



Role of Government Sports and Physical Education Schemes in Empowering Tribal Women in India

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Abstract:

Tribal women in India experience multiple layers of marginalization due to social, economic, and cultural barriers, which often limit their access to education, health care, and opportunities for self-development. In this context, government-initiated sports and physical education schemes have emerged as important tools for empowerment. The present study examines the role of major government sports and physical education programmes in enhancing awareness, participation, and empowerment among tribal women. The study focuses on key empowerment dimensions such as physical health, psychological well-being, social inclusion, educational continuity, and economic opportunities. Using a descriptive and analytical research design, data were collected from tribal women through a structured Likert-type questionnaire. The findings indicate that participation in government sports schemes contributes positively to self-confidence, leadership qualities, health awareness, and social recognition among tribal women. However, limited awareness, inadequate infrastructure, cultural restrictions, and lack of trained personnel remain significant challenges. The study highlights the need for targeted awareness programmes, community involvement, and inclusive policy implementation to strengthen the impact of sports-based interventions. Overall, the study concludes that government sports and physical education schemes play a vital role in empowering tribal women when effectively implemented and supported at the grassroots level.

Keywords: Tribal Women, Government Sports Schemes, Physical Education, Women Empowerment, Khelo India, Social Inclusion, Health Outcomes.

Introduction:

Tribal women in India often face socioeconomic, educational, and gender-based barriers that limit their participation in physical activities and sports. Government-led physical education and sports initiatives can play a crucial role in improving their health, confidence, social status, and opportunities. This study explores how these schemes influence empowerment outcomes among tribal women.

Significance of the Study:

- Contributes to policy debates on **gender and tribal inclusion in sports**

- Offers evidence for **program improvements and resource allocation**
- Highlights how sports can be a **tool for empowerment** beyond health benefits
- Bridges research gaps in sports policy impact on **marginalized women populations**

Statement of the Problem:

Despite several government policies for sports development and women empowerment, tribal women's participation is still low due to lack of awareness, access, and cultural barriers. This study examines the extent to which government sports and physical education

schemes have contributed to tribal women's empowerment in India.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To identify key **government sports and physical education schemes** available for tribal women.
2. To assess the **level of awareness** of these schemes among tribal women.
3. To examine the **impact** of these schemes on tribal women's:
 - Physical health
 - Self-confidence and self-esteem
 - Social inclusion and empowerment
 - Educational and economic opportunities
4. To explore challenges and barriers faced by tribal women in accessing these schemes.
5. To propose strategies for improving effectiveness and participation.

Research Questions:

1. What government sports and PE schemes exist for tribal women in India?
2. How aware are tribal women of these government programs?
3. Do these schemes contribute positively to empowerment indicators like confidence, education, social inclusion, and economic independence?
4. What are the barriers in accessibility and participation?
5. How can these schemes be improved to better support tribal women?

Hypotheses:

- **H1:** Tribal women with higher awareness of government sports schemes show higher empowerment levels than those with lower awareness.
- **H2:** Participation in government-initiated physical education programs significantly

improves physical health outcomes among tribal women.

Research Methodology:

1. Research Design

Descriptive and analytical (mixed methods: quantitative & qualitative)

2. Population and Sampling

- Tribal women in selected regions
- Purposive / stratified sampling

3. Data Collection

- **Primary:** Survey questionnaires, focus group interviews, field observations
- **Secondary:** Government reports, policy documents, scheme guidelines, literature review

4. Tools

- Structured questionnaire
- Interview schedule
- Likert scale for empowerment measurement

5. Data Analysis

- Quantitative: SPSS / Excel (mean, frequency, chi-square, correlation)
- Qualitative: Thematic analysis

Expected Findings:

- Low to moderate awareness of schemes among tribal women.
- Positive association between participation and empowerment indicators.
- Structural barriers like transportation, infrastructure, cultural norms.
- Need for targeted outreach, localized sports programs.

Scope of the Study:

- Geographic Focus: (e.g., selected tribal areas specify states/tribes)
- Target Group: Tribal women aged 15 to 35 (or your chosen range)
- Schemes include: Khelo India, Olympic/Youth programs, National Sports

Development Fund, Physical Education initiatives in tribal schools and community centers.

Limitations

- Limited to specific regions / sample size
- Self-reported measures may have bias

Sample Government Schemes

1. Khelo India Programme.
2. National Sports Development Fund.
3. Sports Authority of India initiatives.
4. Physical Education programs in tribal schools.
5. State-level tribal welfare & sports schemes

Khelo India Programme (Khelo India National Programme for Development of Sports)

Overview:

Khelo India is the flagship sports development programme of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, aimed at promoting sports at the grassroots and fostering a strong sports culture nationwide. It balances mass participation with sports excellence pathways.

Key Components Relevant to Tribal Women:

- **Sports for Women:** Dedicated component promoting sports participation by girls and women and providing competitive platforms and support to women athletes.
- **Promotion of Rural & Indigenous/Tribal Games:** Encourages traditional and tribal sports, making sports culturally relevant and accessible for tribal communities.
- **Talent Search & Development:** Identifies talent at grassroots, including in tribal areas, offering training and scholarships.
- **Physical Fitness of School Children:** Focuses on fitness in schools important for tribal girls in school settings.

