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Socio-Economic Status of Women Volleyball Players in Nepal

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Abstract

The study analyzed socioeconomic status of seventy-five Nepali women volleyball players aged 14-39 from the National team and five clubs. Structured questionnaire and interviews were employed to collect qualitative and quantitative data on ethnic background, religion, income and education level, and satisfaction with the game of the respondents. The findings revealed that Brahman and Chhetri (50.7%) players had the highest participation, followed by Janajati (42.6%) and Dalits (6.7%). The largest representation of national-level clubs was from Sudur Paschim Province. Among employed players, an average monthly income varied from NRS 25,000 to NRS 30,000. The highest average income was earned by older players (30+ years), while the lowest average income was earned by younger players (14-19 years). There was a positive relationship between experience and monthly income. The average age of the volleyball players was 22.8 years, with 45.3% in the 20-24 age group, which corresponds to volleyball's prime athletic years. Regarding education, 48.0% of the players had completed SEE, 42.7% had a plus-two education, while 5.3% had earned a bachelor's degree. Analysis of societal perception before and after starting volleyball did not show a significant difference. The results showed that the majority of the parents lacked formal education and depended on agriculture, indicating a strong rural and agriculture-based socioeconomic background. The study shows potential in women's volleyball in Nepal to provide several opportunities for youths and emphasizes the need for support at the household, community, institutional and policy levels.

Keywords: Women volleyball players, socioeconomic status, education, sports participation



Introduction

Women's sports participation is an excellent way to develop the skills required for women's empowerment, as well as decision-making and leadership skills for the future. One way to maximize this opportunity is to include women who participate in sports or who hold leadership positions in such activities from all over Nepal, along with a small number of international participants. It has the potential to facilitate a cross-cultural exchange of ideas while addressing issues that women face worldwide. Women's participation in sports such as volleyball is a vital mechanism for fostering empowerment, enhancing leadership capacity and promoting decision making skill among women.

Volleyball (VB) is a dynamic team sport played both indoors and outdoors. The engaging and physically demanding nature of VB makes it well-suited for maintaining physical fitness and promoting overall well-being. A great volleyball performance is the result of several factors. It includes a wide range of physiological, psychological, and cognitive effects that interact with social and environmental contexts (Heydari, Soltani, & Mohammadi-Nezhad, 2018). Studies have shown that participation in sports influences and is influenced by the "social composition" of female athletes (Weiss & Barber, 1995).

Players without family support face multiple obstacles and frequently struggle to strike a balance between their athletic goals and cultural expectations. In terms of social acceptance, different communities have very different views on female athletes. Some are encouraging and see sports as a way to empower women, while others see them as an unconventional choice that results in social stigma or limited access to training facilities (Bista, 2021).

Volleyball is an ideal game for a mountainous country such as Nepal. Although the history of the VB in Nepal is not well documented, it suggests that it has been introduced by Nepalese youths who served in the East India Company. Volleyball was first introduced and played in India around 1957 AD, and it gradually spread through informal channels. Volleyball was initially played by the police and army, and the first competition was held at Tri-Chandra College in 2013 B.S. The first female national volleyball competition in Nepal was held in 2037 B.S. The study of volleyball in Nepal is limited, with only a few articles published due to a lack of research in this field. Socioeconomic status can be of great help in providing information about the economic, educational, and

occupational conditions of the current volleyball players' developmental process. Significant social and financial barriers affect Nepalese women's ability to participate in sports. Their options are frequently constrained by patriarchal standards, a lack of infrastructure, and a lack of financial incentives. Because of cultural norms, family obligations, and a lack of institutional support, Nepalese women participate in sports at a significantly lower rate than men (Acharya, 2019). However, because it is played at both the community and school levels, volleyball continues to be one of the most accessible sports.

Socioeconomic status represents the place of a person or group in a hierarchical social system. Numerous factors, such as occupation, education, income, and area of living, influence socioeconomic status. It is often employed as a predictor of behavior (Hirsch, Kett, and Trefil 2002). Socioeconomic issues play crucial roles in their career development, success, activity choice, and level of achievement (Mahat & Aithal, 2022). The socioeconomic condition of athletes who play team sports as opposed to solo sports has been the subject of extensive investigation. Based on occupation, income, and education, socio-economic status is a comprehensive economic and sociological assessment of a person's or family's economic and social standing in relation to others, as well as their job experience.

