

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SPORT IN INDIA  
INNOVATION, INCLUSION & INTEGRITY

December 16, 2024  
K J Somaiya Institute of Management

ORGANISED AND HOSTED BY



1st Indian Sport Management Conference

# EVENT REPORT

MUMBAI, INDIA

DECEMBER 16

#INSMA2024




**MUMBAI 2024**

INDIAN SPORT MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

ORGANISED AND HOSTED BY



# THE JOURNEY SO FAR

- 
- **09.09.2022**      **Idea sparked in Innsbruck, Austria for a sport management platform in India**
  - **01.02.2024**      **Founding members officially establish INSMA**
  - **15.04.2024**      **Founding members officially establish a functional governing body for INSMA**
  - **06.06.2024**      **MoU signed with K J Somaiya Institute of Management to host the 1st Indian Sport Management Conference**
  - **16.12.2024**      **1st Indian Sport Management Conference officially hosted with 5 panels and 31 parallel presentations**



## THEME

### SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SPORTS IN INDIA: INNOVATION, INCLUSION AND INTEGRITY

INSMA 2024 successfully brought to life its vision of shaping the future of sports in India through its focus on innovation, inclusion, and integrity. These foundational pillars guided discussions and initiatives aimed at fostering a sporting ecosystem that is not only high-performing but also equitable and ethical.

The conference showcased how sport in India is undergoing a remarkable transformation, driven by cutting-edge technologies, inclusive practices and a steadfast commitment to ethical standards. Through thought-provoking panel discussions and parallel presentations, participants explored tangible ways to ensure the continued growth and sustainability of sports in India.

INSMA 2024 united business organisations, key stakeholders, and the academic community in a spirit of collaboration. Together, they identified and developed innovative solutions to address pressing challenges, paving the way for a future where Indian sports thrive on the principles of innovation, inclusion and integrity.

As the event concluded, it left an indelible mark on all participants, inspiring them to carry forward the momentum and implement the ideas and strategies shared during the conference. INSMA 2024 was not just an event—it was a catalyst for change in the Indian sports landscape.

## CONFERENCE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE



**Dr. Vandana Tripathi (Conference Convenor)**

Assistant Professor  
KJ Somaiya Institute of Management



**Dr. Shiny Raizada**

Assistant Professor  
Symbiosis School of Sport Sciences



**Dr. Sahen Gupta**

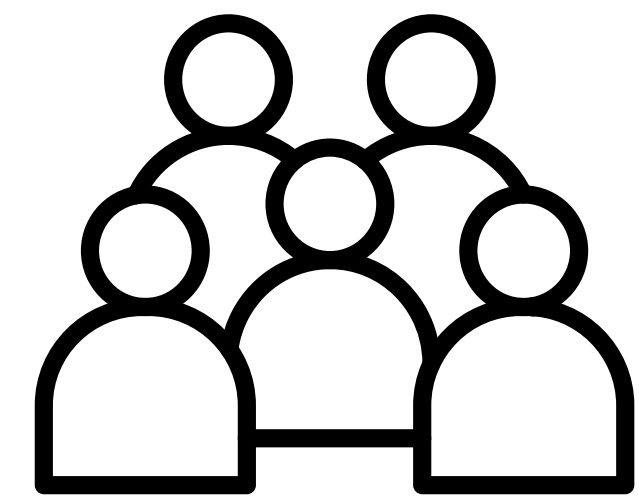
Senior Lecturer  
University of Portsmouth



