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# Sports and Social Capital: A Qualitative Study on Women Athletes with Disabilities

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## ABSTRACT

Social capital enhances the flow of resources to individuals via formal and informal network and social support. Over the last two decades, social capital has been employed at exploring the processes that makes a conducive and secure community – for fostering different identities and behaviors (1). About 44 percent of the disabled community in India is women (2). Apart from the lack of social and physical autonomy this populace is subjected to stigmatisation, poor quality of life, disintegrated social and psychological functioning. Previous studies show that sport helps to build community identity and a sense of community and belonging. Our study focuses on the discourse of the intersectionality between disability, gender and sports in the formation and maintenance of social capital on a group of five women athletes with disabilities. Qualitative study based on primary and secondary data was done through narrative and content analysis. Results show that there might be a role of sports in developing social capital leading them to break few mental and physical barriers. The study finally shows the positive effects of the socio-cultural aspects of social capital.

**Keywords:** People with disabilities, social capital, paralympics, women with disabilities, sports.

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## INTRODUCTION

Critical Disability studies analyse disability in terms of material barriers to work, education and community living experiences in everyday life; materialist social modelist Carol Thomson defined politicized disability and sought to address material needs via increased socio-political participation (3). The notion of ableism is a social attitude, where disability is perceived as a pathology or ‘abnormality’ which needs to be treated, repaired or eliminated. It suggests a belief that individuals with disability are in a lower hierarchy of values and capacities than

able-bodied individuals (4). Feminist studies define disability from a social perspective by finding its significance in interaction between bodies and their social and material environment. They believe disability to be ‘cultural interpretation of human variation’, rather than pathology or inferiority. Disability as a system of exclusion, stigmatizes human differences, and marks bodies as subordinate. According to Roman Ossowski, the situation of the individuals with disability is especially influenced by the following factors: qualities of the social environment, visibility and the

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material status of the disabled (5). These factors concerning accessibility, representation and social status depends on the network of social ties, which archetypes relatively better life-chances and lifestyles. Pierre Bourdieu in 1986 used the term social capital to describe the “aggregate of resources which are linked to mutual acquaintance and recognition, which provides each members of the group with collectively owned capital” (6). According to him, social capital enhances social mobility and can be advanced towards attaining economic gain.

Social capital enhances the flow of resources to individuals via formal- informal network and social support. Consumption pattern, political ideologies, mutual trust and collectively coordinated work creates stronger social ties, which strengthens the social capital within the in-group, while maintaining differences from the out- group, hence becoming a source of exclusion (7). Thus exclusion based on social cohesion is a resource for the advantaged and adversely affect the less advantaged communities, who often do not receive the chance to organize, exchange information and protest. Social capital is cemented on social bonding, linking and bridging networks, which depends on individuals’ membership in a social network, portrays that this form of capital can be easily accumulated by people who have convenient accessibility to the public sphere and can conform to the normative expectation of the society. Bio- politics, which sets the narrative of ‘normal’ and ‘not- normal’ bodies, via political gaze over biological features, plays an essential role in producing and reproducing social network based on generalised trust. ‘Femaleness is a natural form of physical and mental deficiency’ as cultural meanings are attributed to bodies. Marginalized communities, such as women and disabled, then remains traditionally and constantly deprived, since social capital is believed to benefit through access to resources such as emotional and material support and health information generated by social networks (8, 9).

The discourse on social capital over the last decade has altered the dynamics of how communities might operate to become safer and

more productive, and be more visibilised at places where positive identities and lifestyles might be forged. As Coalter (7) points out “the diffuse and contested nature of social capital is central to the social regeneration/social inclusion agenda” (10). As Feminist disability studies scrutinizes how people with emotional, physical and mental differences are designated as defective and excluded from social order and are forced to face the cultural sentence of inferiority. Thus the attempt is to understand the marginalisation through identity, intersectionality and embodiment. Contemporary society is largely dependent on the restructuring of inclusive associations and institution, for, e.g., Sports, for creating social cohesion and harmony despite the heterogeneity among people. Of the various social elements within a community, sport is widely recognised as a way to build positive social capital (1, 11). Since Sports increases propensity of group interaction and forming voluntary association, thus it’s potentiality to fabricate an inclusive democratic participation through equitable and orderly ways, needs to be effectively utilized for a positive social change.