In Nepal, gender norms and preconceptions frequently prevent women from participating in competitive sports. According to Maharjan et al. (2020), women volleyball players are criticised by society for putting sports above traditional responsibilities, even though they are more visible than players in other sports. The socioeconomic gaps that exist among female athletes are maintained in part by these cultural obstacles.

Programs to encourage women in sports have been started by both governmental and non-governmental organizations in recent years. Scholarships and training programs are among the programs that assist female volleyball players; nevertheless, they are not comprehensive enough to address systemic socio-economic issues (Pokharel & Thapa, 2018). The majority of current literature does not address the specific challenges encountered by the female athletes, especially in low-income and rural areas, where cultural expectations, lack of funding, and insufficient opportunities provided by institutions can hamper their sports careers. Despite the growing popularity of volleyball in Nepal, there is a lack of research in this area. Shahi (2023) conducted a study using the AAHPER

volleyball skill test in the Lamjung district to compare girls from community and institutional schools. It showed significant differences in some skill components, with institutional school students performing better. However, the study was only focused on skill performance of girls and did not cover the socioeconomic factors influencing women's volleyball participation in Nepal. Hence, it is very important to know the socioeconomic background of female volleyball players and the role that it plays in their participation and development in the sport. This study aims to address this gap by analysing the socioeconomic status of Nepalese women national volleyball players in terms of education, occupational status, and financial status. The aim of the present study was to determine the socioeconomic status of selected Nepali volleyball players and the factors influencing their participation and performance in the volleyball.

Review of literature

The early research papers established that socioeconomic status, family background, and peer support strongly influence the participation of women in sports. Pietkiewicz (1970) and Snyder and Spritzer (1973) highlighted that the female athletes are primarily motivated by 2 key factors: the family environment and peer influence. Similarly, Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) found that parental influence differs depending on the type of sports, where either a father or a mother plays the stronger role. Hoffman (1972) and Kenyon and McPherson (1973) expressed that women should be actively encouraged to engage in physical activity and sports. In 1982, Weiss and Knoppers observed that while parents, teachers, and coaches influence young female athletes, siblings play a role in providing stronger motivation during adolescence. In 1980, Hasbrook et al. highlighted that the support, opinion and goal of a father shaped the decision of a girl to participate in sports. Frauendorfer (1975) explained that rewards, opportunities and prerequisites help to shape the early involvement of girls in sports, whereas Havan (2000) suggested that motivation plays a stronger role in younger athletes.

Socioeconomic status (SES) is known to be a crucial determinant of sports participation, which includes occupation, education, income and living conditions (Nair, 1978). Hirsch, Kett, and Trefil (2002) explained that SES usually predicts individual behaviour, opportunities, choices, and achievements in sports. Research highlights that families with higher education and income levels are better

equipped to provide supportive environments, including housing, nutrition, and awareness about the benefits of physical education (Tanner, 1973; Malina, 1993). Adrian et al. (1976) found that Canadian female athletes in volleyball and hockey challenged the traditional women of their social groups, while Singh (2000) observed that changes in India's socioeconomic structures between 1972 and 1992 increased women's access to sports.

In spite of the global development, women's participation in sports remains unequal across regions. Girls in the United States are more likely to engage in sports than their counterparts in Europe or Latin America, though they still participate less than boys and avoid more violent contact sports (Inkle's, 1969; Weiss & Knoppers, 1982). In Nepal, women face significant social and financial barriers. Patriarchal norms, lack of infrastructure, and limited financial incentives limit opportunities (Acharya, 2019). Cultural norms and family obligations often discourage women from sports, leading to lower involvement compared to men. Nevertheless, volleyball remains one of the more accessible sports, being played widely at community and school levels. Maharjan et al. (2020) noted that female volleyball players in Nepal often face social criticism for prioritizing sports over traditional responsibilities. Similarly, Bista (2021) emphasized that family and community attitudes play a decisive role in shaping opportunities, self-esteem, and persistence of female athletes. Some communities may encourage sports as empowerment, whereas others may impose social disapproval and restrictions.

