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# Family Support and Sports Participation Among Para-Athletes in Rajasthan: A Sociological Perspective

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**Abstract:** Family support is widely observed as a significant social determinant influencing the performance and participation of person with disabilities in sports. The purpose of the present study is to examine the role of family support in promoting sports participation among Para-athletes in Rajasthan from a sociological perspective. The aim of the study is to seek the understanding how family encouragement, emotional assistance, practical involvement, and family responsibilities shape the experiences of Para-athletes in sports.A descriptive research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 230 Para-athletes representing different disability categories across Rajasthan using a structured interview schedule. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, mean scores, standard deviation, and one-sample *t*-test, were employed to analyse the data as required.
**Keywords:** Family support, Para-athletes, Sports participation, Disability, Rajasthan, Sociology, Social support.

**Introduction -** Sport is considered an important social institution and has long been recognised as one which is beyond physical activity and competitive performance. From a sociological point of view sports act as a tool for mobility, inclusion and community participation. They offer an individual the opportunity to lead, to develop confidence, to form interpersonal relation, and to create a sense of belonging. Thus, sports participation should not merely be viewed as a recreational activity but instead as a means to promote social integration and to improve the overall quality of life. As societies increasingly adopt the principles of equality and inclusion, sports have become a significant platform for marginalised groups to confront stereotypes and engage actively in mainstream social life (Coakley, 2021)[1].

Persons with disabilities constitute the marginalised population, who have encountered significant barriers historically to sports participation. Earlier, disability was mostly understood through medical dimension or medical model, which focuses on impairment and an individual's limitations rather than social inclusion. This viewpoint has often put the person with disability outside the organised sporting preview by reinforcing assumptions regarding their physical in-capabilities. However, with the emergence of the social model of disability the attention shifted and moved towards the environmental, structural, and attitudinal barriers that restrict participation. This transformation has facilitated an increased understanding that disability is influenced not only by physical impairment but also by the social context in which individuals reside (Oliver, 1996)[2].

With the changing perspectives, Para-sportsevolved as an important method for rehabilitation, empowerment and social inclusion. Para-sports was initially developed as an important tool for rehabilitation to the war veterans of the second world war, but with the gradual transformation it turned into an internationally recognised competitive sports movement that promotes equal sporting opportunities for person with disabilities. Engagement in Para-sports facilitates the improvement of physical fitness, psychological well-being, self-esteem and social acceptance, while concurrently challenging societal perception of disability and capability (Brittain, 2016)[3]. In addition to competitive accomplishments, Para-sports play a crucial role in transforming public attitudes by illustrating that disability does not undermine an individual's potential for excellence.

Despite the remarkable development and growth of the Paralympic movement world-wide, even in India as well, participation in Para-sports still continues to be influenced by multiple social, cultural, economic and institutional factors, family support occupies a significant position. Family is represented as a primary social institution which is responsible for socialisation, emotional development, and value formation. For person with disabilities who belongs to the marginalised segment of the society, where family often become the first caregivers, decision-maker and providers for emotional, financial and practical support. Attitudes toward disability and sports often influence an individual's access to opportunities for participation in athletic activities, professional training, and the pursuit of a

long- term career in sports.

The role of family and the importance of its support become even more pronounced in developing societies such as India, where disability is still continues to be influenced by traditional beliefs system, limited awareness, and unequal access to resources. Many Para-athletes hail from rural backgrounds which are economically disadvantageous, where financial barriers, responsibilities for caregiving, inadequate transportation, and restricted exposure to organised sports often hinder participation. In such circumstances, the encouragement and support offered by family members emerge as essential factors influencing sustained participation and athletic development. Family members often take on the responsibility of covering training expenses, accompanying athletes to competitions and providing psychological support, even while contending with their own economic and social challenges.

