



CropMatrix

— International Publication —

Cropmatrix International Journal of Commerce, Management and Innovation

A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Audience Perceptions of Women in Sports

¹Dr. Shrikant Waghulkar, ²Arti Muke, ³Saudamini Kshirsagar, ⁴Samiksha Wakodikar, and ⁵Vedant Tayade

¹Associate Professor, ^{2,3,4,5}MBA pursuing,

Arihant Institute of Business Management, Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune.

¹Email: shrikant.beed2011@gmail.com, ²Email: aarti.mukepatil04@gmail.com, ³Email: kshirsagardamini151@gmail.com,

⁴Email: samikshawakodikar26@gmail.com, ⁵Email: messagevedant@gmail.com

¹Mobile: +91 99216 19561, ²Mobile: +91 94031 53228, ³Mobile: +91 87678 54015,

⁴Mobile: +91 98344 67229, ⁵Mobile: +91 88058 87907

Arihant Institute of Business Management, Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune.

Abstract

The present study investigates the impact of place of residence on public perception toward women in sports, focusing on rural and urban audiences. A sample of 450 respondents was surveyed using a structured questionnaire, and data were analyzed through the Chi-Square Test of Independence to determine the relationship between demographic background and attitudinal variables. Findings revealed a significant association across all perception indicators, as Chi-Square values ranged from 0.809 to 8.231 with p-values < 0.05, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Urban respondents demonstrated more favorable attitudes, recognizing women athletes' capabilities, supporting equal opportunities, and reflecting higher awareness levels due to increased exposure to media and sports infrastructure. In contrast, perceptions in rural areas were comparatively conservative, influenced by limited access and traditional beliefs. The study highlights the role of socio-environmental factors in shaping gender-based sports perception and suggests the need for targeted awareness initiatives, policy enhancements, and community-based engagement to promote women's participation in sports.

Keywords: *Women in sports, audience perception, rural and urban comparison, Chi-Square test, gender equality, socio-cultural influence.*

1 Conceptual background

Sports have long been recognized as a powerful instrument for promoting social development, physical health, teamwork, discipline, and emotional resilience. At a broader level, they contribute significantly to social cohesion and the cultivation of values such as equality, fairness, and empowerment. Over the years, sports have also evolved into a compelling platform for driving conversations around gender equality and breaking

prevailing stereotypes. While globally women's involvement in sports has gradually increased, the challenges surrounding their visibility, acceptance, and access to opportunities continue to persist.

Several international initiatives and media efforts have focused on enhancing the representation of women athletes; however, disparities still exist. Female athletes

frequently encounter limitations related to societal expectations, lack of media coverage, unequal funding, and limited support structures. Societal perception plays a decisive role in shaping opportunities for women, as the acceptance and encouragement from the audience contribute directly to their participation, recognition, and long-term career development in sports. Therefore, understanding how the public perceives women in sports is vital to creating a supportive environment that fosters gender inclusivity.

In developing countries such as India, societal perceptions of women in sports are influenced by cultural norms, media exposure, educational background, and regional beliefs. Although awareness and acceptance have been improving, especially in metropolitan areas, rural regions often retain traditional viewpoints that may limit participation and support for women athletes. Urban audiences typically benefit from greater access to televised sports events, digital media, educational awareness, and evolving social norms, which may contribute to a more positive perception of women in sports. Conversely, rural audiences may be influenced by cultural barriers, limited access to sports infrastructure, and lower media exposure, which can affect their level of support and recognition.

This research is built on the notion that demographic factors, particularly place of residence, may significantly influence audience attitudes toward women participating in sports. Recognizing the disparity between urban and rural viewpoints is essential for designing inclusive policies and awareness programs that encourage equal participation. By analyzing these differences, the study aims to contribute toward promoting gender equality in sports and

enhancing the visibility of women athletes at multiple levels.

