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Open Access Law Journal, ISSN (O): 3049-0057

Editor-in-Chief – Prof. (Dr.) Amit Kashyap; Publisher – Reet Parihar

A Study On Problems And Challenges Of The Sports Industry And The Constitutional Remedies Under Sports Law

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Published on: 29th March 2026

Abstract

This study examines the major problems and challenges faced by the sports industry and the constitutional remedies available under sports law. The sports industry in India has grown rapidly, but it continues to face issues such as poor governance, corruption, lack of transparency, and denial of fair opportunities to athletes. These challenges often affect the rights and welfare of sportspersons. The study highlights how constitutional provisions such as equality, freedom of profession, and the right to life are relevant in addressing these issues. Both doctrinal and non-doctrinal research methods have been used for the study. The research also analyses the role of courts in resolving disputes related to sports administration. The study aims to create awareness about legal remedies available to athletes. It further suggests the need for stronger regulation and accountability in the sports industry.

Keywords: *Sports industry, sports law, constitutional remedies, fundamental rights, sports governance, judicial intervention, athlete rights.*

1. Introduction

The sports industry occupies a unique position in modern society, functioning not merely as a source of entertainment but also as an instrument of social integration, economic growth, and national pride. Globally, sports has evolved into a multi-billion-dollar industry encompassing professional leagues, sports federations, sponsorships, broadcasting rights, merchandising, and athlete management. In India, sports holds deep cultural and emotional significance, particularly in disciplines such as cricket, hockey, badminton, and athletics. The increasing success of Indian athletes at national and international platforms has enhanced public interest and investment in sports. Sports today also contribute significantly to employment generation, youth engagement, and international recognition. As a result, the sports industry has assumed an important role in shaping social and economic development.

Despite this growth and recognition, the Indian sports industry continues to face several systemic and structural challenges that hinder its overall development. The absence of a unified and comprehensive regulatory framework has led to inconsistent governance practices across various sports bodies. Many sports federations function as autonomous entities with limited accountability and transparency, giving rise to allegations of corruption, favoritism, and abuse of authority. Athletes frequently encounter arbitrary selection procedures, unfair disciplinary measures, and lack of effective grievance redressal mechanisms. Such practices directly impact their professional careers, livelihood, and dignity. These governance failures highlight the urgent need for legal oversight and institutional reform within the sports sector.

The regulation of sports in India primarily falls within the domain of sports law, an emerging field that intersects with constitutional law, administrative law, contract law, and criminal law. Sports law addresses key issues such as governance standards, athlete rights, doping control, dispute resolution, and ethical conduct. However, in the absence of a comprehensive sports legislation, courts have increasingly relied on constitutional principles to adjudicate disputes within the sports industry. Constitutional remedies under Articles 14, 19, 21, 32, and 226 play a crucial role in protecting athletes' fundamental rights and ensuring fairness in sports administration. Judicial review has enabled courts to intervene where actions of sports authorities are arbitrary or unreasonable. This study seeks to analyse the challenges faced by the sports industry and examine the effectiveness of constitutional remedies in addressing these challenges through judicial intervention.

2. Statement of the Problem

The sports industry in India faces serious governance and structural deficiencies affecting athletes and stakeholders. Lack of transparency and accountability in sports administration remains a major concern. Many sports federations operate without democratic functioning or effective oversight. This results in biased selection processes, misuse of power, and financial irregularities. Athletes are often subjected to arbitrary suspensions and unfair disciplinary actions. Such practices violate fundamental rights relating to equality, profession, and livelihood. Female athletes continue to face discrimination and unequal opportunities within the sports ecosystem. The absence of effective internal dispute resolution mechanisms worsens these problems. Consequently, athletes are compelled to seek constitutional remedies before courts. The central issue lies in balancing sports body autonomy with the protection of constitutional rights.

