

EXPLORING ECONOMIC GENDER PARITY IN INDIAN CRICKET

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ABSTRACT

Women empowerment has long been a highlighted agenda item for international bodies and governments across the globe. Sustainable Development Goal 5, United Nations clearly puts forward the need to act and invest in women. Indian government has been consciously working towards upliftment of women and gender equality through a multipronged approach in various fields including sports. The magnanimous status of cricket and the love for this game is well acknowledged by players, fans, sponsors and general public at large. However, a gender-based approach clearly highlights the glaring differences between popularity of men's cricket and women's cricket. Board of Cricket Control in India (BCCI) is the apex body managing Indian Cricket players including both men and women. There have been commendable steps on BCCI's part to provide a level-playing field to both men and women players but it's a long ongoing journey. This study provides a descriptive analysis on role of cricket in women empowerment through promotion of "equal pay equal work". The discussion is supported by data on salary of cricketers and sale of broadcasting rights. This is an attempt to highlight that a lot needs to be done collectively and consciously by the stakeholders of Indian Cricket to bring gender parity and achieve women empowerment in its spirit through the most loved game of masses. The study further puts forward workable suggestions that can result in a win-win situation for all.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Indian Cricket, Gender Equality.

Introduction

Development economists have developed theories, presented propositions and identified shortcomings in their continuous efforts towards understanding economies and being the guiding wheels towards development. However, marginalized role of women and challenges of patriarchal society remained largely unearthed till first half of twentieth century. Boserup's work (Boserup et al., 2007) explored the effects of economic and social growth on women in the third world. This was followed by emergence of Women in Development (WID) approach and sought to include women in the development process. Additionally, the term 'empowerment' has been jargonized in the past century though the history of empowerment through transformation runs much deeper in centuries. Its pertinent to state here that women empowerment through sports signify a holistic and positive change that an economy can embrace. Empowering women not just signifies bringing equality in two halves of the population but also brings along a generational leap in the development of economies as female halves have a much bigger and prominent role in the families. The care giving unpaid work defines the very foundation of growth years for kids of the families. Financially independent women raise much informed and aware individuals who respect feminism and equality thereby leading to paradigm shifts in efforts towards inclusive development. Sports not only reflects physical fitness but holistic wisdom. Women choosing sports as a career can be great mentors and change agents for altering attitudes towards feminist economics. They

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symbolize empowerment by challenging traditionally male-dominated roles, promote physical and mental wellbeing and can scale new frontiers of leadership and personal growth. India's passion for the game is shared by masses throughout the country. Both men and women follow the game with keen interest. Despite the love and respect for the game, gender inequality is prevalent and visible in cricket not just in India but various other key nations loving this sport. This is evident from the fact that salary and remuneration of cricketers, number of competitions and leagues organized, celebrity value, sale of broadcasting rights, advertisements and media coverage is heavily skewed in the favor of men's cricket.

Despite these challenges, Indian women's cricket has displayed a promising turnaround in the past decade. There is a remarkable improvement in players' performance, number of matches played have increased along with increase in viewership of the game. The recent launch of first edition of Women's Premier League is another significant milestone. There is an impressive change in media coverage, advertisements bagged by women cricketers and increasing focus on women cricketers' life through the lens of cinema, television and OTT platforms.

There is a consensus about origination of cricket in England and spread across the world including colonies (ICC website, n.d.). however, it continued to be a male dominated sport setting up stereotypes. Both England and Australia have been taking initiatives to break these stereotypes and working towards promoting facilities for women and gender equality (BBC, 2013). New Zealand introduced pay equity in terms of match fees in July 2022. It's a laudable effort though men will continue to earn more due to higher number of matches and tournaments (The Guardian, 2022). October 2022 witnessed this landmark step by the BCCI (apex body for Cricket in India) towards its efforts in bringing pay equity in men and women cricket (BCCI Media Advisory, 2022). Equal match fees for both men and women cricket players are a step closer to empowering women representing the Indian sub-continent and setting a realistic example for others to follow.