Governmental and non-governmental organizations in Nepal have introduced initiatives to promote women in sports. Policies such as the National Sports Development Plan emphasize inclusivity, yet implementation remains limited (Pokharel & Thapa, 2018). Despite various scholarship programs and training opportunities for female volleyball players, these programs are not comprehensive enough to resolve systemic socioeconomic barriers. Shrestha and KC (2017) found that many Nepalese women volleyball players struggle to balance academics and athletics due to financial challenges and inadequate support systems. Institutional and governmental interventions such as scholarships, reserved quotas, and safe training facilities can positively influence long-term planning, reduce social disapproval, and normalize women's participation in sports.

Globally, research highlights that sports participation is shaped by complex interactions between physiological, psychological, social, and environmental factors (Malina, 1993). For Nepal, these interactions are particularly visible among female volleyball players, who must balance educational disruptions, financial limitations, and social resistance. According to studies, institutional support and governmental regulations can assist female athletes in redefining their goals, controlling their feelings, and gaining greater social acceptance. However, persistent socioeconomic disparities and gender role expectations continue to challenge sustainable participation. While previous studies have highlighted the importance of SES, cultural norms, and family influence on women's participation in sports globally, there is limited empirical research focusing specifically on the socioeconomic profiles of Nepalese women volleyball players. This study addresses that gap by examining their social and economic backgrounds and assessing factors such as ethnicity, education, occupation, income, and continuity in sport for better understanding of which characteristics support or constrain the growth of elite female athletes in Nepal.

Methodology

Altogether 75 female volleyball players, 15 each from five clubs- Tribhuvan Army Club, Nepal Police Club, Armed Police Force Club, Jawalakhel Volleyball Club, and New Diamond Club were selected purposively for the present study. A structured questionnaire and interview were used to collect data on respondents' ethnic, religious, and physical characteristics, as well as their income, education level, and satisfaction with volleyball participation in Nepal.

Statistical analysis: The collected data were processed, tabulated, and analyzed using SPSS. An independent t-test was performed to determine significant differences in the study parameters. R programming was also performed for some descriptive analyses.

Result

In this study, 75 women volleyball players from five clubs were selected from the Kathmandu valley: Tribhuvan Army Club, Nepal Police Club, Armed Police Force Club, Jawalakhel Volleyball Club, and New Diamond Club. The results reveal that 60.0% of the players involved in the present study were employed by the above sports clubs, and the rest of 40% remain unemployed, indicating a

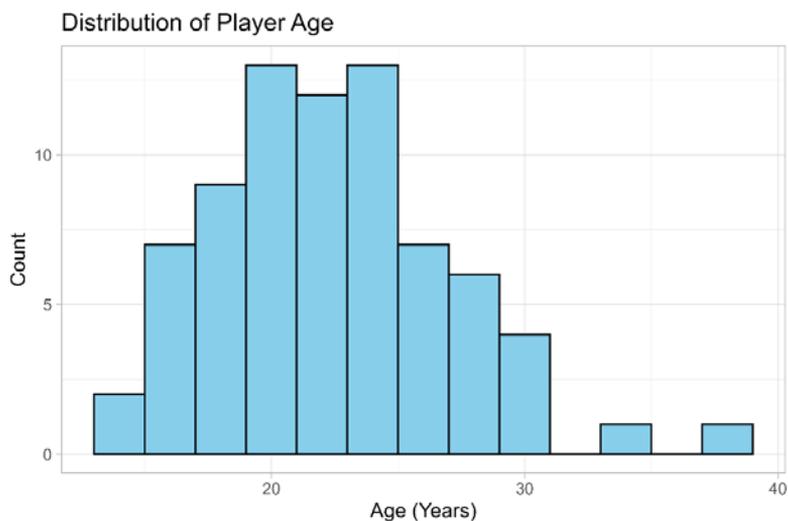
higher employment rate among the players. Among the employed players, the 14 to 19- 19-year age group had an average monthly income of Rs. 25000, and the 20-24-year age group had Rs. 25941.18, and that of 22-29 years had Rs. 27000 and above, 29 years of age had Rs. 3000. Among the various ethnic groups involved, women, as shown in Table 1, Brahman and Chhetri (50.7%) have the highest participation, followed by Janajati (42.6%) and Dalits (6.7%)