3. Review of Literature

i) **Gardiner (2011)** explains that the sports industry faces serious governance and regulatory challenges due to excessive autonomy of sports bodies.¹ The study highlights lack of accountability and transparency in sports administration. It discusses how poor governance affects athlete welfare and fair competition. The author also points out that legal intervention is often required to correct administrative failures. The study emphasizes the role of courts in ensuring fairness. It provides a foundation for understanding sports governance issues.

ii) **Blackshaw (2013)** examines the relationship between sports law and athlete rights.² He explains that athletes often suffer due to weak dispute resolution mechanisms. The study highlights the importance of legal remedies in protecting sportspersons from arbitrary decisions. It also discusses how constitutional principles influence sports regulation. Judicial intervention is seen as necessary where internal mechanisms fail. The study supports the need for stronger legal frameworks in sports.

iii) **Mitra (2016)** focuses on the problems of sports administration in India, particularly corruption and political interference.³ The study points out that sports federations lack democratic functioning. It highlights cases where athletes were denied fair selection and

¹ Roger Blanpain & Simon Gardiner, *Sports Law* (4th ed., Routledge, 2011).

² Ian Blackshaw, *International Sports Law: An Introductory Guide* (T.M.C. Asser Press, 2013).

³ Mitra, *Sports Administration in India*, 2016, p. 77.

opportunities. The author stresses the importance of constitutional remedies such as writ petitions. The role of the judiciary in reforming sports bodies is emphasized. The study reflects Indian realities in sports governance.

iv) **Boria Majumdar (2018)** discusses the commercialization of sports and its impact on ethics and governance. The study explains how financial interests often override athlete welfare.⁴ It highlights structural weaknesses in Indian sports institutions. The author also notes the absence of a uniform sports law in India. Judicial activism is seen as a corrective mechanism. The study contributes to understanding modern sports challenges.

v) **Jain (2020)** analyzes the application of constitutional law in sports-related disputes.⁵ The study highlights how Articles 14, 19, and 21 are relevant to athlete rights. It discusses important court decisions involving sports federations. The author argues that courts play a crucial role in protecting fairness in sports. Lack of awareness among athletes is identified as a major issue. The study supports the need for legal education in sports.

4. Research Gap

Existing studies on the sports industry mainly focus on issues such as governance, corruption, and administrative inefficiency, but they often fail to link these problems with constitutional remedies. Most research discusses sports law and judicial intervention separately, without examining how constitutional provisions can be practically applied to protect athletes' rights. There is limited literature analysing the role of fundamental rights in resolving disputes related to selection, administration, and athlete welfare. Further, very few studies focus on the awareness level of athletes regarding constitutional remedies. Indian sports-specific challenges have not been adequately studied from a constitutional perspective. This creates a gap in understanding the legal protection available to sportspersons. Hence, this study attempts to bridge this gap by examining sports industry challenges along with constitutional remedies under sports law.

5. Objectives of the Study:

⁴ Boria Majumdar, *Playing It My Way: My Autobiography and the Evolution of Sports Governance in India* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁵ R.K. Jain, "Constitutional Protection of Athlete Rights in India," *Journal of Sports Law and Policy*, Vol. 5 (2020).

- i. To study the major problems and challenges faced by the sports industry.
- ii. To examine issues related to governance, corruption, and lack of transparency in sports administration.
- iii. To analyse the impact of these challenges on the rights and welfare of athletes.
- iv. To understand the role of constitutional provisions in protecting sportspersons' rights.
- v. To examine the role of judicial intervention in resolving sports-related disputes.
- vi. To suggest measures for improving accountability and fairness in the sports industry.

6. Research Methodology

This research is based on both doctrinal and non-doctrinal methods of study. Doctrinal research includes the study of constitutional provisions, statutes, case laws, journals, articles, and books related to sports law. Non-doctrinal research is conducted through a questionnaire circulated using Google Forms to collect primary data. The sample size for the study consists of **106 respondents**. This research is used some statistical methods such as percentage method and average method. The duration of the research is three months. This research uses the stratified random sampling.

