



Advancing Linguistic Accuracy and Gender Equality: An In-Depth Examination of Gender Inclusivity in Cricket

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Abstract:

Objective: This study aims to mitigate gender sensitivity and foster inclusivity in the domain of cricket.

Methodology: Employing a qualitative approach, this research utilized secondary data gathered from various search engines, focusing on the Marylebone Cricket Club's laws and the International Cricket Council's rules and regulations. Additionally, diverse news articles were examined to compile information on changes in cricket terminology.

Findings: The adoption of gender-neutral language is anticipated to have a lasting positive impact on society. However, it is imperative to recognize that gender-neutral terminology alone cannot effect transformative change; a shift in societal attitudes towards women in sports is equally crucial. This necessitates acknowledging and valuing the contributions of women across various facets of games and sports. Ensuring equal opportunities without barriers for aspiring girls and boys in cricket and other sports is paramount. This study underscores the importance of addressing gender sensitivity and advocating for gender rights across all segments of society, transcending socio-economic and individual differences.

KEYWORDS: Cricket, Batsman, Batter, Gender Equality, Gender Right.

INTRODUCTION:

Communication systems that transfer information through either spoken or non-spoken codes are fundamentally based on language. Messages are the main focus of communication, which is the sharing of information and messages between two or more individuals. One of the most important inventions that allows knowledge to be passed down from generation to generation is language. Language fosters interpersonal relationships and advances politics, society, and the family. Through words, speakers and listeners are able to comprehend each other's thoughts and feelings. They can use body language to communicate their emotions without using words. In a materialistic society, language enables people to comprehend harsh relationships and power struggles. To bring about peace and harmony, people must eliminate all traces of superiority and oppressive ideologies from their language. Politics, economics, and sociology are all governed by language. Furthermore, language transfer between generations advances human development. Speakers of a language can convey ideas about a particular race, their views on women, or even the nature of their country as a whole. Language connects people and serves as a medium for communicating human rights. Language can sometimes reflect differences in social, political, and cultural contexts between men and women. Words have the power to perpetuate social inequality. Moreover, men who use such language are frequently prevented from having a positive attitude towards women. A significant quantity of research examines the linguistic behaviours that men use to uphold their dominant position (Awal, 2023).

Cricket is a harmonious, multicultural sport with no boundaries (Powis and Velija 2021). Cricket as sport gained its popularity throughout the world in twenty first century. But it is evident from the historical events that cricket was well established in England duly eighteen centuries as the people believed that the game cricket was started or originated from the country. After the First World War, it slowly gained its popularity in other continents of the world and become popular sports for men in almost every continent. Then the game was seen to be played almost in every city and village for the purpose of entertainment as well as competitive sports. During twentieth century and mid of twenty century the historical events were organised by the concerned cricket boards (MCC& ICC). The popular sport (cricket) was concerned of every individual after the introduction of world cup started in 1975. Eventually Women are also started to realise the importance of games & sports and started to show their interest and participate in many games & sports.

The majority of modern sports, including cricket, do not promote an inclusive culture, and discriminatory practices are still common. (Burdsey 2011; Fletcher 2014; Lusted and Fielding-Lloyd 2017; Powis 2020; Ratna, Lawrence, and Partington 2016; Velija, Ratna, and Flintoff 2014, Velija 2015, Powis and Velija 2021).

But Women's participation in games and sports has always been inferior to men since time immemorial. For long period of time societal mentality towards women's have absurd their obligation in society. Women are framed in a particular way in every society, which limits their rights to participate in any sports and other physical activity as well. In the ancient time everyone is in favour of the opinion that, women are meant to be at home and are limited to do household work only. But with the advancement and development in the distance past, human approach in dealing with everyday life have changed. Societal perception towards women have been broaden, limitations imposed on women's have now been lesser which indirectly pave ways for women to come out and experience the real values of life with the outside world.