In the “neoliberal state” private-public partnerships, tax advantages (and expectations) for corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the reduction of social solidarity become key aspects of the new institutional framework (12). This move from embedded liberalism to a neoliberal state implies that development or community-level sport should operate under market conditions and institutional frameworks inherent in neo-liberalism and globalism. This change demands that sport fulfil two roles. First, within the traditional development system for grassroot and/or elite sport programmes, as a function of government legislation, policies, programs, funding and sport management (13). A second role has evolved where sport is employed as a platform to deal with societal issues and provides opportunities for disadvantaged members of society. Studies found that sporting activities at the grassroots level have the potential to motivate, inspire and forge a community spirit in the face of social ills (1). Hutzler (1990) introduced the perspective of empowerment in disability sport along with a model of sports-based empowerment. The

objective of this model is to ensure individuals gain control over personal and environmental resources for achieving competencies that are usually deprived through disability (14, 15).

A report by the Australian Sports Commission (1) on the impact of sport in the community noted that: "Social controls are found in traditional and modern social structures, and participatory activities, such as sport, give people a sense of community identity and purpose, and help prevent them from engaging in antisocial activities (1, 11). Tonts opines that in several Australian towns and regions, competitive sport is prevalent in their local, cultural, political and economic relations (11, 16, 17). He also claims that the "associational" nature of sports participation, and specifically sports clubs, is often perceived as a medium for the generation of social capital. Sport is capable of being used to cultivate new friendships and social associations across class, religious and ethnic barriers. This includes playing and non-playing members and spectators and can eventually lead to growth in the norms of trust and reciprocity. In other words, sport supplies passages or connections among diverse groups and social networks (1). Atherley (18) argues that social capital is important to rural community everyday life. She maintains that district sport clubs are a key focus of community life. Social inclusion in or social exclusion from such organisations can influence the daily life, social networks, community assimilation, and the stream of information that helps a resident create a sense of belonging (1).

About 44 percent of the disabled community in India are women (2) Women with Disabilities (WWDs) are stigmatised with respect to their sex/gender and impairments, resulting in poor quality of life, with disintegrated social and psychological functioning. The lack of social and physical autonomy further aids the cycle of marginalization. Women with disabilities have a reduced probability to receive social, personal and legal support, unlike the 'normal' people (19), mostly due to physical, infrastructural and attitudinal barriers. Lack of information, consciousness and monitoring policies related to the rights of the WWDs (WDI Network), forces

these individuals into the darkness of social and psychological isolation resulting to multi-faceted malfunctioning. Ferri (20) suggested that being a woman and having a disability, are constructed socially and are historically mediated categories. Many individuals with a disability do not feel negative about their condition, but are made to feel as a disadvantaged minority and are subjected to stigmatisation, generalisation and stereotyping; which only enhances in case of a woman. Individuals with physical disabilities are compelled to be under house-arrest and live sedentary lifestyle; with restricted social interactions (21), reduced social participation (due to stigmatisation) leading to social exclusion (22).