In the light of above paragraphs, this paper is an attempt to analyze the current status of pay equity of Indian women cricketers vis-à-vis their male counterparts. Match fee alone as a component cannot serve to be the yardstick of equal pay equal work. The objective of this paper is to analyze role of cricket in women empowerment through promotion of "equal pay equal work."

Literature Review

Gender inequality of pay has been discussed, highlighted and analyzed by researchers round the globe. This inequality is deep rooted in various spheres of life including representation of women in governments, regulatory bodies and board rooms, salaries in corporate sector, media celebrities' status, in the field of sports to count a few. The findings of our study suggest that economic barriers, lack of sporting infrastructure and culture, lack of potential career opportunities, knowledge barriers, and socio-cultural barriers are vital reasons that have implications for limiting women's participation in sports and society alike (Das et al., 2023). The following paragraphs discuss relevant researched in this area.

Gender based discrimination in Indian cricket vis-à-vis rest of the world was examined by (Sharma, 2018). The study proposed that the origination, politics, institutional practices accompanied with political agenda and stereotypes which led to male dominance in cricket. She discussed four major aspects surrounding the issue viz., historical, social, economic and constitutional aspect. She explained how cricket originated in British circles and was aimed at developing not only a sense of British supremacy but that of an English man. It is still renowned as "a gentleman's game." She also listed societal mindset, ignorant cricketing organizations and lack of institutionalization and its legitimization. However, the recent changes in attitude and efforts towards promotion of women's cricket have also been explained with instances from England, Australia, New Zealand. The study also states that India which boasts of women's empowerment lies far behind in terms of supporting Women's Cricket. Economic aspect has been discussed pay disparity figures from different countries including Australia, India and the UK. Similar inequality was noted in figures from golf however, lawn tennis was found to be most competitive and level playing sport in terms of economic equality. The study further contemplated upon legal aspects and status of BCCI. The paper concluded by suggesting better sponsorships, a positive institutionalization and equal opportunity to play irrespective of gender.

An overview of the role of games and sports in women empowerment in India has been presented by (Pradhan, 2019). The study lists the remarkable achievements and challenges faced by a list of female sports personalities of India from different sports like cricket, athletics, tennis, badminton, gymnastics and so on. The paper reiterates that sports have an integral role in shaping an inclusive economy through women empowerment.

(Agarwal & Agarwal Charu, 2020) also reiterated the importance of pay equality as a step towards women empowerment. The paper presented sector wise disparity in terms of pay and also listed reasons include attitudinal issues, scattered pattern of employment, shorter work life due to multiple responsibilities, incorrect perception about females and indifferent approach of senior management. Legal route, structural changes and spreading awareness were suggested to achieve pay equality.

(Thakur, 2022) stated that gender disparity is particularly pronounced in the field of sports primarily due to socio-psychological reasons. She discussed five major aspects of gender discrimination including inequality of salaries, sexual harassment, barriers to participation, role of media and lack of women coaches with events and examples from different field of sports. The issue is all pervasive and inequality of economic benefits have occurred in almost all industries. She further shed light on huge difference between salaries of different categories of men and women players. The role of media in promoting the gender divide was also laid out. Lack of infrastructure, safety concerns and financial and social issues were listed as primary barriers to participation. The study presented an overview of gender discrimination spanning across different arenas of sports.

(Dash Bhattamishra & Tripathy Rangin, 2022) analyzed the feasibility of equal pay in sports through judicial route. The study stated that there is an increase in popularity and performance of females in various sporting formats over the last decade. The discussion concluded that changes in policy formulation by administrators subsequent to public opinion could be a better way of addressing gender disparity instead of judicial decisions. As lawn tennis took the lead in bringing equal pay in 1970s, other games like soccer and cricket have also displayed convincing steps. The study cited two specific cases including Rooney Rules in football league of US and US Women Soccer team and suggested that decisions enforced through law may not bring an attitudinal shift and may not endure for long. Instead changes in policies based on transformed public opinion followed by improvements in viewership and sponsors would yield convincing and unquestionable changes.

