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Inspiring the Next Generation: Effects of India's 2025 Women's World Cup Triumph on Girls' Sports Participation

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Abstract

The year 2025 marks a pivotal phase in the evolution of women's cricket in India, characterized by landmark achievements, expanding public interest, and enhanced institutional investment in the women's game. This paper analyzes the significant on-field and off-field developments of 2025, with a particular focus on their wider social implications. Utilizing evidence from competitive performance, media visibility, and emerging patterns in grassroots engagement, the study investigates the role of elite sporting success in motivating increased participation among young girls. India's triumph in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup is examined as both a symbolic milestone and a practical mechanism for fostering ambition, reshaping gender norms, and strengthening societal acceptance of girls' involvement in sport within schools and community settings. The paper also assesses the broader implications of this momentum for the sustained growth, inclusivity, and long-term development of women's sport in India, identifying 2025 as a critical turning point in the expansion of sporting opportunities for girls beyond cricket.

Keywords: Women's cricket, India, ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025, Women's Premier League (WPL), girls' sports participation, gender and sport, role models, social impact

Introduction

A particularly significant dimension of India's women's cricket success in 2025 lies in its potential to generate lasting positive outcomes for the next generation of Indian girls. The World Cup victory has elevated female athletes into highly visible national role models, offering young girls tangible proof that sporting excellence and professional success are attainable within the Indian context. Such representation is especially powerful in challenging long-standing gender norms that have traditionally constrained girls' participation in competitive sport. When elite female athletes are celebrated in mainstream media and public discourse, sport becomes increasingly normalized as an acceptable—and aspirational—pathway for girls across diverse social, economic, and regional backgrounds. At the grassroots level, the symbolic impact of the 2025 triumph is likely to translate into measurable increases in girls' participation in school and community sport programs. Previous research on role-model effects in sport suggests that elite success can significantly influence parental attitudes, a critical factor in determining whether girls are encouraged to pursue athletic opportunities. In the Indian context, where parental approval often shapes educational and extracurricular choices, the visibility of successful women cricketers can reduce resistance to girls' sustained involvement in sport and increase willingness to invest time, resources, and institutional support in their development.

Moreover, the expansion of professional structures such as the Women's Premier League (WPL), strengthened by the World Cup victory, creates clearer and more credible career pathways for aspiring athletes. For young girls, the presence of domestic leagues, professional contracts, and visible income opportunities reduces the perception of sport as a risky or temporary pursuit. This professionalisation enhances motivation, retention, and long-term commitment to sport during adolescence—a stage at which many girls traditionally disengage due to social pressures, academic expectations, or lack of opportunity.

The influence of the 2025 success also extends beyond elite performance to broader

educational and psychosocial outcomes. Participation in sport has been linked to the development of leadership, confidence, teamwork, and decision-making skills—attributes that contribute positively to academic performance and future employability. By encouraging greater participation among girls, the momentum generated by the national team's achievements may indirectly support women's leadership and labour-force participation in the long term. In this sense, sport functions not only as a physical activity but as a mechanism for social mobility and empowerment.

Finally, the World Cup victory holds the potential to reshape institutional priorities, prompting schools, state associations, and policymakers to invest more deliberately in girls' sports infrastructure, coaching, and safety. If leveraged effectively, this moment can lead to more inclusive and equitable sporting environments, particularly for girls from rural and marginalized communities who have historically faced limited access. Thus, the impact of India's women's cricket success in 2025 extends well beyond immediate sporting glory, offering a transformative opportunity to inspire, enable, and sustain the sporting aspirations of the next generation of Indian girls.

Objective of Research Paper

The objective of this research are as follows

1. To analyse the impact of India's ICC Women's Cricket World Cup victory on reducing urban-rural socioeconomic disparities, with a particular focus on enhancing access, participation, and opportunities for girls in sport.
2. To examine the current performance and competitive development of women's cricket in India, emphasizing recent international achievements, domestic league structures, and pathways for player development
3. To evaluate the broader economic and sporting benefits of the growth of women's cricket in India, including its contributions to employment, commercial investment, and the professionalisation of the sports ecosystem.

Review of Literature

The evolution of women's cricket in India has garnered growing scholarly attention, particularly at the nexus of gender, sport, and socio-economic development. Research on role-model effects in sports indicates that the visibility of female athletes' achievements can profoundly shape aspirations, parental support, and societal acceptance of women's participation in traditionally male-dominated domains (Bandura, 1977; Messner, 2011) ^[1, 14]. Such representation is especially critical in India, where socio-cultural norms and structural barriers have historically limited girls' engagement in competitive sport.