Historically, definitions of maleness and masculinity were synonymous with the conceptions of athleticism. At the same time, traditional notions of what is meant to be a female were in direct opposition to what is meant to be an athlete (23). However, in the wake of the 1970s feminist movement, women's roles expanded into many areas traditionally occupied by men. According to Foucault, the body is directly involved in a political capital where power relations have immediate hold upon it, thus it becomes only useful when it is a productive and subjugated body. Body as the object and target of power is manipulated, shaped and trained to obey, respond, become skilful and increase its force (24). With modern societies, bodies became the object of pressing investment on which constraints, prohibition and obligations were imposed. The language of the body, its movements, gestures, attitudes and their internal organizations are controlled and monitored, thereby 'otherizing' the bodies which do not fall under the 'ideal body image'. Feminist Studies scrutinizes how these 'otherized' supposed to be 'unable, unfit' bodies are forced to face the cultural sentence of inferiority. Sports as an organization reflect on stratifying social methods through exclusion of 'unfit' bodies and gendered inequalities within it. Refashioning of Sports to use it as a social tool of inclusion and unity would then require the visibilisation of gendered attitude in games with upliftment of the marginalised through shared ownership.

Disability sport includes activities wherein individuals with physical disability participate in organised sport irrespective of an integrated or disability specific setting. Sport and physical activities has positive effect on the self-perception (25), self-confidence and self-efficacy (26), enhancing the quality of life (27), physical and mental well-being (28) with integrated development of mind and body (29), and boosting of social and cognitive development and academic achievement (29). Additionally, several researchers have emphasised on the social competence, perception of bodily competence (30), perception of body for both abled and disabled (31, 32), community integration through increased acceptance to emotional and discriminatory effects of disability, that consequently enables individuals to “come out” and ensures the development through sport” (33). Sport and exercise programmes for WWDs have the potential to provide a platform for the isolated group of girls and women to confront and display their abilities rather than their disabilities. Guthrie and Castelnovo (34) in their study on thirty- four WWDs, discovered that sport and physical activity challenges the existing prejudices about disabilities and impairments. Therefore, this is in conjunction with their personal growth and development positively and significantly contributes to their empowerment.

From childhood women's bodies experience gender construction, and when expedient, it is glorified by ideal images. The gendered bodies of lower castes and classes get constructed by poverty, malnutrition, heavy burden of work, gender discrimination (35). Feminists study began to challenge the notion of "biology as destiny", where the natural material body was being viewed as a biological entity thereby justifying inequality or differences. The female body has also been targeted as a metaphor for nation and community (36). In the context of Paralympic sport the most successful cyborg athletes may be seen as 'supercrips' (37). Supercrips refer to those with “inspirational stories of courage, dedication, and hard work prove that it can be done, that one can defy the odds and accomplish the impossible” (12, 37). Thus the supercrip is the athlete who wins

and also gains a relatively high-profile media exposure. Those athletes who win but do not receive recognition in mainstream media are not superscript in the context of the Paralympics as they are often marginalized by the degree or nature of their impairment. This marginalization is in part determined by the classification process that sports people with impairments must undergo to determine their eligibility to compete (37). The process of categorizing bodies as eligible (or not) in sport for the disabled is known as classification. This classification can be explained via body culture (Howe's adaptation of Brownell, 1995), which highlights the link between organisational/societal role in the formation of such constructs and the internalisation or individual accounts of it (38). Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) conceptualization of habitus (as habitual, embodied practise that collectively defines a culture) is essential; here to situate the individual athletes' bodies within the social environment of the practice community. Within the field of sport for the disabled, key elements of this particular habitus are the systems adopted for the organization of the sporting practice, commonly referred to as classification. Processes of classification within sport for the disabled make distinctions between the physical potential of athletes, and attempt to achieve an equitable environment, whereby after competition the successful athletes in each class will have an equal chance of accumulating physical capital (39). Whether classifying by weight, gender or degree of impairment, classification should provide an equitable environment for the practise of Sport (37, 38).

This paper envisions tracing the modern discourse of the intersectionality between disability, gender and sports in the formation and maintenance of social capital. Using Sports as an inclusive medium of empowerment and social cohesion, how individuals with disability strengthen their agency and social solidarity, remains a key area of interest of the study. The invisibilization of gendered issues within disabled members, in competitive and recreational sports has led to structured inequalities within societies, which can be altered only via reduced marginalization and significant representation. Hence the next

objective of the research will be to understand the socio- cultural importance of social capital among women athletes with physical disabilities.