Many attempts and steps are being taken up to bridge the gender disparity in the areas of cricket by concern authority to demonstrate a gender-neutral identity in all forms of cricket. 'Batsman' is an exception in cricket among other main playing roles, like 'Bowler', 'Fielder' and 'Wicket Keeper' are all gender neutral. Today's MCC's proposal of gender sensitivity has been approved and accepted by the ICC, the authorised body of international cricket council in replacing the substitution 'Batsman' to 'Batter'.

The guardian of cricket Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) on Wednesday 22 September 2021 announced amendments to the laws of cricket. MCC introduced the 'gender neutral' terms 'batter' and 'batters' rather than 'batsman' or 'batsmen'. MCC committee approved the changes when an extended discussion was conducted by the club's specialist Laws sub – committee. The MCC predicted that the change in terminology will make the game more inclusive for all and to promote gender neutrality.

International Cricket Council (ICC) welcomed 'MCC' decision; on 7th October Thursday, 2021 just before the Men's T20 World Cup, and further amend the changes on the word from 'Batsman' to 'Batter'. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Gender equality as an ideal is an objective that we will struggle for generations to achieve, but gender neutrality in language is easily achievable. Every little bit helps in the movement towards gender neutrality. "The move to 'batter' is a natural progression, aligning with the terms of bowlers and fielders that already sit with in the Laws". Gender neutral terminology has been helps to "reinforce cricket's status as an inclusive game for all.

METHODS AND MATERIALS:

For the present study, qualitative method approaches of data collection were considered. Secondary data base from different search engines were searched on the amendment of MCC's Laws of Cricket and ICC's Rules and Regulations. Different news, articles, and quotations, library databases were also taken as data for this study. The secondary data information shows gender neutral terminology has been helps to reinforce cricket's status as an inclusive game for all. The data was collected and different statistics, graphs analysed and conclusion was drawn from the discussion of study.

DISCUSSION:

From the very beginning of time sports are participated and dominated by men only. During the ancient Olympic women's were not allowed to participate in any sporting event, even today women's participation in games & sports are comparatively lower than men. A male-dominated society also discriminates against women in a variety of ways. The issue stems from false beliefs about women (Powis and Velija 2021). Last twenty years some significant changes have occurred and the difference in involvement between both the genders is becoming narrower. So, sports can also be used to achieve gender equality through the establishment of general values such as fair play, non – discrimination and team work. The game of cricket should hold significance for individuals of all backgrounds, including non-cricketers. Even though cricket has symbolic significance for current fans, a wider audience's emotional response was necessary (Powis and Velija 2021).

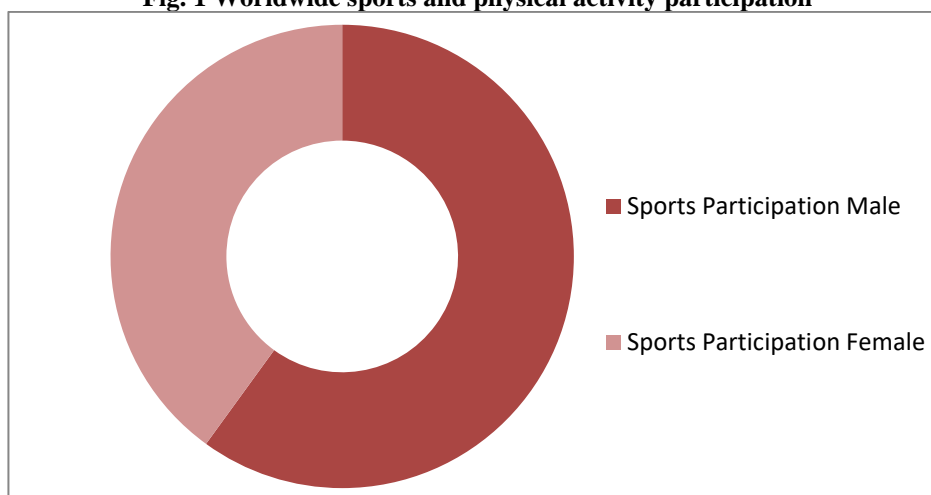
The language and empowerment of Women:

There is a lot of discussion about women's empowerment in both developed and developing nations. Policymakers understand that sustainable development is impossible without the development of women. Women should be given the freedom to be authentic by discovering their own inner strength. Language use and women's empowerment are closely related. They identify their skills and abilities at this point and apply them to further their own growth. Language plays a major role in the subordination of women. Eliminating linguistic discrimination is the only way to empower women. Language is a representation of people's perception, knowledge, and mental processes. Language is used to clarify concepts, give thought more substance, etc. People's perceptions and ideas of women are influenced by their senses, everyday encounters, and language. Contemplative notions about women are largely formed through language (Awal, 2023).