7. Significance of the Study:

This study is significant as it helps in understanding the various problems and challenges faced by the sports industry in India. Issues such as poor governance, corruption, lack of transparency, and unfair treatment of athletes are highlighted through this research. The study explains how these challenges affect the rights and career of sportspersons. It also shows the importance of constitutional provisions in protecting athletes' fundamental rights. By linking sports-related issues with constitutional law, the study provides a legal perspective on sports administration. It helps students and researchers understand the relevance of constitutional remedies in sports disputes. The research adds value to the existing literature on sports law. It also emphasizes the need for legal accountability in sports bodies. The study encourages lawful functioning of sports institutions. Overall, it contributes to better understanding of sports governance.

The findings of this study are useful for athletes, sports administrators, and policymakers. Athletes can become more aware of their constitutional rights and available legal remedies. Sports authorities may use the findings to improve governance and transparency. Policymakers can refer to the study while framing sports-related laws and regulations. The study highlights the role of judicial intervention in protecting fairness in sports. It also helps in identifying areas where legal reforms are needed. The research may guide future studies in sports law and constitutional remedies. It supports the need for effective dispute resolution mechanisms. The study promotes fairness and equality in sports. Thus, it has both academic and practical relevance.

8. Hypotheses of the Study:

This study is based on the following hypotheses:

H₁: The sports industry in India faces significant problems and challenges affecting athletes' rights and welfare.

H₂: Constitutional remedies play an important role in addressing disputes and protecting the rights of sportspersons in the sports industry.

9. Limitations of the Study:

This study has certain limitations that need to be acknowledged. The time period of the study is limited, which restricts a detailed analysis of long-term developments in the sports industry. The research is based on both primary and secondary data, and the accuracy of the findings depends on the reliability of these sources. The sample size of 106 respondents may not fully represent the views of all stakeholders in the sports sector. The study focuses only on selected problems and constitutional remedies related to sports law. It does not cover all sports or regions in India. Changes in sports policies and legal frameworks may affect the relevance of the findings. Due to time constraints, in-depth analysis of individual case laws was limited. The study may not capture all practical issues faced by athletes. These limitations may affect the generalisation of the results.

10. Results and Discussion

Part – I: Doctrinal Research

The sports industry has expanded from a recreational activity into a professional and commercial sector involving competitions, administration, sponsorship, media, and event management. In India, sports are mainly governed by federations that function with significant autonomy and limited statutory control. Globalization and commercialization have increased investments, endorsements, and media rights, creating a stronger need for legal regulation and constitutional protection. This transformation has also increased public expectations regarding fairness and professionalism in sports management. As the industry grows, effective governance becomes essential to maintain credibility and public trust.

Problems and Challenges in the Sports Industry

The research identifies poor governance, corruption, favoritism, and lack of transparency as major issues within sports federations. The absence of a uniform sports law leads to inconsistent regulation, and athletes often lack effective grievance redressal mechanisms. Financial mismanagement, inadequate infrastructure, delayed payments, and political interference further affect athlete welfare and sectoral growth. Grassroots development programs also remain underdeveloped in many regions. These challenges collectively weaken the integrity and efficiency of sports administration.

Constitutional Provisions and Protection of Athlete Rights

Although sports is not expressly mentioned in the Constitution, constitutional principles apply when sports bodies perform public functions. Article 14 ensures equality and prevents arbitrary actions, Article 19(1)(g) protects professional freedom, and Article 21 safeguards dignity and well-being. Together, these provisions provide legal protection to athletes. They ensure that administrative decisions must follow fairness and reasonableness. Constitutional safeguards thus serve as an important check on misuse of power in sports governance.

