

# **The Psychological Challenges Faced by Female Athletes in Male-Dominated Sports in Sri Lanka.**

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## **Abstract**

The research investigates the psychological challenges encountered by female athletes in male-dominated sports fields particularly among cricket players, badminton players and weightlifters. The growing global focus on gender equality in sports has not eliminated unique psychological pressures affecting women in sports because gender biases, unequal opportunities and society expectations continue to affect them. The research investigates psychological and emotional burdens on competitive female athletes by evaluating systematic discrimination and media representation alongside gender-based social stereotypes which affect their self-assurance and performance drive and complete health outcomes.

With an in-depth interviews and thematic analysis shows that female athletes endure isolation experiences while demonstrating their value in athletic environments that primarily consist of men. The respondents shared experiences of both hidden and visible discrimination which included instances where they received blocked training opportunities and their achievements received less attention than male competitors did. Strong female role models' absence in these sports makes the athletes doubt themselves and reduces their sense of belonging. Female cricket players were criticized the substantial inequalities between their visibility in media sources and lack sponsorship arrangements along with unequal payment scales because these factors severely reduced both their current mental health and their career development prospects.

Badminton players experienced psychological pressure since people believe this fast-paced sport suits males better so athletes faced extra physical challenges to outrun male competitors. Weightlifters experienced body-related challenges because they received negative social feedback for their non-traditional female appearance. Each athlete experienced a dual psychological battle within their self which stemmed from opposing sport and social identity demands. To establish psychological support for women athletes the research underlines the immediate necessity for inclusive policies as well as mental health service provision and positive female representation in male-dominated sports.

The study reveals hidden struggles experienced by female athletes and promotes their psychological support to build better sporting environments for men and women.

***Keywords - Female athletes, male-dominated sports, psychological challenges, gender bias, cricket, badminton, weightlifting, mental health, sports psychology.***