

Awareness of Khelo India and Other Government Sports Schemes among Rural Female Students: An Institutional Perspective

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Abstract

India's government has launched several flagship initiatives to strengthen the nation's sports culture, including the Khelo India Programme, the Fit India Movement, and various state-level programs. While these schemes aim to enhance participation and identify talent, rural female students often have limited exposure to such opportunities due to infrastructural, informational, and socio-cultural barriers. This paper examines the level of awareness and accessibility of these schemes among rural women students through the lens of Mata Sundri Girls College, Dhade, Bathinda. Drawing exclusively from secondary data, institutional observations, and academic resources, the study offers an analysis of challenges, highlights institutional efforts, and suggests actionable strategies to bridge awareness and participation gaps in rural Punjab.

Keywords: Khelo India, Fit India, rural female athletes, sports awareness, Punjab state sports policy, women in sports

1. Introduction

Sports are not merely a source of recreation; they play an integral role in physical fitness, personality development, and life skills acquisition. For young women in rural regions, participation in sports can also mean empowerment, increased confidence, and broader career prospects. The Government of India has been proactive in launching targeted sports schemes; however, rural female participation remains low. This study emerges from the commitment of Mata Sundri Girls College, located in Bathinda's rural belt, to explore and address this participation gap through academic inquiry.

2. Objectives

The paper aims to:

1. Assess awareness of Khelo India and related sports schemes among rural female students.
2. Identify institutional challenges in communicating and implementing these initiatives.
3. Evaluate the schemes' potential to enhance women's participation in sports.
4. Recommend strategies for improving awareness and infrastructure in rural women's colleges.

3. Methodology

This research employs a descriptive, qualitative approach. Data has been compiled from government rep

orts, academic studies, sports policy documents, press releases, and the Department's own experiences. No primary surveys or field studies were undertaken, ensuring the study remains grounded in existing credible literature and direct institutional insights.

4. Government Sports Schemes

4.1 Khelo India Programme

Launched in 2018, this program is designed to discover and nurture sporting talent at the grassroots level. It offers training, scholarships, equipment, and infrastructural support, enabling young athletes to pursue sports alongside academics.

4.2 Fit India Movement

Introduced as a national fitness awareness drive, the movement integrates physical well-being into everyday routines through educational institutions, fitness pledges, and community engagement.

4.3 Punjab State-Level Initiatives

Punjab's sports policies complement national programs through district tournaments, rural sports clubs, financial incentives for women athletes, and localized infrastructure development.

5. Barriers to Awareness and Participation

- Limited dissemination of scheme details within rural institutions.
- Shortage of qualified physical education faculty, particularly female coaches.
- Cultural stereotypes framing sports as a male-dominated activity.
- Inadequate facilities for training and competitions.
- Academic workload restricting students' time for extracurricular sports activities.

6. Role of Mata Sundri Girls College

The Department of Physical Education at Mata Sundri Girls College has initiated several measures to promote sports among rural girls, such as:

- Hosting inter-college tournaments and sports meets.
- Observing National Sports Day and Fit India Week.
- Organizing interactive sessions with female athletes and sports officials.
- Embedding fitness training in NCC/NSS programs.

Despite these steps, more robust funding, improved facilities, and official promotional drives are crucial for sustainable progress.

7. Recommendations

1. Exclusive awareness camps for rural female students at the district and block levels.
2. Sports orientation workshops by government sports officers.
3. Inclusion of sports scheme modules in the academic curriculum.
4. Recruitment of certified female coaches for rural colleges.
5. Public-private partnerships to finance and maintain sports infrastructure in villages.

8. Conclusion

While flagship initiatives like Khelo India and Fit India have the potential to revolutionize the sports landscape, their impact on rural female students remains limited without targeted outreach and

institutional support. Strengthening communication channels, enhancing infrastructure, and challenging cultural stereotypes can collectively create an environment where rural women can thrive as athletes. Institutions such as Mata Sundri Girls College can be pivotal change agents, provided they receive the structural and policy backing necessary to turn awareness into action.

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