Role of Judiciary and Constitutional Remedies

The judiciary intervenes when sports authorities violate fundamental rights or principles of natural justice. Through writ petitions, athletes can challenge unfair bans, suspensions, and arbitrary selections. Judicial review has improved transparency and governance in sports administration. Courts generally respect the autonomy of sports bodies but step in when actions are unreasonable or discriminatory. This balance helps maintain both independence and accountability in the sector.

Need for Legal Regulation in the Sports Industry

The growing commercialization of sports requires comprehensive legislation to regulate selection procedures, disciplinary actions, contracts, and dispute resolution. A clear legal framework would enhance accountability, protect athlete rights, and ensure sustainable development of the sports industry in India. Uniform standards would reduce arbitrary practices and promote ethical conduct. Strong regulatory mechanisms would also strengthen investor confidence and international credibility.

11. Case laws:

Zee Telefilms Ltd. v. Union of India (2005)

In this case, the issue before the Supreme Court was whether the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) could be considered a “State” under Article 12 of the Constitution. The Court held that BCCI is not a State as it is not financially, functionally, or administratively controlled by the government. However, the Court observed that BCCI performs public functions related to sports administration. It was held that writ petitions under Article 226 can still be maintained against such bodies. This case is important as it clarified the applicability of constitutional remedies against sports authorities. It highlighted that even private sports bodies can be subject to judicial review when public interest is involved. The judgment played a significant role in sports governance jurisprudence in India.⁶

⁶ Zee Telefilms Ltd. v. Union of India, (2005) 4 SCC 649 .

Board of Control for Cricket in India v. Cricket Association of Bihar (2015)

This case arose due to allegations of corruption and maladministration within the BCCI during the Indian Premier League. The Supreme Court examined the functioning and governance of BCCI and found serious irregularities. The Court appointed the Lodha Committee to suggest reforms in the administration of cricket. The judgment emphasized transparency, accountability, and good governance in sports bodies. It held that sports federations cannot function without checks and balances. This case strengthened judicial control over sports administration. It also reinforced the role of the judiciary in protecting public interest in sports.⁷

Sushil Kumar v. Union of India (2016)

In this case, wrestler Sushil Kumar challenged the selection process for the Olympic Games, claiming it was unfair and arbitrary. The Supreme Court examined whether the selection trials conducted by the sports authorities were reasonable. The Court held that while selection in sports requires expert opinion, it must still follow fairness and transparency. The judiciary refused to interfere excessively but emphasized the importance of clear and fair selection procedures. This case highlighted the limited but important role of courts in sports-related disputes. It reinforced that athlete rights cannot be ignored in the name of autonomy of sports bodies.⁸

Part-II Non-Doctrinal Research

A survey was conducted through Google form and data is collected. The survey results are presented through pie-charts and tables and percentage method is used in tables. The total number of sample respondents is 106. Below are the data collected through Google form survey and percentage method is used in each tables. It also includes pie charts.

Table no. 1 : Sports Law Awareness

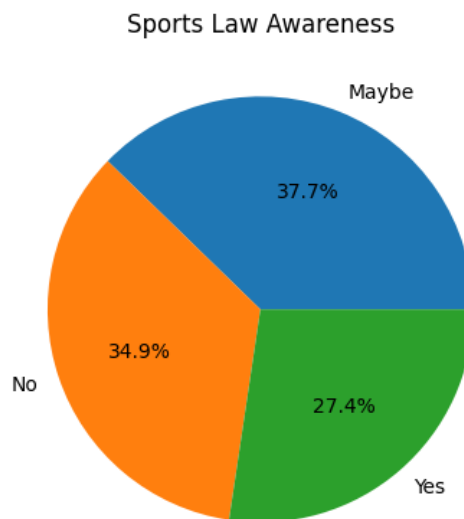
Particulars	Male	Female	Transgender	Total
Yes	27 (25.47)	18 (16.9)	3 (2.83)	48 (45.28)
No	19 (17.92)	11 (10.37)	2 (1.88)	32 (30.17)

⁷ Board of Control for Cricket in India v. Cricket Association of Bihar, (2015) 6 SCC 343.