Barriers to women's participation in sports in India were examined by (Das et al., 2023) through multi-criteria decision-making technique of Interpretive Structural Modelling (ISM) and MICMAC analysis. These techniques were employed to relative rank and classify barriers leading to gender discrimination in sports in India. The study listed twelve specific factors that emerged from literature review along with interviews of experts. The comprehensive ISM-MICMAC analysis concluded that economic barriers, lack of sporting infrastructure and culture, knowledge barriers, lack of potential career opportunities, and socio-cultural barriers are the prominent barriers.

(Hariharan S, 2023) shed light on legal outlook on gender-based pay gap in sports and relevant constitutional provisions. The paper also highlights the role of media in shaping such inequality, gaps in salaries and sponsorships followed by suggestions to overcome the challenges. The researcher has suggested supportive families, favorable legislations, equal media coverage and inspiration from Australian efforts to reduce gender inequalities. The role of media cannot be underrated here when national sports luminaries like Mary Kom and Mithali Raj witnessed a spike in popularity after cinematic portrayal of their respective biographies and challenges faced by them.

Above paragraphs highlight the aspects of gender inequality in sports covered by various researchers. Some of the researchers have specifically focused on cricket and Indian sports while others have performed a comparative analysis of different international teams. This paper attempts to analyze that match fees alone cannot define the status of gender equality and other factors also need to be accounted.

Methodology

The methodology followed in this paper is descriptive and analytical. The data used for this paper is based on secondary sources including research articles, sports new websites, websites of organising bodies. This research revolves around analysis of women empowerment in Indian cricket by a comparison of salaries, match fees, sale of broadcasting rights, scale and timing of premier leagues, number of league teams and icon players.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Women's empowerment through sports has multi-fold benefits. It provides financial stability, equal respect to women along with a fit body, mind and soul. BCCI's steps towards empowerment in Indian Cricket are in the favourable direction yet a small milestone of a long journey. The following table presents a comparative of salaries of cricketers.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Gender Disparity in Indian Cricket

Criteria	Men	Women
Grades of International Players	4 (A+, A, B, C)	3 (A, B, C)
Annual Salaries (Grade wise)		
A+	Rs. 7 Crore	No Such Category
A	Rs. 5 Crore	Rs. 50 Lakh
B	Rs. 3 Crore	Rs. 30 Lakh
C	Rs. 1 Crore	Rs. 10 Lakh
Match Fee (Format-wise)		(Since Oct'2022)
Test Match	Rs. 15 Lakh	Rs. 15 Lakh
One Day International	Rs. 6 Lakh	Rs. 6 Lakh
T20	Rs. 3 Lakh	Rs. 3 Lakh

Date Sources: Various News websites and BCCI's Official website(The Guardian, 2022)(BCCI Media Advisory, 2022)

