gymnastics, while Rapinoe has fought for equal pay in soccer. These advancements and stories of resilience continue to pave the way of greater recognition and respect for women in sports.

Although there has been progress, many challenges remain. Female athletes often face pressure related to body image which are rarely experienced by men in the same way. For instance, India's wrestler, Phogat, was disqualified in the Olympics 2024 for being 3.5 ounces overweight. (women's pro). Additionally, issues like sexual harassment and abuse within the sports environment are still concerns that need to be addressed. Addressing these challenges

require policy changes, increased funding and support from society to create a more inclusive and safe environment for women in sports.

Asian countries are more indulged in these issues especially Pakistan. Women in Pakistan face many challenges when it comes to participating in sports. Social and cultural norms often discourage women from pursuing athletes' career. For instance the recent Paris olympics starkly illustrate this issue as the country over 240 million people managed to send only seven athletes, Arshad Nadeem, Faiqa Riaz, Gulam Mustafa, Guljam Joseph, Kishmala Talat an Ahmed Durran and Jehanara Nabi. Arshad Nadeem won but Jehanara Nab failed to advance to the next round, in the swimming. Pakistan needs to make new policies especially females to

pursue their career as an athlete.

The journey for women's recognition in sports has been filled with obstacles of cultural, social, gender<sup>based</sup> and with many others. But significant progress has been made. Equal treatment and opportunities for women in sports not only enhance the quality of athletic competition but also reflects the values of an inclusive and fair society. It is never too late to pledge for a new change to create a new tomorrow. Where there is a will there is always a way, regardless of the obstacles and hindrances we can definitely achieve our goals.

It is not whether you get knocked down, it is whether you get up. — Vince Lombardi

This quote highlights the resilience of women athletes who, despite challenges continue to rise and push forward for recognition.