⁸ Sushil Kumar v. Union of India, (2016) 1 SCC 1.

Maybe	16 (15.09)	9 (8.49)	1 (0.94)	26 (24.52)
Total	62 (58.49)	38 (35.84)	6 (5.67)	106 (100)

Source: Primary Data

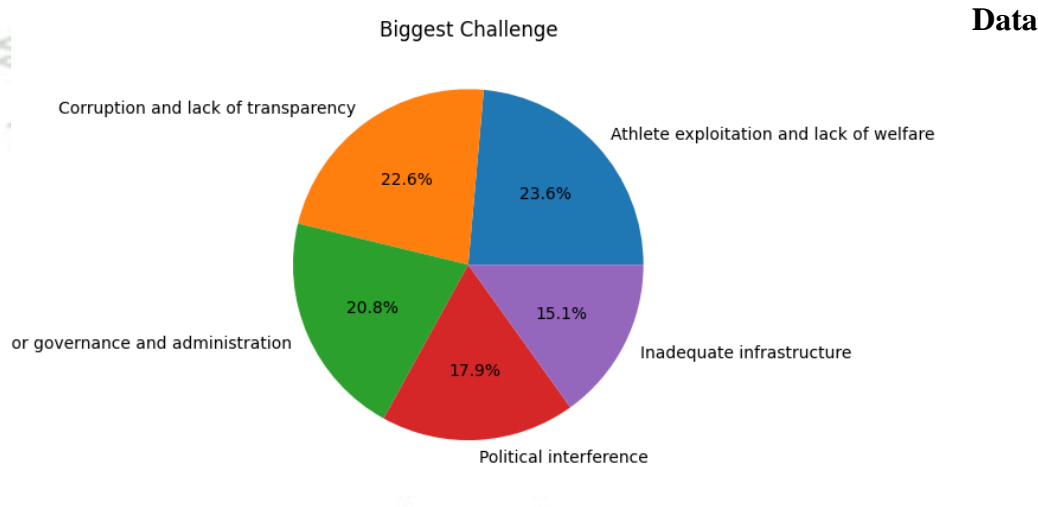


The chart represents the awareness level of respondents regarding the concept of sports law in India. It is observed that 37.7 percentage of respondents were unsure about sports law, while 34.9 percentage were not aware of it. Only 27.4 percentage of respondents had awareness of sports law. This indicates that a large portion of the population lacks proper knowledge about legal aspects related to sports. The findings highlight the need for increased awareness programs, legal education, and dissemination of information regarding sports law and athletes' rights in India.

Table No. 2 : Biggest Challenges Faced by the Sports Industry

Particulars	Male	Female	Transgender	Total
Poor Governance and Administration	13 (12.26)	8 (7.54)	1 (0.94)	22 (20.74)
Corruption and Lack of Transparency	14 (13.20)	9 (8.49)	1 (0.94)	24 (22.63)
Inadequate Infrastructure	12 (11.32)	7 (6.60)	1 (0.94)	20 (18.86)
Athlete Exploitation and Lack of Welfare	12 (11.32)	8 (7.54)	1 (0.94)	21 (19.80)
Political Interference	11 (10.37)	6 (5.66)	2 (1.88)	19 (17.91)
Total	62 (58.49)	38 (35.84)	6 (5.67)	106 (100)