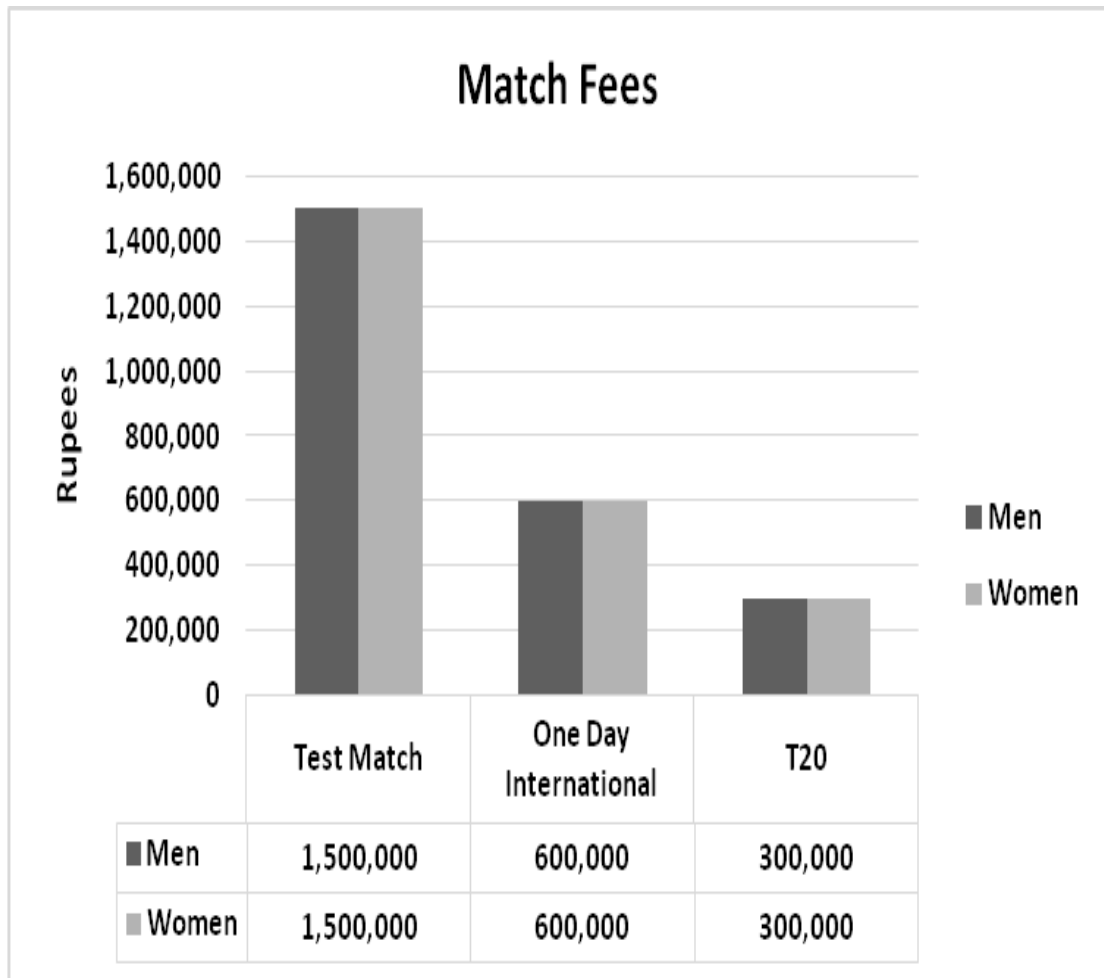


Chart 1: Comparison of Match Fee (per match)

Cricketers' earnings in matches comprise of annual salaries, match fees, monetary awards for special performances. Though there's a recently achieved pay equity in terms of match fee to be paid per match but male cricketers would continue to earn more due to greater number of championships and tournaments than their female counterparts.