Table 1

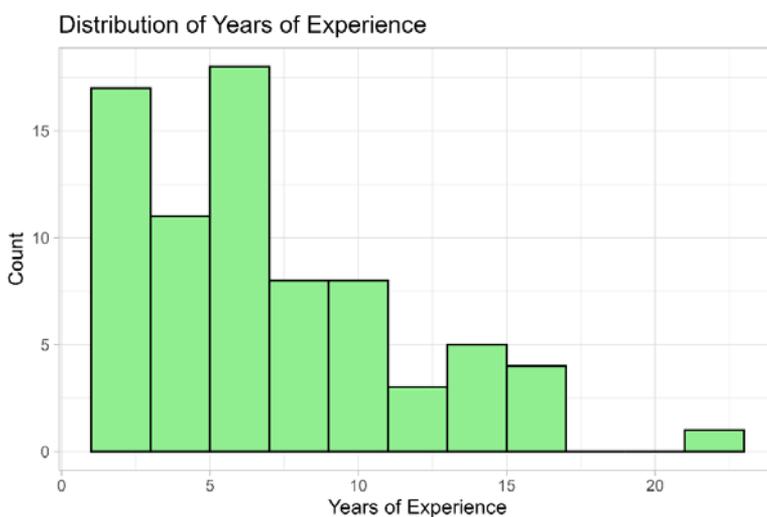
Age group and ethnic composition of women's volleyball players

Age Group	Ethnicity	Number	Mean	SD
14 to 19	Dalits	1	0.4737	0.00000
	Janajati	6	0.4123	0.02149
	BCS	11	0.5359	0.13889
	Total	18	0.4912	0.12244
20 to 24	Dalits	2	0.6053	0.03722
	Janajati	16	0.4704	0.13101
	BCS	16	0.5230	0.12524
	Total	34	0.5031	0.12774
25 to 29	Dalits	2	0.4211	0.00000
	Janajati	7	0.5338	0.11135
	BCS	9	0.4678	0.09649
	Total	18	0.4883	0.10181
30 and above	Janajati	2	0.5263	0.14886
	BCS	3	0.4386	0.12155
	Total	5	0.4737	0.12343
	Dalits	5	0.5053	0.09561
Total	Janajati	31	0.4771	0.11685
	BCS	39	0.5074	0.12283
	Total	75	0.4947	0.11832

The majority of participants (45.3%) were in the range of 20 to 24 years, which corresponds to volleyball's prime athletic years, whereas 24.0% each belong to the age groups of 14–19 and 25–29 years (Table 1, Figure 1).

Figure 1*Distribution of the age of the players*

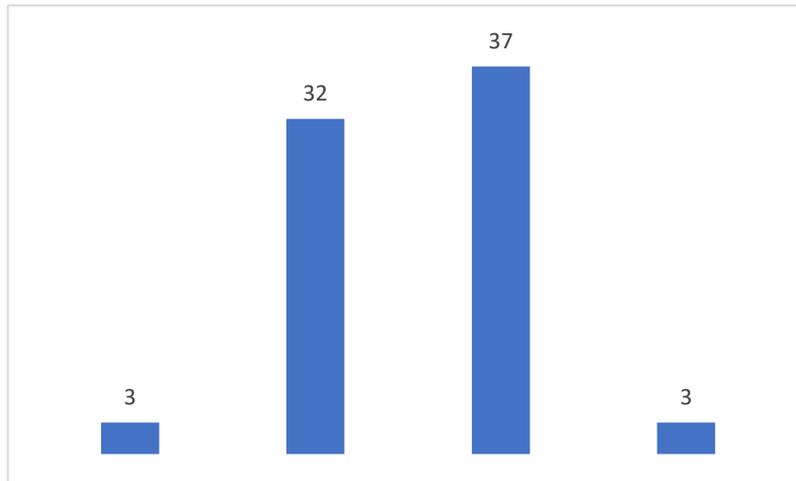
Only 6.7% of participants were 30 years of age or older, indicating a short career lifespan in the sport. The average age of the volleyball players was 22.8 years, ranging from 14 to 39 years (Figure 1). However, their playing experience ranged between 1 and 22 years, with the average experience of 7.42 years (Figure 2).