## METHODOLOGY

The research uses qualitative methodology – more specifically, semi-structured interviews – on five participants, which is a proven way for deeper analysis (28). Respondents between 18-25 years of women with disabilities were chosen with four years of national sports participation. All the respondents had a minimum education of 10<sup>th</sup> grade, a minimum disability of 40% and were brought up in per-urban space in a lower economic family (less than eight thousand rupees per month) (40).

Ethical permission was taken from an independent committee of the organization to carry out this work (No.: DRS/2017/CWF001-2). 32 questions were framed using the existing literature in consonance with our research focus areas. Before data collection, all the participants were approached and their approval was documented in the consent forms, which also depicted the details of the study.

The face-to-face interviews lasted for an average of 70 minutes. They were recorded, transcribed and finally re-confirmed with the respondents. The data was collected in a comparison format where the participants were asked to share their change of experiences in each parameter before and after playing sports. The data was gathered in Bengali, which was later translated into English and triangulated with the interviewee for validation. For the purpose of primary data analysis, narrative analysis method was used.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Psychologists and Sociologists are quite concerned and interested in the issues of Self Concept and Self Image (41), hence we see quite a few studies on this issue. Pricilla Choi's study (42) about, "The sex appeal and flex appeal of the physically active woman". She says, "The pursuit of, and preoccupation with, 'beauty' are central features of the ideology of femininity. This drive for beauty has been taught to us since childhood and this influences women's

involvement in sport and physical exercise. Our first respondent, a State and national level athletic, in a personal interview revealed how her blindness made her feel inferior in a world, where external beauty and physical appearance plays a key role in establishing social relations and gain capital. "In my childhood, when I wasn't involved in Sports, I lacked the courage to interact with people. I felt the insecurity of being an object of discussion and fun due to my blindness." "My only regret in life, till now, is that I lack the accessibility of adequate formal training and scope for it. After my secondary exams, I could no longer access my school ground for practice. Though people appreciated my athletic skills, yet nobody( apart from my family) actually helped or supported me to continue with sports." This 19 year old girl narrated several incidents where lack of adequate training due to socio- economic constraints and inability to perform acts 'normally' acted as a barrier in her regular life.

"In our house, we have six members and only my father earns, that too meagre sum of 2000 rupees monthly", "Apart from formal matches, I do not get any chance to practice my sport. I do not lack time, I feel deprived due to the unavailability of money and resource, so my only option remains is to run every day to keep my body fit."She believed only through Sports she could overcome socially constructed obstruction and create her own identity and agency. "I continued playing despite physical and social barriers, since Sports helped me to explore myself and create a social space for me." She further described how her trust in self has been built through constant and consistent playing and engaging in Sports, which also has garnered her mental strength and self-esteem in an irrevocable way. Collective activity through Sports has increased her social sphere, which has increased the propensity of interaction and connection with others. " Though I still (As I became a national level athlete) feel confused and unsure in front of others, but what Sports gave me was immense mental strength to fight my fear and advance communication, as it becomes essential when one is outside of the house, and is involved in activities which requires mutual support." Our respondent was evidently confident in claiming that through

active engagement in sports, she now not only feels equal, but is also capable of leadership qualities as she can train well. "Since I don't receive regular formal training, but practice on my own, for many years now. After gathering several training experiences from different places, wherever I have gone to play, I now feel equipped enough to able to train novice disabled players in the game."