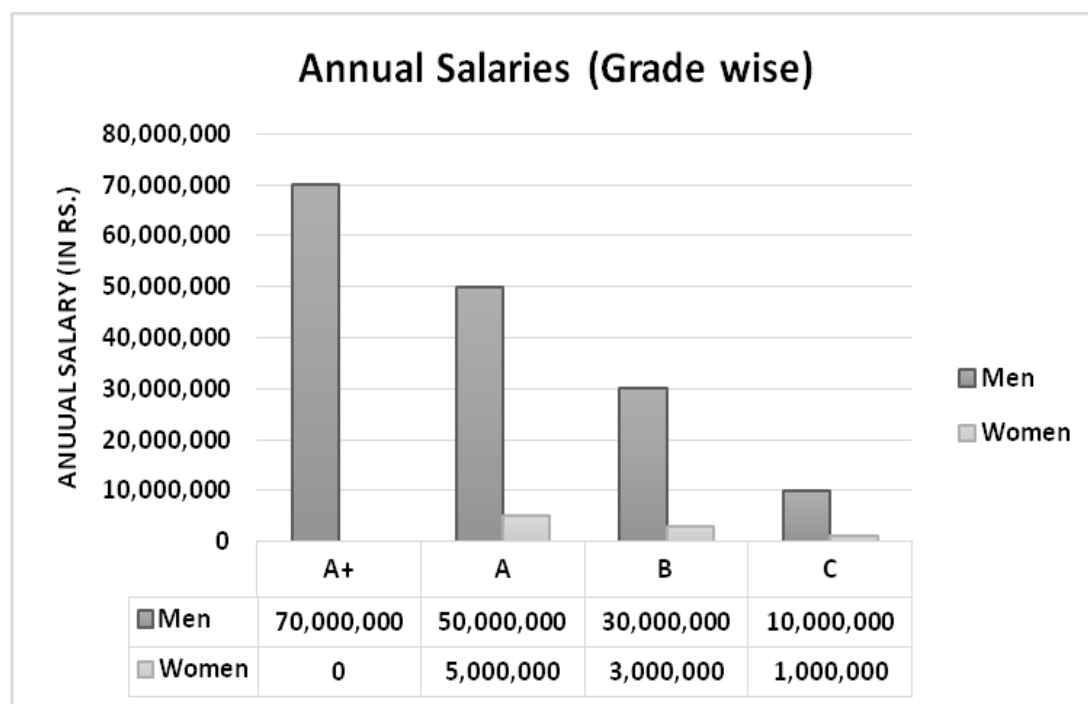


Chart 2: Comparison of Annual Salaries

Chart 1 reflects that there is an astonishing gender-based difference in the salaries. There is complete absence of 'A+' grade for female cricketers and even the most highly rated female cricketer (Grade A) takes home an amount that's just half of Grade C male player. 'Equal pay equal work' seems a far-fetched reality in this scenario. However, sporting organisations must take a note of the societal, psychological barriers and patriarchal mindsets that females strive through in order to pursue a career in sports especially in male dominated sports like cricket. A supportive infrastructure and welcoming facilities can inspire many families to encourage participation in sports and choosing a career in sports too. An increase in number of grassroot level players, women coaches, better and secured facilities can lead to higher number of tournaments, better viewership and brand endorsements.

Table 2: Comparison between First Edition of IPL &WPL

Criteria	Men	Women
Launch of Premier League	2008	2023
Number of Teams in First Edition	8	5
Base Price Range of Players for Auction in First Edition	Approx. Rs. 40 Lakh - Rs 180 Lakh (USD 1 Lakh-4.5 Lakh)	Rs. 10-50 Lakh
Icon Players in league in First Edition	5	None
Team Salary Cap size in First Edition	USD 5 million (Approx. Rs. 20 Cr)	Rs. 12 Crore
Premier League's Broadcasting Rights Sale	2008-17: Rs. 8,200 Cr	2023-27: Rs. 951 Cr
	2018-22: Rs. 16,350 Cr	
	2023-27: Rs. 48,390 Cr	
Average Annual Sale Price of Broadcasting rights		
Comparison between First Edition of IPL &WPL	Rs. 820 Cr per year	Rs 190.2 Cr per year
Comparison between IPL &WPL 2023	Rs 9,678 Cr per year	Rs 190.2 Cr per year

Date Sources: Various News websites(Bhatnagar, 2022; Ed Dixon, 2022) (Kaggle.com) and BCCI's Official website