**Ms. Taruka Srivastav**

Editor-in-Chief  
PlayKnox India

# THE EVENT IN NUMBERS AND PICTURES



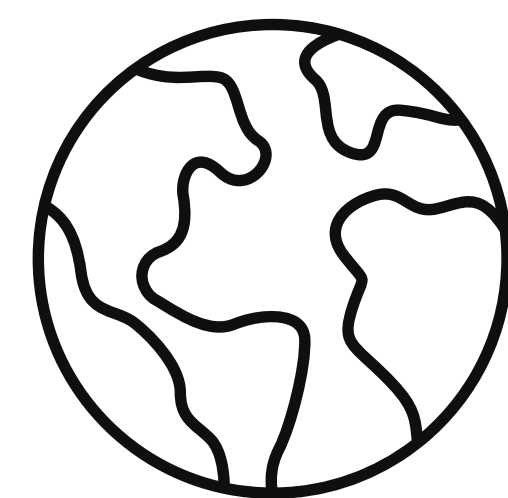
175+

Attendees



90:10

Local : International Audience



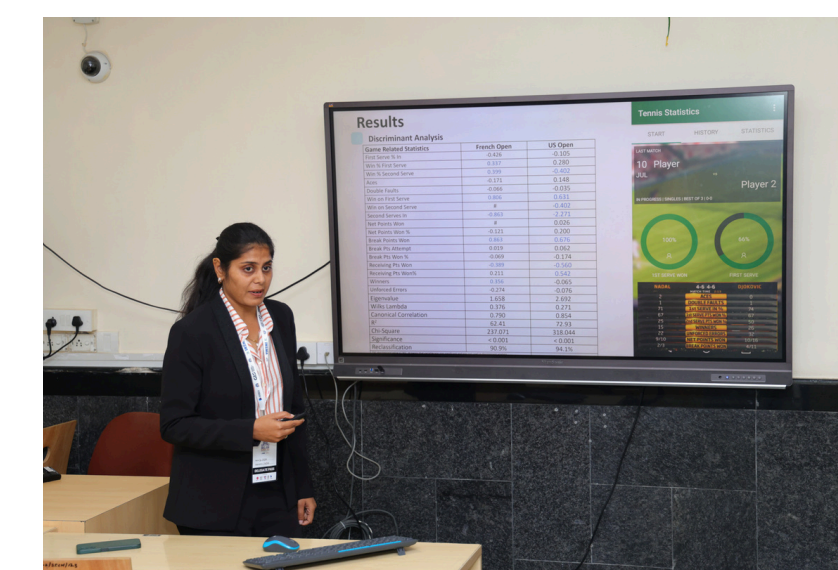
11

Countries Represented



60+

Brands Represented



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# KEYNOTE PRESENTATION 1

## Governance Sport 2.0: Addressing Challenges and Unlocking Opportunities



The keynote address by **Dr. Christos Anagnostopoulos** focuses on a global study of national sport federations' governance, revealing widespread issues and suggesting solutions for improvement. Increased commercialisation of sport has led to new players and services, making decision-making more complex. This includes agents, lawyers, academics, and consultants, which adds to the complexity of the sports ecosystem. Institutional pressures to combat negative aspects such as doping, corruption and match-fixing, and to promote positive aspects such as equality, diversity and gender balance, create a significant burden on those managing sports organisations. A significant problem is that the amount of work required due to the above challenges is often not balanced with the available resources within national sports federations. This can lead to governance issues.

Lack of transparency is another challenge, as evidenced by a study that looked at the official websites of national sports federations. The study looked for elements like organisational structures, board member biographies, annual reports, and strategic plans. Issues with democratic processes are apparent, including the absence of term limits for board members, a lack of nomination committees, and unclear election processes.

Several solutions were proposed to improve sports governance, drawing on the experiences of other countries and the specific context of India. These include the need to monitor the activities of national sports federations across all sports. It was suggested that sanctions for non-compliance should be significant enough to hurt federations that do not comply. This implies that a 'stick' approach is needed to ensure federations take good governance seriously, where the penalties for not complying are severe enough to encourage compliance. The provision of centralised accounting and electronic archiving systems for federations is important so that records are not lost and there is more transparency.

The development of a convergent code of good governance, applicable to all European Union member states, can provide a framework for sports federations in India to improve. This implies that creating codes with shared frameworks and categories can help organisations strive toward these goals, such as having an effective general assembly, a legitimate and active board, and an accountable and responsible federation.

These solutions aim to address various aspects of poor governance, focusing on the need for monitoring, enforcement, education, and support, and also on the importance of alignment and harmonisation at various levels of sports governance.

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# KEYNOTE PRESENTATION 2

## Innovation as the cornerstone of the Indian Sport Industry



**Mr. Vijayraghavan Venugopal**, CEO of the nutrition brand Fast&Up, delivered a keynote on innovation as the cornerstone of the Indian Sport Industry at the Indian Sport Management Conference 2024. He describes his passion for sports since childhood. Mr. Venugopal's journey with Fast&Up began in 2015, blending his business expertise, healthcare background, and interest in sports.