Figure 2*Distribution of the years of experience played by the players*

Regarding education, 42.7% of the participants had a Plus-two level, 48.0% had a SEE, while 5.3% have earned a bachelor's degree(Figure 3). Among the players, 37.3% of players have given continuity to their studies, while 62.7% had already stopped their studies.

Figure 3

Education level of women volleyball players



Based on the report, 65.3% of respondents' fathers worked in agriculture, with formal-sector jobs coming in second at 17.3% and business activities at 6.7%. Similarly, the mothers' occupational distribution showed that 65.3% worked in agriculture, 4.0% had a job, 4.0% ran a business, and 22.7% did not have a job. There were significant variances in parents' educational backgrounds, especially among females, who made up the vast majority (89.3%) of those without any formal education.

Table 2

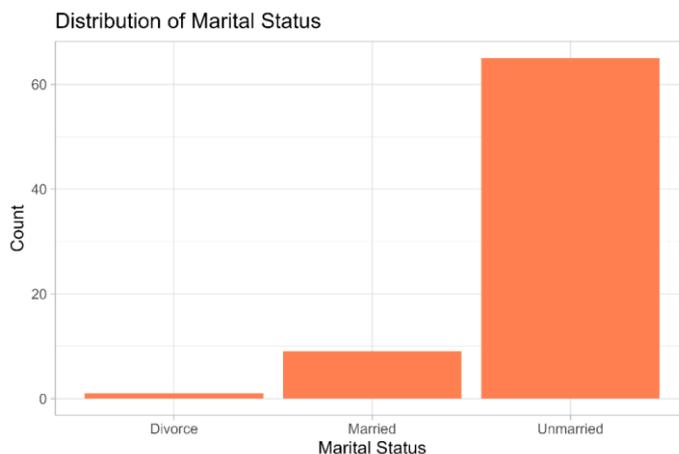
Occupation of parents of the women volleyball players

Occupation	Mother	Father
Job	3	13
Business	3	5
Agriculture	49	49
Not mentioned	17	8
Missing	3	-
Mean	2.99	2.69
Total	75	75

The majority of the players were unmarried (86.66%). However, the small percentage of players who were married had different demographics (Figure 4).

Figure 4

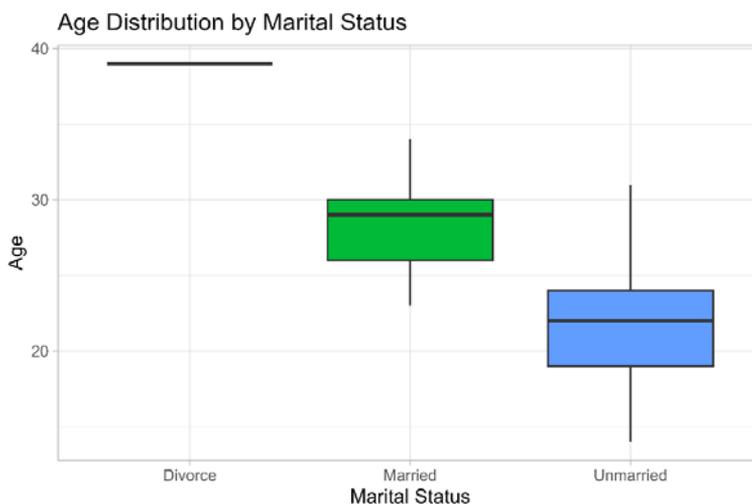
Marital status of the volleyball players



Married players (average age of 28.11 years) were, on average, much older than unmarried players (average age of 21.81 years). There was a significant difference ($p < 0.001$) in the marital status of the players (Figure 5). This highlighted that the players got married at a later stage after playing volleyball for several years.

Figure 5

Boxplot for the age distribution by marital status



Married players had an average experience of 13.22 years, which was more than double the average of unmarried players (6.47 years) (Figure 5). There was a significant difference ($p < 0.001$) in the experience of the married, unmarried, and divorced volleyball players. This suggested the idea that marriage is often a milestone achieved later in a player's career, after they have gained significant experience in the sport.