Elite performance on the international stage, including successes in ICC tournaments, is frequently identified as a catalyst for narrowing these gaps by generating public interest, increasing media coverage, and attracting investment in grassroots programs (Kaur, 2020) ^[12]. The establishment and expansion of professional platforms, such as the Women's Premier League (WPL), have further enhanced the visibility of women's cricket, created sustainable career pathways, and provided professional opportunities for emerging players (Chopra, 2022) ^[5].

From an economic perspective, elite sporting success has been linked to both direct and indirect financial benefits,

including prize money, sponsorship deals, endorsements, and higher remuneration within domestic leagues (Bhatia & Mehta, 2019) ^[3]. Beyond immediate financial gains, enhanced female participation in sports contributes to skill development, leadership capacity, and workforce engagement, generating multiplier effects across the broader economy (Desai, 2018; Menon, 2021) ^[7, 13]. Crucially, exposure to high-performing female role models can inspire the next generation of girls to view sport as a viable pathway, thereby expanding the talent pool and fostering long-term opportunities for professional and personal development.

Nevertheless, scholars caution that elite success alone is insufficient to effect systemic change. Persistent socio-cultural barriers, safety concerns, and uneven distribution of resources can restrict the translation of high-profile victories into sustained participation and employment opportunities for girls, particularly in rural or marginalized communities (Patel & Sharma, 2020) ^[15]. The literature therefore underscores the importance of a synergistic approach that combines elite success with targeted policy interventions, private-sector investment, and strengthened grassroots programs.

Research Methodology

This study is based entirely on secondary data. It involves the collection, review, and analysis of existing information from official reports (BCCI, ICC), academic literature, media coverage, and industry analyses. A descriptive and analytical approach was adopted to examine the impact of India's ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 on socio-economic, sporting, and economic outcomes.

Data analysis combined qualitative insights (from literature and media reports) with quantitative trends (viewership, prize money, salaries, participation rates) to evaluate the broader implications for women's cricket in India. The study is limited by the availability and scope of secondary data, and causal relationships are inferred from observed trends rather than primary investigation.

Data Analysis, Findings, and Suggestions

Impact of India's ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Victory on Urban-Rural Socioeconomic Disparities

The 2025 ICC Women's Cricket World Cup victory has had a transformative effect on girls' participation in cricket, particularly in bridging urban-rural socio-economic divides. Following the tournament, grassroots data indicate a 35-40% increase in registrations at cricket academies and local programs in semi-urban and rural regions (BCCI Grassroots Report, 2025). Media visibility of elite female athletes has inspired parents and communities to perceive sports as a viable career option for girls, challenging long-standing socio-cultural barriers.

Survey findings reveal that exposure to high-performing role models has driven increased enrollment in school and community sports programs. Nevertheless, infrastructural challenges—including limited access to quality coaching, safe facilities, and professional mentorship—persist in rural areas. These findings underscore the importance of sustained investment in grassroots programs, targeted policy interventions, and public-private partnerships to ensure that high-profile victories translate into long-term, inclusive development.

Performance and Competitive Development of Women's Cricket in India

India's women's cricket team exhibited exceptional competitive development in 2025:

- **Domestic Leagues and Talent Pathways:** The Women's Premier League (WPL) has expanded significantly, offering structured pathways for talent identification and professional development. Emerging players from semi-urban and rural backgrounds increasingly feature in state and national squads, reflecting effective scouting and coaching systems.
- **Player Development and Leadership:** Senior leaders, including Harmanpreet Kaur and Smriti Mandhana, have enhanced team cohesion, skill specialization, and strategic decision-making under pressure. The squad's depth and dual-role capabilities (batting and bowling) have strengthened performance consistency.

Overall, India's women's cricket demonstrates a robust domestic and international framework that supports elite performance while promoting grassroots engagement and sustainable talent development.

Economic and Sporting Benefits

The growth of women's cricket in India, catalyzed by the 2025 World Cup, has generated significant economic and societal benefits:

Immediate and Short-Term Impact (Weeks-12 Months)

- Prize money, BCCI, and state rewards totaling ~₹90-91 crore were awarded to the team and support staff.
- Star players saw endorsement fees rise by 25-100%, alongside opportunities for media appearances, commentary, and paid events.
- Direct payouts and enhanced visibility significantly improved household incomes for national players, coaches, and support staff.

Medium-Term Impact (1-3 Years)

- Expansion of leagues and franchises (WPL and state leagues) has increased team budgets, player salaries, and coaching/support roles. Analysts project larger WPL auction fees and improved commercial viability.
- Grassroots academies reported increased enrollment of girls, particularly from rural areas, creating demand for coaches, physiotherapists, talent scouts, and support staff.
- Growth in media and broadcasting—including documentaries, regional-language coverage, and digital content—has created jobs for production crews, commentators, analysts, and content marketers.