He divides the evolution of Indian sports into three 25-year blocks, using his own life as a mirror to analyse each era. The period between 1975-2000 saw events like the 1982 Asian Games and the 1987 Cricket World Cup being hosted by India but lacked sustained momentum. India was **finding its feet** in sports. The 1983 Cricket World Cup win was a defining moment, and Vishwanathan Anand's Junior World Chess Championship win in 1987 was also significant. The business and administration of cricket developed during this time. China's emergence as a sporting force also influenced India according to Mr. Venugopal.

The period between 2000-2025 saw a shift with the realisation that sports could be a viable career option. There was a media explosion with the arrival of channels like ESPN and Star Sports, and the growth of online platforms like Cricinfo. The launch of the IPL and other sports leagues generated interest. This period also saw the rise of startups and private participation in sports, and Indian athletes started to achieve global recognition. There was a **tentativeness** to the interest, but opportunities were present for exploitation. The next 25 years are predicted to be one of high growth and opportunity, with the potential for India to host the Olympics.

Mr. Venugopal stresses the importance of innovation, drawing on his experience with Fast&Up. The brand introduced effervescent nutrition to India, a new format at the time. Initially, athletes were hesitant to try new products, but this has changed as people become more aware of the need for sports nutrition. Fast&Up is now a global brand, exporting to over 20 countries and partnering with international sports teams. The brand has adapted to changes like e-commerce growth, digital marketing and the rise of athlete managers.

As an advice to students in order to succeed in the business of sport, Mr. Venugopal suggests them to develop traditional business skills as just a passion for sports is not enough. He further advises students to identify a niche and continuously innovate as the field is evolving and there is a lack of clarity regarding career paths.

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# KEYNOTE PANEL 1

Innovations in sport sponsorship in the age of new media



**Arup Soans** hosted the session with **Aditya Datta**, CEO of Impetus Sports, and **Ramakrishnan R**, co-founder and director of Baseline Ventures. The discussion highlighted the evolving role of data, noting that while emotion drives initial engagement, data becomes crucial in finalising sponsorship figures and demonstrating the value of community building. Brands are seeking personalised fan engagement and direct consumer connections, which makes data an important factor in sponsorship decisions.

India lags behind the US and Europe in sports marketing maturity. The Indian market often views sports marketing as a media buy rather than a comprehensive marketing exercise. To engage sponsors, innovation is vital, especially in sports with smaller budgets. Strategies include utilising the metaverse to connect with fans and collecting data to understand fan preferences.

Sponsorship should focus on building long-term partnerships to enhance stickiness and fan engagement. Activation is key, with a recommended spending ratio of three rupees on activation for every rupee spent on sponsorship. For those aspiring to a career in sports sponsorship, it is a demanding field that requires sales skills and relationship-building. Success involves networking and understanding that it is not a typical 9-to-5 job.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives are becoming more integrated into sponsorships, particularly with brands like Infosys, although they are not always mandatory in sports. New-age brands are looking at Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) factors, prompting teams to engage in social activities such as waste management. The panel also noted the importance of making a strong initial pitch. Securing a deal requires a compelling pitch and tonality, and it's best to conclude the deal and exit the conversation to avoid afterthoughts.

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# KEYNOTE PANEL 2



## Towards an inclusive sport management education system in India: A case for professional standards framework



The Indian Sport Management Conference 2024 featured a panel discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of sport management education in India, along with emerging trends in the industry. Moderated by **Dr. Sahen Gupta**, the panel comprised **Neel Shah**, **Dr. Sandhya Manjunath**, **Prof. Mina Barot**, and **Dr. Shiny Raizada**, who collectively examined the current state of the curriculum and proposed strategies for its advancement.

Prof. Mina Barot highlighted significant weaknesses, including the absence of a structured curriculum across institutions, limited faculty expertise in sports, insufficient industry connections, and a lack of India-specific research. She noted that institutions are responding by fostering industry relationships, providing more internship opportunities, and engaging industry professionals as visiting faculty. Dr. Shiny Raizada stressed the growing importance of sports technology, analytics, entrepreneurship, and sustainability in sport management education. She advocated for incorporating these elements into the curriculum and fostering collaborations with international universities through seminars and workshops. According to Dr. Raizada, nurturing entrepreneurs and integrating sustainability are crucial for long-term growth. Neel Shah discussed the potential of long-term athlete development and the rising popularity of eSports and new sports like Padel and Pickleball. He emphasised the importance of adapting global best practices to the Indian context and forging international partnerships to create relevant, engaging educational content. Dr. Sandhya Manjunath called for a customised curriculum aligned with Indian sports industry standards. She proposed developing original databases and teaching methodologies instead of relying heavily on Western models. Dr. Manjunath emphasised that India has the resources and talent to create its own educational framework, drawing selective inspiration from global practices.