Figure 6

Boxplot for the years of experience by marital status

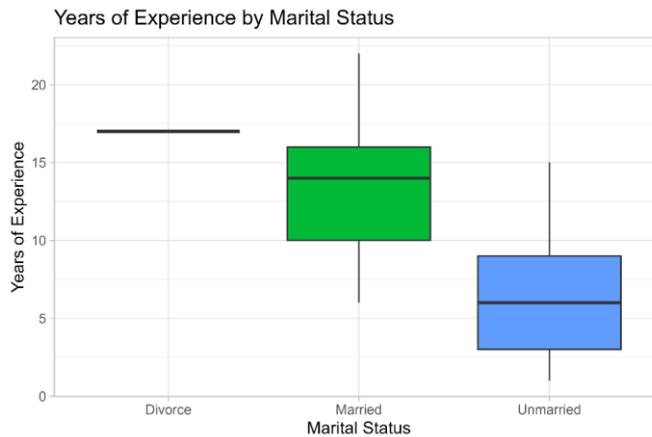
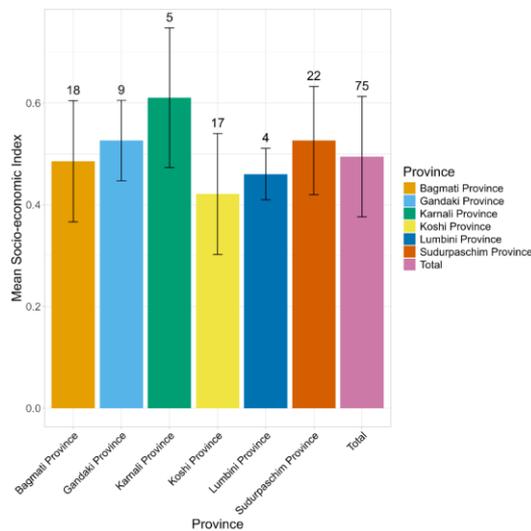


Figure 7

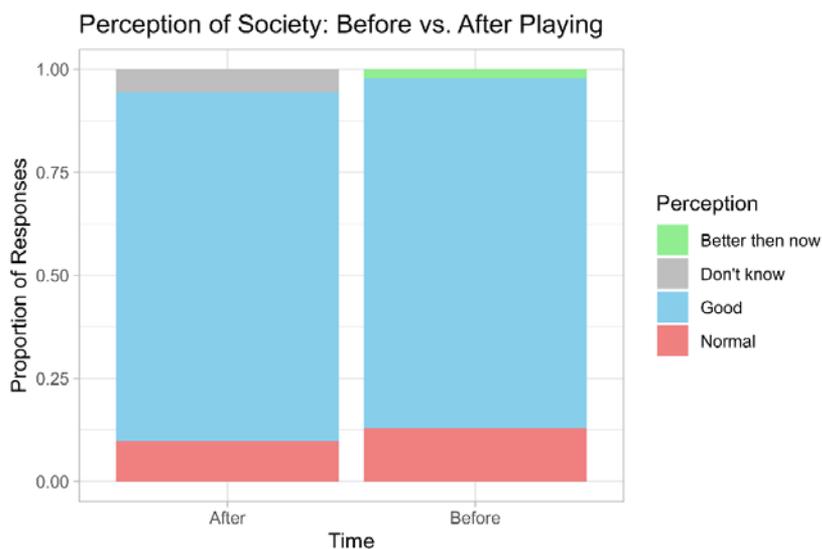
Distribution of the players involved in clubs based on their home provinces



A geographic study revealed that province-by-province involvement of the women's volleyball players in national-level clubs varied. The largest representation was from Sudur Paschim Province (22), followed by Bagmati (18) and Koshi Province (17).

Figure 8

Stack plot for the perception of society for the players before and after starting the game



The perception of society towards the players was analyzed before and after starting the game. It was tested with the help of an interview asking for ticking in 4 options like Good, Normal, better than now, and don't know. The descriptive result has been shown in Figure 8. Most of the players reported "good" status for the before and after category, and it was supported by the paired t-test analysis, which revealed no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the perception of society before and after starting the game (Figure 8).

Discussion

Socioeconomic and Ethnic Disparities

Sports have a significant impact on both society and the lives of individuals. Through the discipline and team work, it contributes in promoting peace and enhanced outputs in society. Better lifestyle and the opportunities gained by the

successful athletics and/ or team success can influence and motivate young players. A person's home and surroundings often have an impact on their desire to succeed in sports, which brings them inner joy. Greendorfer (1975) asserts that opportunities and rewards influence girls' early involvement in athletics and motivation affects younger people more than it does older people (Halvan, 2000).