Uninterrupted by her impairments, with thorough family support, what she could attain, is possible for many such other women. Despite grave relative deprivation, her eagerness to continue with sports has not only been beneficial to her mentally and socially, but also economically. "Since I am actively playing, I receive scholarships, which is helping me to conduct my higher studies. Also it provides me with the opportunity to access city spaces (Kolkata- India), resources and gather new knowledges and information." Surpassing the hurdles of gendered disability, young girls like her can be increasingly integrated into the mainstream to feel more empowered and less 'otherised' and live at the mercy of others. Her story was in complete tune with the philosophy of her life, "The spirit of living is to live materially and constantly move forward." Personal narrations like this, crystallizes the importance of social capital for leading a socially better life with relatively better life-chances and how sports can be a facile and robust medium for personal and social growth.

Sporting engagement has innumerable benefits for women. These advantages obtained initial recognition in the landmark report of the President's Council, 'Physical activity and sport in the lives of girls' that considered the perspectives of myriad stakeholders (43). Page after page of that report describes evidence of the physical (e.g., lower risks of obesity, heart disease, osteoporosis, and other chronic diseases), psychological (e.g., higher self-esteem, better body image, enhanced sense of competence and control, reduced stress and depression), and academic (e.g., better grades, higher standardized test scores, lower risk of dropping out) benefits of sport and physical activity. In the past few years, the bestselling book *Reviving Ophelia* (44), and the more recent *Raising our athletic daughters* (45) have publicly

trumpeted the benefits of sport and physical activity for improving girls' well-being and have urged parents to do whatever it takes to get their daughters involved (46). While interacting with a national level disabled athlete, she constantly expressed the essentiality of good training programs to uplift and include the marginalized- disabled individuals in the mainstream. "I feel I have increasingly liked myself felt self-satiated as I pursued to play and learnt to live with relentless fighting spirit. Though I still feel shy and depressed for my disabilities, but now I can cope with them more easily as I am confident about my capabilities which have been actively shaped through constant social participation." Sports based collective activities remain crucial in positive self-exploration and causing an inclusive social change. Our young respondent, despite much intersectional marginality of class, gender and disability is an exemplar of how coordinated social participation helps in the formation of socio- economic capital, catering to the needs to humans and society.

Childhood play activities, along with other agents of socialization (i.e., family, peers, and coaches), should be considered as an important factor in predicting future sport participation for disabled women athletes. Our next respondent, a 19 year old national level player in disability sport, stated how her perceptions about herself and life altered as she started her involvement in swimming and chess from a very early age, despite her eye impairment. "I have 75 percent eye blindness since birth. I belong from a downtrodden family. I was never quite sure about my strengths and failed to interact with unknown people." "I used to observe people playing chess, but could never ask anyone regarding it. I learnt to play all by myself through keen observation and a very little formal training of two days from a senior I knew." "After I participated in Sports, I started to travel in various places that tremendously helped in bolstering my self-confidence and engaging with the outside world without direct support of my family." She admitted feeling inferior for her impairment, and her biological dissimilarities resulted in social inequality. "I am unable to receive official training and sufficient space to practice every-day, due to poor

economic condition of our family” “In villages, it becomes very hard to be able to acquire resources that would help me to continue both with studies and sports, especially being a woman with disabilities.” Despite her awareness she lacked the confidence to speak on matters due to less access in the social sphere, thereby reducing her social networks. “When in a group with the ‘normal people, I feel the urge to speak less due to the fear of being misunderstood or wrongly judged” “My tendencies to escape from the social sphere of majority ‘normal’ population has been reduced with more traveling due to swimming and chess matches and the resulting appreciation received post the match.” “Altogether, my fear of social sphere, has somehow decreased via intermixing with heterogeneous groups and people.” How the stigma of disability creates fear within these individuals is being easily explained by our respondent who clearly states that, “I feel very awkward at the social gaze and instantly my self-esteem reduces drastically.” However engaging in community life have bolstered and nourished her skills, motivation and confidence to be an active social being. “Though I still sometime feel socially awkward and backward, but I try to overcome my fear by initiating conversations and following the positive suggestions given by my seniors.”