Source:
Primary



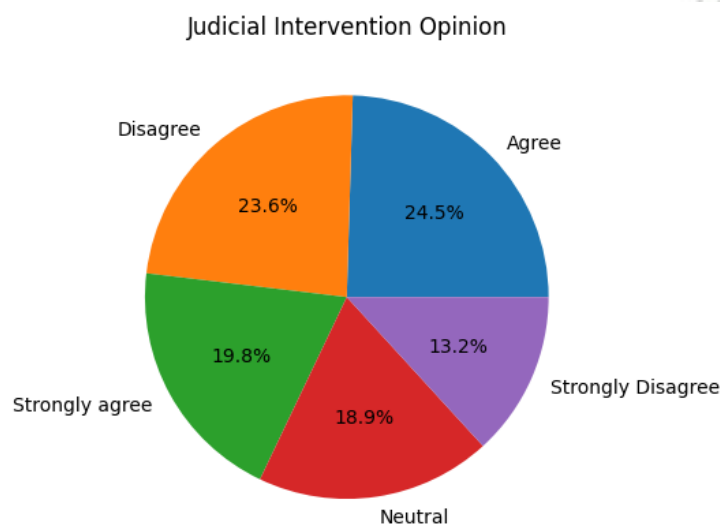
The chart shows the major challenges faced by the sports industry in India. Among the respondents, 23.6 percentage identified athlete exploitation and lack of welfare as the biggest challenge, followed by 22.6 percentage who pointed out corruption and lack of transparency. About 20.8 percentage believed poor governance and administration to be a major issue, while 17.9 percentage considered political interference as a significant challenge. Inadequate infrastructure was identified by 15.1 percentage of respondents. The results clearly indicate

that administrative and welfare-related issues are major concerns affecting the sports industry, which requires immediate policy and legal reforms.

Table No. 3 : Opinion on Judicial Intervention in Sports Governance

Particulars	Male	Female	Transgender	Total
Strongly Agree	13 (12.26)	7 (6.60)	1 (0.94)	21 (19.80)
Agree	15 (14.15)	10 (9.43)	1 (0.94)	26 (24.52)
Neutral	12 (11.32)	7 (6.60)	1 (0.94)	20 (18.86)
Disagree	14 (13.20)	10 (9.43)	1 (0.94)	25 (23.57)
Strongly Disagree	8 (7.54)	4 (3.77)	2 (1.88)	14 (13.19)
Total	62 (58.49)	38 (35.84)	6 (5.67)	106 (100)

Source: Primary Data



The chart illustrates respondents' opinions regarding the necessity of judicial intervention in sports governance. It is observed that 24.5 percentage of respondents agreed and 19.8 percentage strongly agreed that judicial intervention is necessary. Meanwhile, 23.6 percentage

disagreed and 13.2 percentage strongly disagreed, while 18.9 percentage remained neutral. The findings indicate that a significant proportion of respondents support judicial involvement in sports administration, suggesting that legal mechanisms are viewed as important for ensuring transparency, fairness, and protection of athletes' rights.

12. Testing of Hypothesis

The hypotheses formulated for the present study were tested using the primary data collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using percentage-based interpretation supported by tables and pie charts. Given the socio-legal nature of the research, **descriptive statistical analysis** was adopted to assess trends, perceptions, and behavioural intentions of respondents.

Hypothesis 1

H₁: The sports industry in India faces significant problems and challenges affecting athletes' rights and welfare.

To test this hypothesis, respondents were asked to identify the major challenges faced by the sports industry in India. The results indicate that a substantial number of respondents acknowledged the presence of serious issues affecting sports governance and athletes' welfare.

The pie chart depicting the biggest challenges faced by the sports industry shows that 23.6 percentage of respondents identified athlete exploitation and lack of welfare as the most significant problem. Additionally, 22.6 percentage of respondents pointed out corruption and lack of transparency, while 20.8 percentage considered poor governance and administration as major challenges. A further 17.9 percentage of respondents highlighted political interference, and 15.1 percentage identified inadequate infrastructure as a major issue.

These findings demonstrate that respondents strongly perceive structural and administrative weaknesses in the sports sector. The presence of multiple recognized challenges indicates that athletes' rights and welfare are significantly affected due to governance failures and lack of proper regulatory mechanisms.