Socioeconomic indicators such as education, employment, parental occupation, regional background, experience level, and ethnicity vary among the players. Present findings showed a significant ethnic stratification among Nepalese women volleyball players. Brahman and Chhetri were the most active ethnic groups (50.7%), followed by Janajati (42.6%). This distribution shows potential barriers to volleyball opportunities for Dalits and deprived individuals and reflects broader patterns in Nepali sports participation. Women's participation in sports continues to differ by nation and region on a global scale as well. For instance, although females in the US participate in sports at a far lower rate than boys in the same country, they are more engaged than girls in other nations (Inkle, 1969; Weiss & Knoppers, 1982).

The majority of participants were in the 20–24 age range, which is associated with volleyball's optimum athletic years. The short career lifespan in the sport is indicated by the fact that just 6.7% of players were 30 years of age or older. The ages of 14–19 and 25–29 had similar percentages (24.0%).

The education and occupation of the mother and father, as well as their combined income as opposed to their individual income, are significant factors to take into consideration when analyzing a family's socioeconomic standing. The findings showed significant socioeconomic dependence on agriculture and the rural aspect of the respondents' villages, with the majority of the respondents' parents employed in the agricultural sector. Less participation in business and the formal sector, suggests fewer chances for entrepreneurship. Family members may face financial difficulties after the parents' retirement, incapacity to work, or lack of involvement in income-generating activities.

Education and Career Trade-offs

An athlete's degree of schooling is one of the key elements affecting their socioeconomic profile. Of the female volleyball players, 42.7% had a Plus-two education, while the majority (48.0%) had a SEE level education. Just 5.3% of the

players had a bachelor's degree. Higher dropout rate of the players from the school was due to time constraints as they need to practice and participate in various competitions. Additionally, factors like family and personal issues, and financial difficulties are the reasons behind school dropouts. Given the dropout of large numbers of players, the issue should be addressed at the policy level, as the present educational system severely limits their long-term career and economic mobility.

Parents' levels of education fluctuated significantly, particularly among mothers. Compared to 46.7% of fathers, the vast majority of mothers (89.3%) did not have a formal education. The players' support systems and academic goals may be impacted by the previous generation's lack of education. Families with higher incomes and educational attainment are able to provide a better supportive environment, such as housing, food, and knowledge of the advantages of physical education (Tanner, 1973; Malina, 1993). Nonetheless, the stark disparities in academic performance between generations shown in this study, particularly the 89.3% of mothers who had no formal education, indicate underlying systemic barriers that still impact present athletes.

This generation gap in education may result in less encouragement at home and less emphasis on academic achievement, in addition to physical skill. The low percentage of bachelor's degree-holding volleyball players (5.3%) in urban areas compared to the national trend shows that playing volleyball may actually hamper rather than enhance students' academic careers.

Besides serving as a sport, playing volleyball can generate employment and can become a good source of income. However, taking short-term employment opportunities in their early career can hamper their long-term learning goals. Future long-term research could more specifically assess how playing volleyball affects life outcomes over time.

Employment, Income, and Experience

The average monthly income of the players of various age groups was NPR 26,650, which increased with age and experience, as older players (30+ years) earned the highest average income (NPR 30,000) than younger players (NPR 25,000). The players from departmental teams such as Nepal Army have better income (mean 0.5628), followed by the Armed Police Force (0.4316) and the

Nepal Police (0.5544). The participants' monthly earnings were shown to be correlated with their educational attainment and employment experience.

Based on the 60% employment rate among participants, who primarily work with departmental teams like the Nepal army, armed police force, and Nepal police, volleyball enables an opportunity to obtain employment in Nepal's limited job market. Years of experience of playing volleyball and monthly income were positively correlated (0.401) and statistically significant ($p = 0.01$). However, this dependence on athletic achievement for employment creates vulnerability because job transitions following athletics are still unpredictable. Given that 65.3% of both parents come from an agricultural family, volleyball players can find better employment opportunities through their better performance in the game. However, playing volleyball may not guarantee their substantial economic advancement, despite the fact that it presents opportunities.