Vrinda Nabar writes in ‘Caste as Woman’ (47), “There is a sense of the Other when referring to the girl child. One finds a clear discrimination between the rights and privileges of a daughter/girl and son/boy.” The girl child in India is alien from birth, a fact which is reinforced in later life by innumerable tragic instances of deprivation and discrimination. Therefore it is obvious that women in family situations have been less likely than their male counterparts to be able to negotiate the time and resources needed to maintain sport participation. When a married women with disabilities, decides to play, that schedules practices, she may encounter resistance from her closed ones. There are however certain exceptions like one of our interviewee, also a woman with disabilities athlete, national and international level kabaddi player, since more than fifteen years, despite her injury and then marriage. “When I was in school, I used played

Kabaddi with other students, from where I had my leg injury. Though that incident changed my life, yet I continued playing, I got involved in athletics.” Interaction and interview with this female athlete, has evidently portrayed the doubly oppressive exploitation arising from the intersection of disability and gender, which has catastrophic effect in the development of self, personhood and agency. “It grieves me when I cannot play naturally with the ‘general’ people.” “Scope of receiving support wasn’t available to me, since my father died at a very early age and my mother was the sole earner of our family, which comprised of me along with my three other sisters. As a result, it wasn’t possible for my family to provide for me economically as well as socially” “When I played Kabaddi as an ‘able-bodied’ person, I had no fears as I was completely certain of my abilities and strengths.” Due to socio economic constrain, She could not have access to training resources, and started to self-train from a very young age. She has been married to a general person, who has been supportive throughout of her Sports career. “After marriage, because of my husband’s and in-laws support, I could get formal training.” “I now feel I am best in what I do.” Engaging with her, clarified how despite her very successful career, she still feels inferior from and in-front of her husband, due to the social perception associated with a woman with disabilities. “When I am at any social gathering with my husband, even if I am properly dressed, I feel people’s uncomfortable gaze at our partnership. People sympathize with him for having a disabled partner.” “However, I try to not care about gaze and discomfort now, after I played my international matches.” Exploring several people and places, due to her Sports career, has made her accept all situations with equanimity and focus on constructive things.

Women in middle-and lower-income families often feel the constraints of homemaking and child rearing. Without money to pay for childcare, domestic help, and sport participation expenses, these women do not receive accessible opportunities to play sports. They also lack spare time, or sufficient access; like a car, to get them to where sports are played, or accessibility to gyms and playing fields in their neighborhoods. Furthermore,

informal sports are often social activities occurring among friends. If a woman does not have resources and social groups and friends, enabling them to participate, she will have even fewer opportunities and less motivation for involvement (14). Of course, this is also true for men, but women from middle-and lower-income families are more likely than their male counterparts to lack the network of relationships out of which sport interests and activities emerge. Women from upper-income families might face a different situation. They have social networks made up of other women who also have the resources to maintain at least relatively higher levels of sport participation. (31) During our interview sessions, a respondent stated how lack of recognition and life-chances despite her being a national player, acted as a barrier for her and her career's further development. "Being a woman with disabilities, from a lower class household, I faced great difficulties to attend matches, due to lack of funds as well as adequate social contacts to arrange for it." Withstanding all impediments, with self-arranged funds she could finally attend the second invitation for international kabaddi game. "Sports assisted me to tremendously increase my will and mental strength. I never feel like giving up on anything and my desire to struggle has increased. It has also increased my social circle, where I feel I am more respected now." This catalyzed the tenacity and resolution of our respondent, as she feels herself in a steadier and stable position now, as she gained control over her social life. She clearly voiced how Sports has been a milestone in her life for alleviating stress, negativity and lack of confidence, while increasing her self-esteem.