Since a majority of respondents recognise the existence of significant problems affecting the sports industry and athletes' welfare, Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Hypothesis 2

H₂: Constitutional remedies play an important role in addressing disputes and protecting the rights of sportspersons in the sports industry.

Testing and Analysis

To test this hypothesis, respondents were asked whether judicial intervention is necessary in sports governance and whether legal and constitutional remedies can help improve the sports industry. The survey results indicate that a considerable proportion of respondents support the role of constitutional remedies in resolving disputes and ensuring fairness in sports administration.

The pie chart illustrating opinions on judicial intervention shows that 24.5 percentage of respondents agreed and 19.8 percentage strongly agreed that judicial intervention is necessary in sports governance. This reflects that a significant section of respondents believes that courts play an important role in protecting athletes' rights. Additionally, responses regarding legal and constitutional remedies suggest that many respondents perceive legal intervention as an effective mechanism for improving transparency, accountability, and fairness in the sports industry.

Since a significant proportion of respondents acknowledge the importance of constitutional remedies in protecting sportspersons' rights and resolving disputes, Hypothesis 2 is accepted.

Overall Inference from Hypothesis Testing

The testing of both hypotheses confirms that the sports industry in India faces substantial structural and administrative challenges that directly affect athletes' rights and welfare. The findings demonstrate that issues such as athlete exploitation, corruption, poor governance, political interference, and inadequate infrastructure remain major concerns within the sports sector. These challenges highlight the need for stronger regulatory mechanisms and institutional reforms.

Further, the results establish that constitutional remedies play a significant role in addressing disputes and safeguarding the rights of sportspersons. The study indicates that judicial intervention is widely perceived as an important mechanism for ensuring transparency,

accountability, and fairness in sports governance. The recognition of constitutional courts as protective institutions reflects the growing importance of legal oversight in the sports industry.

By empirically validating the hypotheses through primary data, the non-doctrinal study complements the doctrinal analysis and strengthens the overall conclusion that legal and constitutional frameworks are essential for improving governance standards and protecting the rights and welfare of athletes in India.

13. Conclusion

This study analysed the key challenges faced by the sports industry in India and examined the role of constitutional remedies in protecting athletes' rights. Despite rapid growth and commercialization, the industry continues to struggle with corruption, lack of transparency, political interference, favoritism, and poor infrastructure. These issues affect fair opportunities, career development, and the overall welfare of sportspersons. Constitutional provisions such as Articles 14, 19(1)(g), and 21 help safeguard equality, professional freedom, and dignity.

Judicial interpretations establish that sports bodies performing public functions are subject to constitutional scrutiny. Courts have intervened in cases of unfair selection, wrongful disciplinary actions, and governance failures, promoting accountability and transparency. Survey findings support this view, as most respondents recognized governance problems and emphasized the importance of constitutional remedies and judicial intervention.

Overall, constitutional remedies act as an effective tool to protect athletes' rights and ensure fair administration. However, there is a need for comprehensive sports legislation, better governance structures, and greater legal awareness among athletes. Strengthening regulatory and dispute resolution mechanisms will enhance the credibility and sustainable growth of the sports industry in India.

14. Suggestions for the conclusion of the research

- The sports industry in India should be recognised as a vital sector requiring a strong legal and regulatory framework to ensure transparency, accountability, and protection of athletes' rights and welfare.

- The government should introduce comprehensive national sports legislation defining the powers, responsibilities, and functioning of sports federations, along with structured dispute resolution mechanisms.
- Regulatory authorities should strengthen monitoring systems to prevent corruption, political interference, favoritism, and financial mismanagement in sports administration.
- Sports organizations should adopt athlete-centric policies focusing on career security, financial stability, mental health support, and improved training infrastructure.
- Establishment of specialised sports dispute resolution tribunals and further empirical research is necessary to improve governance and ensure effective implementation of constitutional remedies.

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ISSN (0)
3049-0057

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