The panel also explored the concept of "Indianising" sport management education. Dr. Raizada suggested adapting teaching approaches to include local industry-centric examples, while Prof. Barot highlighted the need for more Indian case studies and greater collaboration between industry professionals and educational institutions. Dr. Manjunath recommended prioritising the recruitment of Indian sport management professionals to align the curriculum with local industry needs. Neel Shah illustrated the relevance of context by sharing an anecdote about Indian students in the UK preferring YouTube videos made by Indians due to their relatable tone and cultural relevance. He suggested creating multilingual AI videos to teach sports fundamentals. The panel concluded by urging the industry to take proactive steps towards Indianising sport management education, addressing current gaps, leveraging technology, and promoting robust industry-academia partnerships.

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# FIRESIDE CHAT

Navigating athlete representation and management in the changing sporting ecosystem



The Indian Sport Management Conference 2024 hosted a fireside chat with industry professionals **Pradyot Sharma** and **Aman Jain**, who shared insights into their careers, the practical application of academic knowledge, and their experiences working with athletes.

Aman Jain highlighted the excitement of managing athletes he once idolised, detailing his varied responsibilities, from event travel to creating marketing strategies. Conversely, Pradyot Sharma described his work in grassroots sports, where he promotes physical activity as a "human right to move" and empowers communities to lead healthier lives. While Jain finds the demanding schedule, constant travel, and the challenge of managing diverse personalities difficult, Sharma struggles with extended desk work and the complexities of project management. Explaining their jobs to those unfamiliar with sport management, Jain summarised his role as "show me the money," focusing on securing sponsorships, branding opportunities, and aiding athletes' personal development. Sharma explained that his mission is to activate people across all age groups to embrace physical activity. Their target age groups differ, with Jain working predominantly with individuals aged 18 to 60, while Sharma engages with participants as young as three and as old as 89.

Both speakers emphasised the importance of trust and cultural understanding. Jain stressed the need to comprehend athletes' family dynamics, particularly when dealing with individuals from rural backgrounds. Sharma highlighted the significance of effective communication with athletes, partners, and community members, noting that intercultural management skills are essential in his role. Reflecting on their career journeys, Sharma revealed that he initially aspired to work in elite sports but discovered his passion for grassroots initiatives that directly impact people's lives. Jain's path was less conventional; initially interested in film production, he shifted to sports management after a shoulder injury ended his cricketer ambitions. He gained early experience in the UK National League before returning to India.

The pair also shared stories of overcoming personal and professional challenges. Sharma recounted his experience of moving to France for his master's degree, learning a new language, and taking up the sport of biathlon. Jain discussed the difficulties he faced during the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased media attention after one of his athletes won two medals. He also touched on the complexities of navigating familial influence in athletes' decision-making processes, particularly when financial stakes are high. The session concluded with both speakers underscoring the dynamic, challenging, yet rewarding nature of careers in the sports industry.

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# CHANGEMAKER IN SPORT AWARD 2024

Awarded to Project Vidhushree of Shreeja India for creating positive change in society through sport



Shreeja India was honoured with the **ChangeMaker in Sport Award 2024** presented by the **UNESCO Chair for Governance and Social Responsibility in Sport** at the Indian Sport Management Conference for its remarkable use of sport to drive social change. This recognition came from the initiative's success in transforming lives, particularly for young girls in underprivileged communities, by using sport as a platform to foster personal growth, education, and gender equality.

What made this project exceptional was its holistic approach. It wasn't just about developing athletic skills but about empowering participants with essential life skills like confidence, resilience, and leadership. The programme created safe, supportive spaces where girls could learn, grow, and break through societal barriers that often limit their potential. Sport became a powerful tool to teach discipline, teamwork, and perseverance – qualities that extended far beyond the playing field into their academic and personal lives.