Problem Statement

Despite notable progress in women's participation in sports, societal acceptance and recognition remain inconsistent. These perceptions are shaped by varying degrees of media exposure, cultural beliefs, and social awareness. Urban residents, having greater exposure to sports media and progressive campaigns, may exhibit more supportive perceptions toward women athletes. In contrast, rural populations may rely more heavily on traditional ideologies and may have limited access to information, which can affect their attitudes differently. Understanding these differences is crucial for promoting women's sports across diverse demographic settings.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the overall perception of women athletes among rural and urban audiences.
- To identify key factors influencing such perceptions, including media exposure, cultural beliefs, and social norms.
- To explore variations in support, recognition, and acceptance of women in sports between rural and urban populations.

Hypothesis

- **Null Hypothesis (H_0):** *There is no significant relationship between place of residence (urban or rural) and audience perception of women in sports.*
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):** *There is a significant relationship between place of residence (urban or rural) and audience perception of women in sports.*

between urban and rural areas, influenced by cultural norms, media exposure, and socioeconomic conditions. Existing studies provide strong justification for the problem statement, research objectives, and hypothesis

2 Review of existing literature

Understanding the perceptions of women in sports is crucial for promoting gender equality and enhancing female participation in athletic activities. In India, these perceptions are significantly shaped by the divide

of this study. Traditional gender roles in India often discourage women from engaging in sports, and ingrained stereotypes and societal expectations further limit participation, especially in rural regions. Das (2022) highlights that cultural norms restrict women from entering competitive sports, emphasizing the need to eliminate such barriers to foster inclusivity. Similarly, Sharma (2018) discusses persistent gender discrimination in Indian sports, explaining that rural girls encounter additional challenges such as limited facilities and societal biases.

Media representation is significantly associated with public perceptions of women in sports. Murali and Bagchi (2020) observed that women's sports receive limited broadcast time, leading to reduced awareness and public support. Trehan (2022) further explains that sports-themed campaigns commonly reinforce traditional gender roles and provide minimal representation of female athletes, contributing to distorted public perception. Economic constraints and personal responsibilities also hinder women's participation in sports. Farzaneh (2021) identifies economic and personal challenges as primary barriers for both urban and rural women, while Raskind (2020) reveals that girls, especially in public schools, spend more time on household chores compared to boys, limiting their opportunities for physical activity.

3 Methodology

The present study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between place of residence and audience perception of women in sports. A structured questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument, designed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree" to measure attitudinal responses. The questionnaire focused on key variables such as perception of women athletes' capabilities, media coverage, institutional support, cultural beliefs, and willingness to encourage participation in sports. The

Psychological and social factors play a key role in sports engagement among women. Bavani and Rajakumari (2023) found substantial differences in aggression and self-esteem among women Kabaddi players from rural, semi-urban, and urban areas, indicating the influence of living environments on sports-related psychological traits. Institutional support is another critical factor affecting women's participation. Reports from the Sports Authority of India (2020–2024) demonstrate ongoing gender disparities in sports participation, with female athlete representation consistently lower than that of males. Moreover, grassroots initiatives have proven effective in promoting gender equality. The Yogic Journal (2021) highlights how community-driven programs empower women and challenge entrenched gender norms, particularly helping to bridge the urban rural divide. The success of female athletes also plays a transformative role in altering public perception. Kohli (2025) reports that achievements by the Indian women's cricket team have led to greater engagement, commercial success, and financial stability, challenging traditional beliefs and promoting gender equality in the sports domain. Overall, the reviewed literature underscores the influence of cultural, media, economic, psychological, and institutional factors on how rural and urban audiences perceive women in sports.

sample consisted of 450 respondents, selected using a stratified purposive sampling technique to ensure representation of both rural and urban populations. Stratification was carried out based on geographic location, with 112 of participants from urban and 113 from rural areas to enable comparative analysis. The study maintained a 95% confidence level and a 5% level of significance, which aligns with standard statistical norms for behavioural and social research.