The present work seeks to examine the nature of family support among Para-athletes in Rajasthan from a sociological point of view. By understanding various facets of family support, including encouragement during competitions, understanding of sporting commitments, motivational support, and family responsibilities, and the aim of the work is to understand how family influences the participation and sporting experiences of Para-athletes. The findings of the study are expected to contribute to the growing literature on social aspect of disability and sports while providing evidence- base insights for policy makers, sports administrators, educational institutions and families to strengthen support mechanism for Para-athletes.

**Review of Literature:**

Family support has consistently been viewed as one of the most significant and influential social factors which affects participation in sports, motivation, and performance among athletes. Among Para-athletes, whose sports journey is often shaped and centred on physical, psychological, and social challenges, the role of the family is beyond emotional encouragement to include financial assistance, logistical support, and social acceptance. The existing literature indicates that supportive family environments have a positive impact on confidence, resilience, participation, and sporting achievements among individuals with disabilities. Nevertheless, the nature and extent of such support differ across various socio-cultural contexts, underscoring the necessity for context-specific research.

The recent work of Narasanti and Putri (2025) analysed the role of parents played in the developing of self-confidence of disabled athletes related to the National Paralympic Committee of Indonesia. It was reported in the study that parental support and encouragement, emotional support, and continuous motivation significantly contributed to athletes' confidence and sporting performance.Parents were found to play a key role in helping athletes with disability to overcome psychological barriers, social stigma, and self-doubt. The study concluded that family support serves as an indispensable social resource in the development of successful Para-athletes. (Narasanti & Putri,2025)[4].

Similarly, another researcher investigated the influence played by service quality on self-confidence of wheelchair athletes while analysing the support of family as a moderating factor.It was found that family support significantly strengthened the relationship between institutional services and athletes' confidence. It was reported in the study that athletes receiving greater encouragement and assistance from their families demonstrated higher levels of motivation, psychological well-being, and satisfaction with their sporting experiences. The authors were of the opinion that institutional support alone cannot ensure positive sports outcomes unless they are accompanied by active involvement of family, thereby emphasising the complementary role of family within the broader support system. (Mandan et al. 2024)[5].

Arianpour et al. (2021) explained the significance of family support in their examination of the relationship between social support, self-efficacy, and engagement in physical activities among veterans and disabled athletes. The study demonstrated that both support from family and support from friends were positively correlated with athletes' self-efficacy and their consistency in sports participation. Individuals who received stronger encouragement from their families exhibited increased confidence in their athletic abilities and were more likely to engage regularly in physical activities. The authors proposed that enhancing family support networks could significantly improve the participation rates and overall well-being of individuals with disabilities. (Arianpour et al., 2021)[6].

Mira et al. (2023) offer a holistic understanding of social support through a systematic review of research investigating resilience, social support, and psychological well-being among Para-athletes. The study concluded that social support, especially from family members, coaches, and peers, plays a crucial role in enhancing resilience, emotional stability, motivation, and athletic success. Notably, family support was identified as one of the most consistent factors influencing athletes' capacity to manage competitive pressures, discrimination, and everyday life challenges faced by them as person with disabilities. Additionally, the work emphasized that nurturing family environments foster social inclusion and enhance the quality of life for athletes with disabilities. (Mira et al., 2023)[7].

**Research Objectives:** The following objectives of the current work are:

1. To investigate the nature and extent of family support received by Para-athletes in Rajasthan regarding their participation in sports.
2. To analyse the impact of family encouragement, involvement, and understanding on the sporting experiences of Para-athletes.

3. To identify the family-related responsibilities and challenges that influence the participation and training of Para-athletes.
4. To explore the relationship between family support and sustained participation in Para-sports from a sociological perspective.

**Research Gap:** The review of the existing literature reveals that support of the family is widely recognized as an essential factor influencing the participation, confidence, motivation, and performance of athletes with disabilities. Most of the earlier studies have focused on family support in relation to psychological variables such as self-confidence, resilience, self-efficacy, and emotional well-being. While these research works providesa valuable insight into the significance of supportive family environments, they offer a comparatively limited understanding of family support as a sociological understanding affecting participation in sports.