Long-Term Impact (3+ Years)

- Sustained investment in infrastructure, school programs, and female coaching staff can normalize sports careers for girls and expand female labor-force participation.
- A larger pipeline of professional female athletes is expected to yield multiplier effects on skill development, leadership, and economic empowerment.
- Without targeted policies and investments, benefits could remain concentrated in urban centers, limiting the impact on marginalized and rural communities.

Mechanisms Linking Sporting Success to Jobs and Income

1. **Visibility → Demand:** Increased fan engagement and TV audiences attract sponsorships, ticket sales, and merchandise opportunities.
2. **Money → Capacity:** Prize money and sponsorships expand budgets for clubs, leagues, and state associations.
3. **Role Models → Participation:** Elite performance inspires more girls to enroll in sport, creating demand for coaches, physiotherapists, and managers.
4. **Market Signaling → Private Investment:** Brands and investors perceive women's cricket as a growth segment, spurring further commercial investment.

Quantified Impact and Trends

- Digital viewership for the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 reached ~446 million in India, with the final drawing ~185 million viewers.
- Engagement across the first 13 matches was five times higher than in 2022, highlighting rising commercial viability.
- Match fees for women cricketers now match male counterparts for Test, ODI, and T20I formats. WPL player salaries reached ~₹3.4 crore, reflecting professionalization and market growth.
- Nearly 40% of the global cricket fan base comprises women and girls, indicating significant long-term potential for grassroots expansion and talent development.

Broader Economic Benefits

- Increased broadcast and advertising revenues due to rising viewership.
- Boost to local economies through tourism, hospitality, and infrastructure development.
- Growth in athlete endorsements and brand value, attracting corporate investment.
- Social and human capital benefits, including enhanced skills, confidence, discipline, and workforce participation among women.
- Expansion of the sports ecosystem, including media rights, merchandising, apparel, digital content, and fantasy sports.

Findings

1. **Bridging Urban-Rural Disparities:** The World Cup win has catalyzed higher participation among girls, reducing socio-economic and geographic gaps, though infrastructure and coaching limitations remain.
2. **Competitive Development:** India's women's cricket demonstrates strong international competitiveness and robust domestic structures, supporting elite performance and talent development.
3. **Economic and Professional Growth:** Immediate and projected benefits include income gains, employment creation, commercial investment, and long-term professionalization of women's cricket.
4. **Societal Impact:** Increased visibility and role models inspire the next generation of girls, fostering skill development, empowerment, and long-term economic participation.

Suggestions and Policy Recommendations

- **Invest in Infrastructure:** Develop coaching centers, academies, and safe playing grounds in rural and semi-urban areas to expand access for girls.
- **Expand Professional Leagues:** Increase WPL and state-level franchises with improved TV deals to create stable employment and commercial growth.
- **Targeted Grassroots Programs:** Implement talent identification, coaching, and training programs in underrepresented regions to grow the player pipeline.
- **Financial Support and Incentives:** Allocate prize money, grants, and sponsorship funds to support grassroots initiatives and professional development.
- **Media and Awareness Campaigns:** Promote women's cricket via digital and regional media to challenge socio-cultural barriers and inspire participation.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborate across government, private sector, and NGOs to fund infrastructure, talent development, and league expansion sustainably.

Conclusion & Future Scope

The year 2025 marks a defining moment in the history of Indian women's cricket, highlighted by the nation's maiden ICC Women's Cricket World Cup victory. Coupled with strengthened domestic-franchise structures, rising performance standards, and unprecedented public engagement, this achievement signals a transformative phase for the sport. Beyond the immediate triumph, the victory has the potential to act as a catalyst for broader socio-economic and cultural change, particularly by inspiring young girls, promoting gender equity, and encouraging participation in sports across urban and rural regions.

However, the realization of this potential depends on sustained, coordinated efforts by key stakeholders—including the cricket board, state associations, media, sponsors, and private partners—to invest in infrastructure, grassroots programs, professional leagues, and long-term development strategies. With strategic planning and systemic support, Indian women's cricket can not only maintain its competitive edge on the global stage but also foster a sustainable ecosystem that expands opportunities, empowers female athletes, and reshapes societal attitudes toward women in sport. The 2025 World Cup victory, therefore, is more than a historic sporting milestone; it represents a pivotal inflection point for the growth, professionalization, and equitable development of women's cricket in India.

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