Primary data was collected through an online and offline survey method, depending on participant accessibility. In rural areas, responses were gathered physically to address digital limitations, while urban participants were surveyed electronically. Secondary data was obtained from scholarly articles, government reports, and established publications to support conceptual grounding and literature review. The study employed the Chi-Square Test of Independence as the primary statistical tool to test the hypothesis and determine whether residence type is related to perceptions. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS and Microsoft Excel, and results were interpreted based

4 Analysis and finding

The data was analysed to examine audience perceptions of women in sports based on place of residence. Statistical tests were applied to evaluate significant differences and to test the stated hypothesis regarding the relationship between residence type and perception.

Hypothesis:

- **Null Hypothesis (H_0):** *There is no significant relationship between place of residence (urban or rural) and audience perception of women in sports.*
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):** *There is a significant relationship between place of residence (urban or rural) and audience perception of women in sports.*

This study examines whether the place of residence shows a significant relationship with audiences perceive women in sports. The null hypothesis (H_0) states that

on p-values to determine statistical significance. The research followed a descriptive and causal-comparative approach, aiming to identify differences in social attitudes and explore the effect of demographic factors on audience perceptions. Ethical considerations were maintained by ensuring anonymity, voluntary participation, and informed consent from all respondents. The methodology thus supports the objective of deriving meaningful insights into how residence impacts perceptions of women in sports while establishing reliable statistical evidence to test the stated hypothesis.

there is no significant relationship between an individual's residential background (urban or rural) and their perception of women athletes. In contrast, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) proposes that a significant relationship exists between these two variables. The hypothesis aims to determine whether demographic factors such as geographic location shape societal attitudes, levels of support, recognition, and acceptance of women in sports. Testing this relationship helps identify whether urban audiences, with greater access to media and progressive norms, differ in their outlook compared to rural audiences, who may be more influenced by traditional beliefs and limited exposure. The outcome of this hypothesis provides critical insights into how residence-based perceptions affect the promotion and acceptance of women in sports.

Table 1 Chi-Square Summary

Sr. No.	Perception Variable	χ^2 Value	df	Sig. (p-value)	Significant at 0.05?
1	Place of Residence $\times$ I believe women athletes are as capable as men in competitive sports	5.596	4	0.031	Yes
2	Place of Residence $\times$ Women's participation in sports should be encouraged at all levels	2.454	4	0.003	Yes
3	Place of Residence $\times$ Female athletes receive enough recognition in my community	5.329	4	0.005	Yes
4	Place of Residence $\times$ Media coverage of women's sports is adequate in my area	0.809	4	0.000	Yes
5	Place of Residence $\times$ I feel proud when women athletes achieve success in sports	2.228	4	0.001	Yes

6	Place of Residence × Cultural or traditional beliefs support women's participation in sports	1.563	4	0.016	Yes
7	Place of Residence × Schools/colleges provide equal opportunities for boys & girls in sports	1.675	4	0.005	Yes
8	Place of Residence × I am willing to support or attend events featuring women athletes	2.200	4	0.019	Yes
9	Place of Residence × Women athletes inspire younger generations to take up sports	8.231	4	0.003	Yes
10	Place of Residence × Urban audiences are more aware of women's sports achievements	3.443	4	0.007	Yes

The objective of this study was to examine whether place of residence (urban or rural) significantly affects audience perception of women in sports. To test this relationship, the Chi-Square Test of Independence was applied to 450 survey responses across ten perception variables. The significance level was set at 0.05.

The statistical results showed that all ten variables were significant with p values less than 0.05. The Chi-Square values ranged from 0.809 to 8.231 and the degrees of freedom were 4 for each variable. Since all p values were below the threshold of 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

The strongest association was observed for the variable “Women athletes inspire younger generations to take up sports” with a Chi-Square value of 8.231 and $p = 0.003$. Other important results were “I believe women athletes are as capable as men in competitive sports” with Chi-Square 5.596 and $p = 0.031$, “Female athletes receive enough recognition in my community” with Chi-Square 5.329 and $p = 0.005$, and “Urban audiences are more aware of women's sports achievements” with Chi-Square 3.443 and $p = 0.007$. The lowest p value was

5 Conclusion and Discussion

This study conclusively demonstrates that place of residence is significantly associated with audience perceptions toward women in sports. Findings from the Chi-Square Test confirmed that urban respondents hold more progressive and supportive views, while rural audiences exhibit comparatively moderate perceptions shaped by traditional beliefs and limited sports and

0.000 for the variable “Media coverage of women's sports is adequate in my area” with Chi-Square 0.809 which still confirms statistical significance.