Another limitation within the existing literature is its geographical dimension. A substantial proportion of empirical studies have been conducted in countries such as Indonesia, Iran, and various European nations, while research focused on the Indian context remains meagre. In India, studies specifically related to the examination of Para-athletes in Rajasthan are nearly non-existent, despite the state's increasing engagement in Para-sports in recent years and the distinct socio-cultural characteristics that shape family relationships, gender norms, rural livelihoods, and community attitudes.

Apart from this, previous studies have typically analysed family support as a singular variable, rather than investigating it as a multiple dimensions, which include emotional encouragement, involvement in training and competitions, family responsibilities, practical assistance, and family comprehension of sports commitments. The present study seeks to address these gaps by exploring family support as a multidimensional sociological construct among Para-athletes in Rajasthan, utilizing primary data collected directly from 230 respondents. In this manner, the study contributes context-specific empirical evidence to the expanding literature on disability, sports participation, and family support in India especially Rajasthan.

**Methodology:**

**Research Design:** The present work utilized the qualitative research design approach to examine the role of the family support in influencing participation in sports among Para-athletes in Rajasthan. A descriptive research method was used to understand the multiple dimensions of family support experienced by Para-athletes and how it influences participation, training, motivation and sporting achievements. The study also utilises a sociological view point by examining the family as an important social institution influencing the sporting experiences of person with disabilities.

**Study area:** The research work was carried in the state of Rajasthan, India. Data collection was carried out during the state Para-games, where athletes from different districts participated, enabling the examiner to access respondents belonging to different and diverse socio-economic and geographical backgrounds.

**Sampling and Sample size:** The sample comprised Para-athletes belonging to different age groups, educational level, occupational categories, income levels and disability type, thereby ensuring diversity within the sample size. The sample was collected on the basis of simple random sampling and a total sample of 230 respondents was collected.

**Data collection:** The primary data collected through structured interview schedule. This consisted of close-ended questions, multiple- response questions, likert- scale statements and few open-ended questions.

**Results and Discussion:** The data and results presented under this section understands the various dimensions of family support experienced by Para-athletes in Rajasthan and its impact on the sports participation. The examination is structured under four thematic dimensions: family encouragement, family involvement, family responsibilities and family understanding. These areas altogether provides a comprehensive analysis of how family being a primary social institution pave the way for the sporting experiences of person with disabilities.

**Family Encouragement towards Sports Participation:** Family support acts as one of the most influential social factor in determining an individual's participation and its continuity in sports. The first source of motivation and encouragement often comes from the family to overcome physical, social, and psychological barriers around disability. They not only act as a source for emotional reassurance but also provide access to training, competition, financial assistance etc. Therefore, examining the extent of family encouragement towards sports participation becomes crucial. The following table below represents the perception of the respondents regarding family support for sports and family encouragement for training and competitions.

**Table: 1**

| Particular | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Family Support: For Sports | 201 | 29 |
| Family Encouragement: Training & Competition | 201 | 29 |

The results shows that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that they received family support for the participation in sports and encouragement for training and competitions. But, the data also reveals that there exist a few segments among the respondents who lack such support for the participation, training and competitions. This highlights that family plays an important role as a source for support in sports participation and encouragement for training and competitions. This high level of family support suggests the growing level of acceptance for person with disabilities in sports from their families.

**Family Involvement in the Sporting Journey:** Family involvement extends beyond encouragement for participation it includes practical assistance during competitions and sporting events. Accompanying athletes to competitions and assistance during travel are important instrumental support particularly for athletes with disabilities. However, the frequency of such involvement may differ and depends upon family responsibilities, occupational commitments, financial conditions and the severity of the disability. The following result illustrates the nature of family involvement in their sporting journey.

**Table: 2**

| Particular | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Family member accompanying to tournament | 86 | 144 |

A substantial majority of the respondents were not accompanied by their family members to the sporting venue. Those who responded in favour of the statement were mostly girls, as safety was the major concern. The reasons given by the respondents for not being accompanied by any family member were: not wish to burden family members with additional responsibilities, family members lacked knowledge or interest regarding sports, agricultural activities and livestock management will be hampered, disruption of daily livelihood activities etc.