The close relationship between income and volleyball experience supports the economic advantages of consistent participation in sports. On the other hand, the lack of correlation between income and overall socioeconomic status suggests that factors other than short-term financial gains impact long-term socioeconomic results.

Regional and Institutional Factors

The present finding reveals regional imbalances in terms of infrastructure and access to various opportunities. There was very low participation and representation from Madhesh and Lumbini provinces, respectively. Opportunities for women's athletics are restricted by patriarchal standards, a lack of infrastructure, and a lack of financial incentives (Acharya, 2019). Nonetheless, Sudur Paschim Province's positive participation rate of 29.3% indicated that volleyball events should be regularly be organized, providing chances for the province's young. The targeted legislative actions are required to address these inequities and ensure fair access to volleyball opportunities across the country.

The concentration of work in departmental organizations (such as the Nepal Army, Nepal Police, and APF) has both benefits and drawbacks. These organizations provide stable employment and a relatively higher socioeconomic status, but they also encourage an emphasis on regular athletic performance and

may not support the development of useful abilities for employment other than sports.

Gender Norms and Family Influence

The 4.0% employment rate for mothers and 17.3% for fathers in Nepal's job opportunities demonstrates the ongoing nature of gender inequality in the country. Families' support of their daughters' sports activities may be affected by the imbalance, which may further increase pressure on female athletes to utilize athletics as a job. Given that farming families make up the majority of volleyball players, many come from low-income backgrounds. In Nepal, women fell significantly behind men, particularly in rural areas. A daughter experiences biases and limited access to education, sports, and other economic, social, and other opportunities due to the bias towards sons.

In Nepal, parents did not like their daughters participating in sports, and many parents still do not think their daughters can play sports and make a living doing so. But in recent years, Nepali women athletes have outperformed males in several sports at the national and international levels, garnering enormous support and popularity both domestically and beyond. Saraswati Chaudhary, a seasoned national volleyball player, also accepted it. She claims that Nepali women have excelled in a range of athletic competitions, both individually and as teams, and that the athletes' quality of living has been improving as their performances have improved. Women are still believed to be less capable of attaining leadership positions, though, because of the concept of masculine leadership attributes (Dhakal, 2022).

The socioeconomic profile of the athletes was greatly impacted by their level of education. While 48.0% of female volleyball players had gotten a SEE degree and 42% had earned a Plus-two degree, just 5.3% had earned a bachelor's degree. Significant policy concerns about long-term professional chances and economic mobility are raised by the fact that the majority (62.7%) had stopped learning, mostly because of time limitations from volleyball practice and competitions (49.3%), followed by financial, age-related, and family reasons. Indicating intergenerational educational disadvantage that can restrict academic support at home, parental education levels were noticeably low, especially among mothers (89.3% without formal schooling; 46.7% among fathers). Higher-income and more educated families are better equipped to create circumstances that promote

both academic and physical growth (Tanner, 1973; Malina, 1993). As compared to national trends, the extremely low percentage of players with bachelor's degrees (5.3%) raises the possibility that playing volleyball might hamper rather than promote academic advancement.

Figure 9

(A) Linear regression for years of experience and monthly income; (B) linear regression for education and monthly income.



Conclusions

Present findings revealed that women volleyball players from Brahman, Chhetri and Janjati community have higher participation, while the players from Sudur Paschim Province has larger representation in national-level clubs. The majority of players completed their SEE level education. The perception of society towards women's volleyball players seems positive, which is a good sign for the development of this sport. The players employed in departmental clubs such as Tribhuvan Army Club, Nepal Police Club, and Armed Police Force Club were found to be financially more secure. It can be concluded that there are ample opportunities in women's volleyball in Nepal.

However, factors like educational discontinuance, geographical inequality, and work dependency indicate the need for comprehensive reforms. There is optimism for athletics as a tool for social mobility and integration because of the possible equalizing effect of participation across ethnic lines. But in order to fulfil this potential, household, community-level and institutional obstacles that presently restrict the long-term possibilities of many sports women need to be resolved. Women's volleyball has potential for providing several opportunities to youths, if the current system fully realizes their potential for socioeconomic progress. Sports organizations, academic institutions, governmental organizations, and development partners must work together to address these issues and establish long-term, comprehensive development routes for female athletes.

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