Women have been complaining about the lack of coverage for sport by media since a very long time. This has had a very bad effect on the development of sport in general. Nathalie Koivula writes about Gender Stereotyping in Televised Media Sport Coverage; she says, "Sports spectators usually experience sports through different mass media (48). To deepen our understanding of the cultural values embedded in sports and to explore current values and power structures regarding men and women, it is necessary to investigate the potential effect that mass media may have in

influencing beliefs about gender-appropriate sport behaviour (48). It seems that televised media sports coverage continues to reinforce constructions of divisions along lines of gender and to reproduce traditional expectations regarding femininity and masculinity (48). An overwhelming body of empirical evidence gleaned from media coverage of sport demonstrates that female athletes remain second class citizens who are trivialized, sexualized and demeaned in most influential institutions. Individuals internalize the messages, the values and beliefs promoted by mass media, so that whenever media texts and commentaries contain sexist ideologies the repercussions of this internalization are harmful to the path of women athletes. By portraying females in ways that systematically highlight their sexual difference from males; the media contributes the limiting of women's full potential as athletes. Power is central to all of these media constructions power of choice and power of access to resources, opportunities and identities as athletes (46). A 26 year old woman with disabilities swimmer narrated how lack of recognition acted as a big barrier for her to continue playing Sports. "My mother first took me in disability matches. I have various experiences of playing, winning, interacting with other disabled players, their parents, from there. After some consecutive years, my mother ceased to take me to such matches, since we belong from a lower middle class family and my mother spent much of her time and resource so that I could play, yet there was no recognition or scope of earning a good future. Disability curbs us from access to natural goods and health related resources, lack of proper practice and coach, all this refrained my mother then to continue her support in my participation in Sports." "However, playing has always taught me to conduct life in a positive approach. The general people do not make me feel inferior anyhow, I rather feel inspired by them." "When I think myself without Sports, I feel very lonely." "Traditional games like 'kana-machi', 'kit-kit', helped me during my childhood to play and thus bond with other disabled as well as general people." "Now when I play Nationals and there are certain activities which I cannot do, my senior tells me to instruct people as they do it.



This has created a harmony between us, where even they feel my inclusion within the activities.”

The type of sport participation opportunities available for women and girls reflect dominant definitions of femininity in a culture. Women in our Indian culture often face barriers that discourage sport participation and certainly limit the extent to which any woman could take sport seriously enough to train at an elite level. These barriers are both normative (i.e., establishing ideas about what is and isn't appropriate) and structural (i.e. restricting access to opportunities and to the things they need to take advantage of the opportunity). Another interviewee, also a State level player altered the stereotypical perception on ableism. This girl was full of optimism and hope, where no natural impairment could compete to make her feel less abled or equipped to participate in any socio- cultural activities and decision making. “I sometime do feel confused, but it has never prevented me to try new things.” “I never felt my impairment as any barrier, since my parents have always treated me and my other siblings (who are general) alike”. Childhood socialization hence played an essential role in strengthening her determination and prerogative to perform acts equally as any of her counterpart. Her will to travel and explore the world has constantly encouraged her to continue playing Sports. “I love travelling to places, and that has kept me going to play.” “In our house, due to monetary issues we could not afford to travel, but Sports has helped me to achieve that.” “My only issue is that I have to cancel many matches at the last moment, due to health issues.” Economic restrains has resulted in social stratification in terms of life chances and lifestyles, which for her, has been a cause for the neglect of her education and her access to health.

“My hesitation to speak irrespective of my knowledge on matters has reduced ever since I have started to travel and mingle communicate with a lot of people. Now I feel I am expert at initiating interaction in exigency situations. My confidence in my health, body and mind has increased.” Her success while playing nationals have ascended self-assurance, prosperity and conviction, not only in sports but

other activities as well. “My first experience in a formal disabled match in Kolkata, though I was quite nervous, when I saw other disabled swimmers I felt, I could do it too.” “I never got training, I watched the moves and learnt to play.” “I won my first match and for the next match immediately, I was sent to Bangalore. That was important in asserting my self-trust and consistency.” Society's sustained ceaseless attempt to segregate; the accepted heteronormative as 'normal', and estrange the 'other', has adversely impacted in detrimental repercussions for the marginalized. Disability and gender, dovetails to entangle situations and chances for individuals, who are excluded from the spectrum of 'ableism' and 'able- bodied', amplifying their socio- economic impediments. However, the functionality of Sports in these situations has to be interceded to materialize equitable and egalitarian growth of society.