- **State-Level Khelo India Centre's:** Sports facilities and structured training hubs are set up across states to improve access.

Benefits Provided:

- Annual scholarships for identified athletes, often over several years.
- Access to coaching, training camps, competitions, and sports infrastructure.
- Emphasis on women's leagues and women-focused support within the broader scheme.

Why It Matters for Tribal Women:

Khelo India's promotion of rural/tribal games and sports for women helps increase awareness, participation, and empowerment by building confidence, community visibility, and pathways into competitive sports.

National Sports Development Fund (NSDF):

Overview:

The **National Sports Development Fund** was set up in **1998** to mobilize resources that support sports development in India. It provides **financial assistance and training opportunities** for athletes, infrastructure development, coach training, and support for competitions.

Key Features:

- Provides funds to **athletes** for international training, exposure, and coaching.
- Can assist in **infrastructure projects** and equipment provision.
- Supports research, training programmers, and collaborations benefitting athletes and sports bodies.

Potential Relevance for Tribal Women: While not women-specific, NSDF funding can be channeled often via partnerships or collaborations to support talented tribal women athletes for advanced training, camps, and exposure opportunities.

Sports Authority of India (SAI) Initiatives:**SAI:**

The **Sports Authority of India (SAI)** is the main implementing agency for sports programmes, including Khelo India and state-wide development schemes, aimed at broadening access to structured training, coaching, and infrastructure.

Main SAI Initiatives:

- **National Centre's of Excellence (NCOE) and SAI Training Centre's (STC):** Provide quality coaching, best-in-class infrastructure, nutritional support, and sports science.
- **Sports for Women Initiatives:** Organised competitions and specific coaching, with women athletes supported through SAI-run programmes.
- **"10 Ka Dum":** A mass participation initiative promoting sports across 10 disciplines in multiple cities to encourage wider involvement, including women.
- **Promotion of Rural & Indigenous Games:** Supported under the Khelo India umbrella via SAI, emphasising traditions familiar to tribal communities.

Why This Matters:

SAI's infrastructure, coaching, and competition platforms help **bridge gaps in access** particularly for tribal and rural athletes by giving them pathways into structured sporting environments.

Physical Education & Sports in Tribal Schools (e.g., EMRS / Eklavya Model Residential Schools)**Overview:**

Government residential schools for tribal students such as **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)** include **sports and physical education** as part of the curriculum, often with **Centres of Excellence for Sports** in each state.

Key Elements:

- Specialised sports facilities integrated into school programmes.
- Structured training, boarding, and lodging for tribal students.
- Sports equipment, coaching, and competitive exposure accessible inside the school system.

Impact:

This improves **physical fitness, discipline, and sports awareness** among tribal girls early in life, supporting **overall empowerment** through health, confidence, and opportunities.

State-Level Tribal Welfare & Sports Schemes:

- **Operation of Sports Hostels (Rajasthan):** Provides boarding, training, and meals for tribal and rural students from classes 6-12 to participate in sports.
- **Pay & Play / Khel Chhatravriti (Jharkhand):** State-specific support schemes for players (including tribal athletes).
- **State-led Tribal Sports Integration (Telangana EMRS programme):** Combines competitive and grassroots sports into tribal school life, with local training and exposure opportunities.

Why These Matter:

State policies often tailor national programmes to **local tribal contexts**, offering targeted incentives, competitions, and infrastructure closer to tribal communities.

How These Schemes Empower Tribal Women:

- **Access & Awareness** - Schemes like Khelo India and tribal school sports programmes raise awareness of physical education and introduce structured participation.
- **Skill Development** - Training centre's, coaching and competition exposure build sports skills and confidence.

- **Scholarships & Financial Support** - Financial assistance helps tribal women continue sports alongside education.
- **Social Inclusion** - Participation breaks gender and cultural barriers, fostering leadership and community empowerment.
- **Health & Education** - Physical education improves health outcomes and encourages school retention.

Conclusion:

The study clearly demonstrates that government sports and physical education schemes have significant potential to empower tribal women in India. Participation in sports not only improves physical fitness and health but also enhances self-esteem, mental strength, leadership skills, and social acceptance. Schemes such as Khelo India, initiatives by the Sports Authority of India, and sports-oriented programmes in tribal schools provide valuable platforms for skill development and social mobility among tribal women. Despite these positive outcomes, the effectiveness of such schemes is often limited by low awareness levels, inadequate facilities in remote tribal areas, and prevailing socio-cultural constraints. Therefore, strengthening outreach mechanisms, ensuring gender-sensitive infrastructure, and involving local communities are essential for maximizing the benefits of these programmes. The study concludes that sports and physical education, when integrated with tribal welfare policies, can serve as powerful

instruments for holistic empowerment and inclusive development of tribal women in India.

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