A sport as a leisure activity improves our health and equality of life. Sports as a global industry promote social inclusion and co-operation in World. Men dominate society as a result of these practices as well as gender relations that often favour men. Male dominance affects more subtle and pervasive facets of social interaction, like language use, in addition to limiting women's access to resources and decision-making processes (Awal, 2023). Gender equality in sports means breaking down the harmful stereotypes that continue to make women to take up sporting activities. It also means paving way for women's to be professional athletes and be a leader in the sports industry. According to Kloch (2000) that feminist linguistics regularly criticised the language system in the 1970s and 1980s. The argument was predicated on observations pertaining to the grammatical gender category, which is prevalent in most languages and represents the most overt manifestation of gender differences. When sexes are treated asymmetrically, languages where grammatical gender matches natural gender allow for deep conjecture or interpretation. Men who rejected gender neutrality and aimed to keep control over the other sex dominated language for far too long. This was interpreted as evidence of a sexist perspective on language in general. Sexuality was a component of the language system that governed language thought and language world (page no. 47). According to Penelope (1990), language is the main tool used to uphold power disparities in society

MCC Secretary Jamie Cox in an officially released, said, "MCC believes in cricket being a game for all and this move recognises the changing landscape of the game in modern times". ICC CEO Geoff Allardice has said, "We welcome the MCC decision to implement into the Laws of cricket and follow suit with our playing conditions that are derived from the Laws". "This is natural and perhaps overdue evolution of our sport and now our batters, bowler's, fielders and wicket keepers are neutralised in terms of gender sensitivity". Allardice further opined that following amendment is a small change however will have a significant impact on cricket and it will be viewed as a more inclusive sport. "Of course, language change alone will not grow the sport, we must ensure that girls and boys who inspired to play cricket have a fantastic, fun first experience are both able to progress as cricketers without barriers". ICC Hall of famer and former Australian star cricketer Lisa Sthalacker said, the move to batter is a simple but important one. Dr. Savita Aggarwal, Associate Professor at Institute of Home Economics, Delhi University, said, "The ICC 's announcement in regards to gender equality in replacing 'batsman' to 'batter' for official use is a welcome step. This may help to aware people how language plays a significant role to perpetuate gender discrimination". Shampa Sengupta, A disability and gender rights activities, Joint Secretary of National Platform for the right of disabled (NPRD) and founder of Sruti Disability Right Centre, said, "The use of gender-neutral language will put us further on the battle to eradicate gender biasness ingrained in our culture and lifestyle. Now the world will adopt the use of 'batter' as a part of their routine and include in their culture". Gender inequalities are evident across the sports sectors, from representation at decision – making levels and media coverage, to participation in sports activities including coaching. Women may also face a general lack of safe and appropriate sports facilities, potentially exposing them to physical and or verbal sexual harassment and assault. They may also experience additional physical constraints, lack of time and or lack of childcare facilities. The following figure – 1 shows the worldwide sports participation of both male and female in general.