A significant reason for winning the award was the initiative's long-term, sustainable impact. The team didn't just introduce activities and leave; they built a foundation for lasting change by involving local mentors and engaging with families. This community-driven model ensured that the lessons learned and the benefits gained continued long after the programme's initial implementation. By encouraging dialogue around gender roles and the importance of education, the initiative helped shift long-standing perceptions within the community.

Innovation was another key factor. The project creatively linked sport with educational development, health awareness, and social skills training. This multi-faceted approach made the programme more engaging and relevant to the participants' everyday lives, showing them how lessons from the pitch could be applied to overcome real-world challenges. The results were undeniable. There was a significant increase in school attendance, along with notable improvements in self-esteem among the girls involved. Communities became more supportive of girls participating in sports and pursuing education, which further validated the initiative's effectiveness.

The award was a recognition of the initiative's ability to leverage sport as a tool for empowerment and social change. The Shreeja team demonstrated that with the right support, guidance, and opportunities, sport can help individuals unlock their potential and inspire communities to rethink deeply rooted social norms. Their success is a testament to the transformative power of sport in shaping brighter, more inclusive futures.

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# GOALS OUTSTANDING RESEARCH PAPER AWARD

Institutional isomorphism and professionalisation in sport management higher education and research in India



The paper titled “*Institutional isomorphism and professionalisation in sport management higher education and research in India*” by **Dr. Sandhya Manjunath** reflects on the globalised nature of the educational curricula in sport management. While countries like the United States and Europe have well-established programs, India’s sport management education remains nascent, despite its significant sports culture. Institutional theory and professionalization provide a useful framework for understanding this disparity. Institutional isomorphism, which explains how organisations within an industry become similar due to external pressures, manifests in three forms: coercive (legal and regulatory forces), mimetic (imitation due to uncertainty), and normative (alignment with professional standards). In sport management education, these forces contribute to curricula seeking legitimacy from established institutions like business schools and social sciences faculties.

Professionalisation in sport management is categorised into three types: organisational, systemic, and occupational. Organisational professionalization focuses on internal practices for maintaining professional standards. Systemic professionalization addresses the influence of broader societal systems, such as governmental regulations and industry associations. Occupational professionalization pertains to the recognition of sport management as a distinct profession with specialised knowledge and qualifications. India’s sports industry is undergoing a transformation, driven by the professionalisation of leagues, increased sports tourism, and greater societal interest. However, there remains a significant gap in academic research and higher education programs related to sport management in the country. As demand for skilled professionals grows, it becomes crucial to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical experiences.

The study proposes a model involving key stakeholders—government bodies, sports organisations, educational institutions, and accrediting agencies—to foster sport management education in India. Their collective efforts can influence institutional isomorphism, enhancing the legitimacy and professional standards of sport management programs. The interaction between professionalization and institutional isomorphism plays a critical role in shaping the sports industry. While these processes promote efficiency and growth, challenges such as maintaining innovation and preserving sport’s intrinsic values persist. Further research is necessary to better understand the dynamics of India’s evolving sport management education landscape and to develop tailored strategies for its advancement. Ultimately, the professionalisation of sport management in India presents substantial growth potential, aligning the country’s academic framework with global standards to meet the demands of a rapidly expanding sports industry.

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# GIS BEST PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE PAPER AWARD

Proper policy and procedures: The keys to good governance and administrative reform



The paper titled *"Proper Policy and Procedures: The Keys to Good Governance and Administrative Reform"* by Kervin D. Jean discusses the critical role of policy development in addressing governance challenges within sports administration. Historically, sport has been leveraged as a tool for social control, welfare enhancement, and international policy implementation. However, this openness has made sports susceptible to exploitation by self-serving individuals and organisations. The lack of region-specific policies has resulted in misaligned administrative and operational frameworks.

The presentation emphasises the need for sports policy and governance specialists to adopt comprehensive and context-specific policies to combat governance issues. The core objective is to raise awareness of the importance of developing holistic, realistic policies that inform operational strategies. The presentation also highlights the necessity of policy integration and mainstreaming to align international, regional, and national directives without compromising local objectives.