**Family Responsibilities and Sporting Commitments:** From the above results and interpretation it was found that family act as a source of support but that support is often, family may impose responsibilities that influences an athlete's ability to regularly participate in sports. In many Indian households, especially those which belong to rural and economically weaker backgrounds, family members are often expected to contribute to household work, agriculture, and caregiving or income generation. These types of responsibilities may affect the time, energy and consistency which are required for better training in sports. Therefore, it becomes crucial to understand the types of family responsibilities experienced by Para-athletes.

**Table: 3**

| Particular | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Family responsibilities preventing training | 98 | 132 |

The responses suggest that a segment of the respondents suffer due to family responsibilities as they act as a barrier for their sports training and sports preparation, but at the same time a substantial number of the respondents manages and are able to keep the balance between family obligations and sports. The types of responsibilities which are hindering the sports preparation of the respondents were: supporting elderly parents, contributing to household income, assisting in family businesses and agricultural work, being the sole earning member of their family, making it difficult to prioritize sports over economic obligations. Female respondents commonly cited marriage- related responsibilities and household work, which often limit their time availability for training.These responses demonstrate that responsibilities can create substantial challenges for sustained sports participation.

**Family Understanding and Perceived Role in Athletic Success:** Apart from providing practical assistance, understanding the attitudes of family members towards sports significantly influences an athlete's motivation and long-term commitment towards sports. Thus, those families which recognise the dedication, discipline, and time required for competitive sports are more likely to form a supportive environment that enables Para-athletes to pursue sports in excellence. The following analysis is based on the responses of the respondents based on the likert scale.

**Table: 4 (see in last page)**

This finding suggests that most families understand the time and dedication in sports. The output demonstrates that family support act as an important source of motivation, encouragement, financial assistance, and emotional support for the Para-athletes. Such understanding from the family creates a supportive environment which enables Para-athletes to balance sporting commitments with family life and pursue their sporting journey more effectively.

**Conclusion:** The present study underscores the crucial role of familial support in influencing the sports participation of Para-athletes in Rajasthan. The findings reveal that, for the majority of respondents, family members serve as the primary source of encouragement, motivation, and practical assistance throughout their athletic journeys. Family support encompasses not only the promotion of sports participation and encouragement of regular training but also includes emotional reassurance and financial backing, thereby fostering a conducive environment for sustained involvement in Para-sports.

Conversely, the study indicates that family-related responsibilities continue to present challenges for some Para-athletes. Economic obligations, household duties, agricultural work, caregiving responsibilities, and gender-specific expectations—particularly among female athletes—often restrict the time and resources available for sports participation. These findings illustrate that while family support is predominantly beneficial, the socio-economic realities faced by many households significantly impact the extent to which Para-athletes can engage fully in training and competition.

From a sociological standpoint, the study reinforces the significance of the family as a foundational social institution that shapes the opportunities, aspirations, and sporting experiences of individuals with disabilities. A supportive family environment enhances confidence, resilience, and continuity in sports participation, whereas limited support or competing family responsibilities may impede athletic development. Increasing awareness among families, promoting disability-inclusive attitudes, and implementing family-oriented support initiatives through sports policies can further bolster the participation and

performance of Para-athletes.

In summary, this study contributes to the expanding body of literature on Para-sports by illustrating that family support extends beyond emotional encouragement to include practical, financial, and motivational dimensions. Recognizing and strengthening this support system is vital for cultivating an inclusive sporting environment where Para-athletes are empowered to realize their full potential and make meaningful contributions to the advancement of Para-sports in Rajasthan and India.

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**Table: 4**

| Particular | N | Mean | St. Deviation | t-(Test) Value | df | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Family understanding time and dedication in sports | 230 | 4.27 | 1.04 | 18.54 | 229 | p<.001 |
| Family support play a significant role in success | 230 | 4.25 | 0.86 | 22.09 | 229 | p<.001 |

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