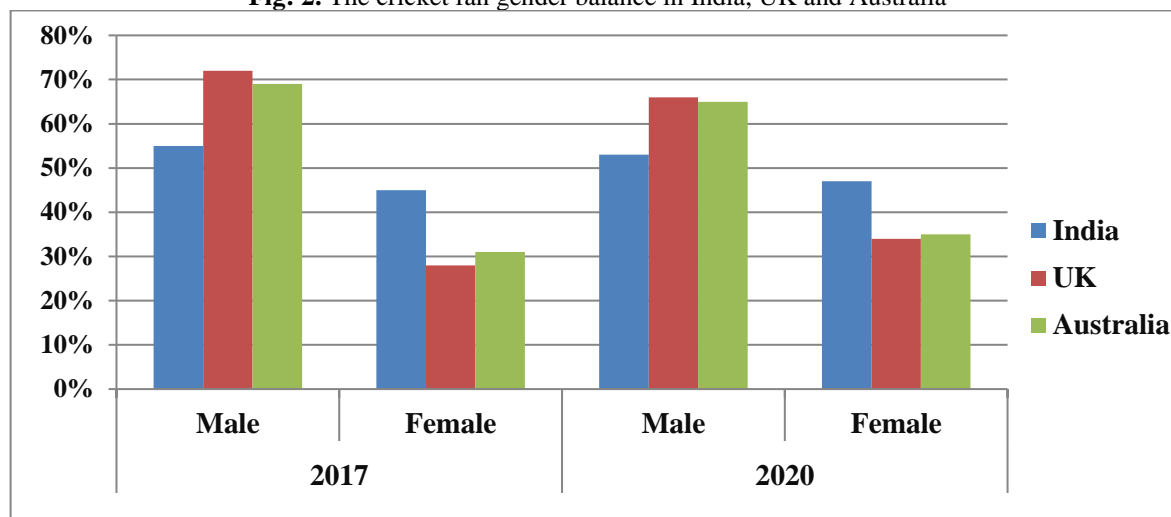
Fig. 1 Worldwide sports and physical activity participation



The following graph shows, worldwide participation in sports and physical activity male by 60 % and female by 40% in general. In cricket and in other sports too we observed disparities in the amount of money being invested in men & women's tournaments, even in advertisements same popular of a male and a female sports person. Cricket fan viewership continues enjoy year in year, pointing to the fact that it remains dynamic and increase women participation in sports activities.

Figure – 2 is the graphical representation on the increase of cricket fan (male and female) in India, U.K and Australia, from the year 2017 to 2020.

Fig. 2. The cricket fan gender balance in India, UK and Australia



The following graph brings out the cricket fan viewership in India, UK, and Australia. The graph also tells us the female viewership growing likeliness of cricket matches, in India, UK and Australia. Cricket is a major sport in India, UK and Australia. As a sport cricket has closed the fan gender gap in India since 2017 by 45% of fans to 47% in 2020, 28% to 34% of fans in UK and in Australia since 2017 by 31% to 35% in 2020. Woman’s league’s (Worldwide) has contributed greatly to the increasing interest in the sport amongst women.

CONCLUSION:

The study has highlighted thematic informative structure in gender neutral languages use in s field of cricket. Language is a carrier of beliefs, values, cultural as ideologies and it reflects think of social order. Breaking deep – set biases is a long and difficult process, but efforts must be continuous. Every small step is significant. Some of our language has a gender-neutral terminology, we often use words that do not denote specify gender, like policeman, chairman, fireman, and stewards etc. strike a reflexion of gender in people’s perception. Times are changing and languages are never static, they are always evolving, so, it is important to adapt to these changes. Pinpointing that un-gender language is needed for the inclusion of all. The uses of neutral words will definitely longer-lasting impact on society.

Gender neutral words are not a magic stick, the attitude of the people towards women has to change, and acceptance and acknowledgement of women is a significant role. Shampa Sengupta, said, “Sports are for boys/men, who are tough and strong, similarly a batsman is presumed to be a ‘man’, there is a gender identity attached to this word which erects the gender disparity. On the other hand, when we promote the use of the word ‘batter’ there is no identity attached to it. The person can be of any gender; hence the usage is of gender-neutral words are pertinent”.

The following amendment is a small change, however will have a significant impact on cricket and it will be viewed as a more inclusive sport. Of course, language changes alone will not grow the sport, we must ensure that girls and boys who are inspired to play cricket should have a fantastic, fun first experience and they should be able to progress as cricketers without any barriers. The gender-neutral words should be made more widespread, we should consciously implant these words in our language by using them in books, in novel and even in official documents and in journalistic writings as well.

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