The background section underscores the adverse effects of poor policy planning on governance and administration. Many practitioners overlook the necessity of policy-informed operational procedures, which leads to inefficiencies and dysfunctions. Through practical insights drawn from regional experiences, the presentation aims to equip sports administrators with the tools needed for effective policy planning, development, and implementation. The design and implementation framework of the presentation covers ten key areas, including the definition and necessity of policies, the relationship between policy and good governance, and the application of governance principles. Additionally, it explores the policy cycle and the transition from planning to operational execution. This structured approach provides participants with a clear understanding of policy management and the benefits of integrating policies into administrative practices.

The anticipated outcomes include improved policy development skills, a greater appreciation for the impact of policy on administrative performance, and enhanced cooperation among stakeholders. By adopting strategic policies, sports organisations can achieve greater operational efficiency and align their objectives with national development strategies.

Ultimately, the paper advocates for a shift away from generic international policies toward bespoke, context-specific frameworks. This approach ensures that policies resonate with local realities while maintaining coherence with broader international standards, thereby fostering better governance and more effective sports administration.

# UOP BEST STUDENT PAPER AWARD

Gender gap in payment of IPL vs WPL: A comparative analysis of payment vs performance and influence of broadcasting



The study "*Understanding the Gender Pay Gap in IPL vs WPL*" by **Varsha Venugopal** and **Anirudh Padmanabhan** examines the factors contributing to salary disparities between male and female cricketers in the Indian Premier League (IPL) and the Women's Premier League (WPL). It analyses the influence of gender, age, stadium attendance, and experience on player salaries, highlighting a significant gender-based pay gap within professional cricket.

The research emphasises the undervaluation of women's sports, attributing this to limited media coverage and funding. It investigates the relationship between stadium attendance and player compensation, salary differences based on gender, age, and experience, and the primary factors driving these disparities. Additionally, the study compares salary gaps between players with varying levels of experience and age. The researchers adopted a quantitative approach using secondary data from sources like IPLT20, ESPN Cricinfo, WPLT20, and Cricbuzz. A sample of 40 players—20 male IPL players and 20 female WPL players—was selected through convenience sampling. The analysis applied descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, heatmaps, and linear regression to explore the relationship between salaries and the selected variables.

The findings indicated a wide demographic range among participants, with ages between 20 and 42 years and experience varying from zero to 16 years. While age and experience showed a strong positive correlation, indicating that older players tended to have more experience, their impact on salary was minimal. Stadium attendance displayed a more significant influence, with a positive correlation suggesting that higher attendance was generally associated with increased earnings.

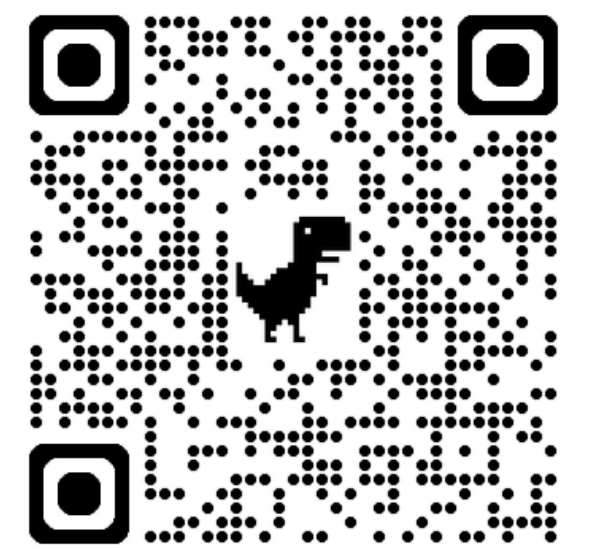
The study's most compelling findings pertained to gender-based differences. Although female players were slightly younger than their male counterparts, the difference was negligible. More significantly, women attended fewer matches and earned considerably less, with the analysis revealing a strong negative correlation between gender and salary. This disparity persisted despite similar levels of experience between male and female players.

The study concludes that gender is the most significant factor in determining salary, with age, experience, and attendance playing relatively minor roles. While attendance does influence salaries, media coverage and sponsorship deals have a more substantial impact. The researchers advocate for pay reforms to establish equitable compensation based on performance, skill, and experience, thereby addressing the enduring gender pay gap in professional cricket.

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# If you want to host the second edition of the Indian Sport Management Conference

Drop an expression of interest to [info@insma.in](mailto:info@insma.in)



[LinkedIn](#)

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