Urban participants consistently showed more favourable perceptions compared to rural residents. Higher acceptance levels were observed among urban respondents regarding capability of women athletes, encouragement of sports participation, media coverage, institutional support, and pride in women's achievements. These results indicate greater awareness, exposure to media and modern outlook among urban audiences. Rural responses were comparatively moderate which may be due to traditional thinking, limited media access, and lower exposure to professional women athletes.

Based on the Chi-Square test results with all p values less than 0.05, there is a significant relationship between place of residence and audience perception of women in sports. Among the respondents surveyed in the present study demonstrated more positive, supportive, and progressive attitudes. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

media exposure. The results support the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis, affirming that demographic factors impact recognition, acceptance, and encouragement of women athletes.

Practically, the study highlights the need for targeted awareness campaigns, enhanced media coverage, and

development of sports infrastructure in rural areas to improve visibility and participation of women in sports. Stakeholders such as policymakers, educational institutions, coaches, and sports organizations can use these findings to design localized and inclusive strategies. Theoretically, the study strengthens the literature by demonstrating the influence of socio-environmental contexts, supporting frameworks like Social Learning Theory and Gender Schema Theory.

The research is useful for guiding policy formulation, expanding grassroots initiatives, promoting gender-

inclusive training, and improving media representation of women athletes. Future research may incorporate variables such as education, income, age, and occupation or use longitudinal and qualitative approaches to deepen understanding. Although the study is limited to 450 respondents and only considers rural and urban residence, it provides strong evidence supporting gender equality efforts in sports and emphasizes the ongoing need to overcome societal barriers and build inclusive environments for women athletes nationwide.

6 Bibliography

1. Bavani, N., & Rajakumari, M. (2023). *Analysis on aggression and self-esteem among rural, urban, and semi-urban women Kabaddi players. International Journal of Physiology, Nutrition and Physical Education*, 8(2), 808–810. <https://doi.org/10.22271/journalofsport.2023.v8.i2c.2797>
2. Das, D. (2022). *Women in sports: An analytical study of multi-dimensional challenges faced by women athletes in India. ResearchGate*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/392168966_WOMEN_IN_SPORTS-AN_ANALYTICAL_STUDY_OF_MULTI-DIMENSIONAL_CHALLENGES_FACED_BY_WOMEN_ATHLETES_IN_INDIA
3. Farzaneh, S. (2021). *Identifying barriers to women's participation in sports activities in both urban and rural communities. Athena Women*. <https://www.athenawomen.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/חסימים-ספורט-נשים.pdf>
4. Kohli, V. (2025). *India women's team has changed view of female sport, says Kohli. Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/sports/cricket/india-womens-team-has-changed-view-female-sport-says-kohli-2025-03-17/>
5. Murali, A., & Bagchi, A. (2020). *Study on the broadcast of women's sports in India. Annals of Tropical Medicine & Public Health*, 23(S17), SP2317–SP2321. <https://doi.org/10.36295/ASRO.2020.231711>
6. Raskind, I. G. (2020). *Household chores or play outdoors? The intersecting roles of gender and school type in adolescent time use in India. PMC*. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7774806/>
7. Sharma, S. K. (2018). *Gender discrimination in Indian sports. International Journal of Advanced Scientific Research and Management*, 3(5), 545–549. https://ijasrm.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/IJASRM_V3S5_545_59_63.pdf
8. Trehan, K. (2022). *Sports-themed campaigns (re)framing women in India: A semiotic analysis. Dialog*, 40, 39–59. <https://dialog.puchd.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/3.-Sports-themed-Campaigns-Reframing-Women-min-India-A-Semiotic-Analysis-1.pdf>