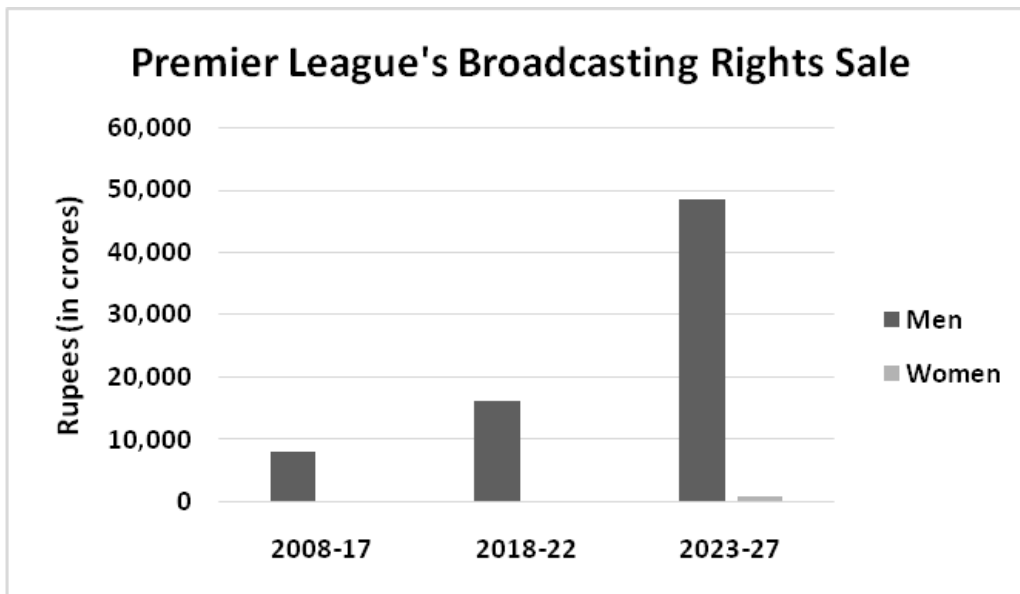


Chart 3: Comparison of Broadcasting Rights' Sale

The year 2023 witnessed the first edition of Women's Premier League after one and a half decade of Indian Premier League (Men's). Even the nomenclature of the league somewhere reflect upon male dominance as Men's league name is gender neutral and begins with 'Indian.' Table 2 displayed above throws light on the difference between first editions of both men's and women's premier league. It is not encouraging to know that there is a gap of 15 years in starting a dedicated female's league. The number of teams for WPL is three less than first edition of IPL.

Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag, Yuvraj Singh, Sourav Ganguly and Rahul Dravid were five icon players in IPL inaugural season who had to play from their home state. On the other hand, absence of icon players is surprising in case of WPL despite the availability of star players like Smriti Mandhana, Harmanpreet Kaur and the like.

The base price for WPL auction is abysmally lower than IPL 2008 without any inflation adjustment. Indexation of 2008 prices would further deepen this gap. This is also accompanied by a lower purse size of Rs 12 Cr vis-à-vis 20 crore of IPL 2008.

A major argument is that 'the multibillion-dollar global sports industry is driven by numbers, measurement and precision science. Elite athletes and their coaches and clubs set targets, achieve them and then set them again. This cycle of continuous improvement mirrors that of companies who spend millions on sports endorsements' (*Gender-Balance-in-Global-Sport-Report*, 2014). The same is reflected by the differences in the amounts at which broadcasting rights were sold. Broadcasting is a revenue-based event and requires sponsors and viewers. IPL 2008 rights were sold at a whopping Rs. 8,200 crores for a ten-year deal that averages to Rs. 820 crore per year. Alternatively, WPL's broadcasting rights have been sold for Rs. 951 crores for a five-year period resulting in average price of Rs. 190.2 crore a year.

Conclusion

Women's cricket landscape has tremendously changed in the last decade. An upward movement in these numbers is expected by all the stakeholders. But more concrete steps on BCCI's part combined with better media coverage and availability of sufficient women coaches can redefine Indian cricketing scenario in the coming years. Hence, it's important to bring grassroots level changes and develop a cohesive business model for the sponsors to be attracted towards women cricket. Government and regulatory bodies can explore legal and judicial provisions to bring pay equity. Sporting organisations can plan for greater number of matches and tournaments for enhanced exposure combined with better media coverage. The study concludes that an inclusive society with equal dignity, opportunity and economic benefits would lead to collective wisdom and women empowerment in its true sense. The love for cricket as a game should be equally celebrated irrespective of the gender.

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