Sports has deep relation with the well-being of individuals, by well-being we might understand it, both subjectively and objectively. The formation of an assertive self with active agency, which helps in amplifying the mental pleasures is the outcome of subjective well-being due to Sports. While the objectivity depends on the success of the Sport players, their ability to build a livelihood through it and pursue their dreams. These positive circumstances will assist in invigorating individual's social relationship and position in decision making. In this regard, all our respondents assures the rationality that Sports would be integral and thus necessarily be complicit in creating social capital through inclusive participation of all stakeholders in a society. In personal interviews with five disabled athletes, they vividly portrayed their altered life spaces and chances before and after their participation in disability Sports. Despite belonging from the subjugated section of society, these women have empowered themselves through constant and consistent practice and playing.

Most of our interviewee belonged from the unprivileged economic backgrounds. Their standards of living could not facilitate them with decent healthcare access for their impairments. These women however chose to struggle for their life and livelihood. Through constant

passion and dedicated efforts, they continued their careers in Sports. Many of them continue to receive higher education from the sports scholarships, despite their successful career in athletics and Sports. It has helped them to negotiate with their vulnerabilities and cope with the impairments. Exposure to collective activities beyond their known group have aided their wish to explore themselves, people and places as they have not done before. All the players whom we interviewed said, “we want to play”, “want to have career in sports” (49).

Indian woman with disabilities players are no less than any women players in the world. They are equally talented and hard-working, but the problems that they face are much more daunting than other ‘abled’ or ‘masculine’ players in the world. Girls narrating their own stories of struggles also told us what should be done to improve the condition of woman with disabilities’ sport in India (46). Long-term viability or sustainability in delivering social outcomes is central to the success of these developments through sport programs. Modern society demands more flexibility and choice and this should also be true of how local communities and individuals access a range of opportunities. A one-size-fits-all approach will not meet all community and individual needs. The need is to move beyond current sport delivery practices to provide a range of products including low-cost, locally-developed, grass roots opportunities and extended public/private/third sector-linking social capital programs. There is a risk however, in relying on this predominantly volunteer-based sector to deliver social outcomes. As volunteering is primarily a short term, unsustainable and optional process, achievable outcomes are always not guaranteed. Inclusive participation and systematic representation will synchronically lead to social changes and benefit society by creating unity in heterogeneity and equity without stratification (1).

The study includes multidimensional implications for the disability sport per se. While sports have been shown to be a promoter of different psychological aspects (50), the role of sports in enhancing social capital in Indian context was explored for the first time with respect to women with disabilities. This study if

in future can be done on more respondents will be helpful for intersectional policies with focus on disability rights and sports and gender. Furthermore this study shows the marginalization of women with disabilities in the society and the mere importance of social capital in breaking those barriers.

## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

The examples provided above indicate that in various ways, sport is a useful tool for building social capital, fostering community development and building sustainability. That is, many positive outcomes have been achieved by using sport in this manner which justifies our first objective of the study. Moreover, the socio-cultural aspects of social capital became prominent with all the five respondents who envisage sports as an important cohesive element in enriching their socio-cultural index. The study though had done in only 5 respondents shows the larger picture of importance of sports for people with disabilities specially among women in breaking barriers both mental and physical. This low number of the respondents stands as one of the main limitation of the study. The economic aspect of the social capital was not included in the study which also might add to the limitation. Finally, the narrative analysis used can be considered as a drawback as at times it restricts the analysis in broader focal themes. Further dynamic studies with more respondents might give us more concrete ideas of required policies for development of social capital for women with disabilities.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest in this study which intercepts with other studies or third party.

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