

# Why Women Need Exclusive Gyms for a Healthier Future

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**Abstract:** EmpowerFit is a research-driven initiative aimed at addressing the low participation of women in fitness activities in India. With over half of Indian women between 18-69 being physically inactive, there is a growing need for fitness environments that cater specifically to their needs. This study identifies key barriers to women's fitness participation, including societal norms, lack of female trainers, and misconceptions about strength training. Through a mixed-methods research approach, including surveys, interviews, and literature reviews, the study provides data-driven insights into the fitness habits and preferences of women. The findings emphasize the importance of creating safe and inclusive gym spaces, such as EmpowerFit, to encourage participation. Key recommendations include launching exclusive women's gyms, employing trained female fitness professionals, and implementing awareness programs to address common misconceptions about fitness and health. By removing these barriers, EmpowerFit aims to revolutionize the fitness industry and contribute to healthier lifestyles among women in India.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Physical inactivity among women in India is a growing health concern, with studies showing that 52% of Indian women between 18-69 years do not engage in physical activity. This lack of exercise contributes to a range of health issues such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases, osteoporosis, and hormonal imbalances like Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS). Many women face significant barriers to fitness participation, including uncomfortable and male-dominated gym environments, the absence of female trainers, and cultural norms that prioritize household responsibilities over personal health. Additionally, misconceptions about strength training, particularly the fear of becoming overly muscular, further discourage women from adopting a fitness routine.

This study aims to examine the barriers preventing women from engaging in fitness activities and propose a solution through EmpowerFit, a women-exclusive gym. EmpowerFit seeks to address these challenges by offering a supportive and welcoming environment with female trainers, fitness programs tailored to women's health needs, and initiatives to challenge misconceptions around fitness. The goal is to analyze how such an approach can enhance women's participation in physical fitness, contributing to better health outcomes and overall well-being.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies emphasize the health risks of low physical activity among women, including obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and osteoporosis (Smith et al., 2021). Gender-specific barriers like "gymtimidation," societal expectations, and misconceptions about strength training prevent many women from exercising (Jones & Brown, 2020; Taylor, 2019). Women-only gyms and female trainers create a supportive environment that encourages more women to engage in fitness (Anderson, 2022; Lee & Kim, 2020). Additionally, group fitness programs like yoga and Pilates foster community, while regular exercise improves mental health, manages reproductive conditions like PCOS, and boosts overall well-being (Williams et al., 2021; Patel & Singh, 2021).

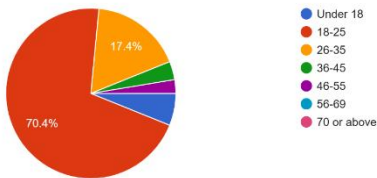
Strength training, cardiovascular exercise, and proper nutrition are key for long-term health, preventing osteoporosis, managing weight, and improving metabolism (Davis, 2020; Harris, 2023). Digital fitness platforms help overcome gym intimidation, offering accessible and flexible options (Nguyen, 2020). Government initiatives like the "Fit India Movement" and community programs encourage regular activity among women (Choudhury, 2023; Ministry of Health, 2022). These efforts, along with fitness education, promote women's physical, mental, and social well-being, ensuring sustained fitness participation (O'Connor, 2019; Jenkins, 2022).

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data to comprehensively understand women’s fitness participation. The research follows a descriptive and analytical design, with data collected through surveys across Tier 1, 2, and 3 cities to assess fitness habits, barriers, and preferences. In-depth interviews with fitness experts, female trainers, and healthcare professionals provide expert insights, while secondary data from published research, government reports, and market studies are reviewed. Stratified random sampling ensures a diverse representation of women across age, socio-economic status, and geography. Quantitative data is analysed using statistical tools to identify patterns, and qualitative data from interviews is categorized thematically. Finally, a comparative analysis is conducted between existing fitness models and the EmpowerFit initiative to assess its feasibility and effectiveness.

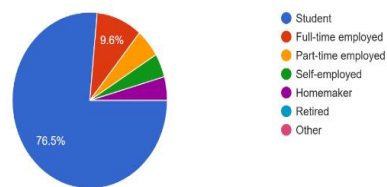
#### Data Analysis

Age Range:  
115 responses



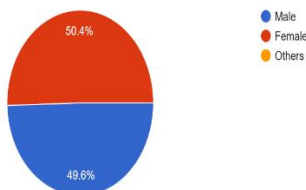
1

Employment Status:  
115 responses



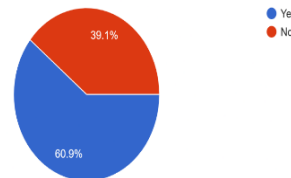
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Gender  
115 responses



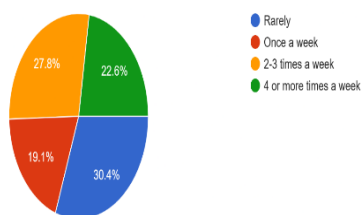
3

Are you currently a member of any gym?  
115 responses



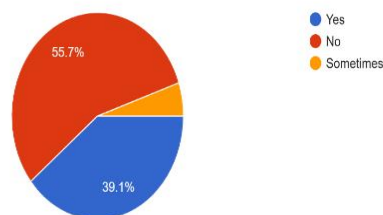
4

How often do you exercise?  
115 responses



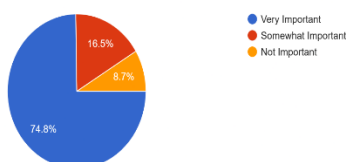
5

Do you feel comfortable in mixed-gender gyms?  
115 responses



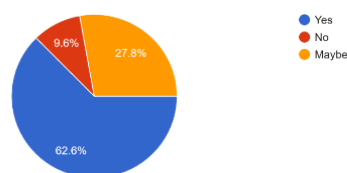
6

How important is it to you that a gym offers female trainers?  
115 responses



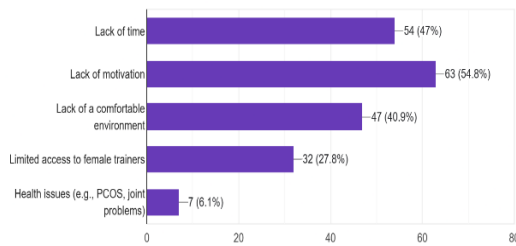
7

Would you be interested in social awareness programs about women’s fitness and health misconceptions?  
115 responses



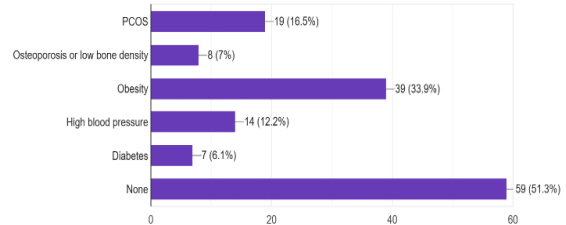
8

What are the biggest challenges you face in achieving your fitness goals?  
115 responses



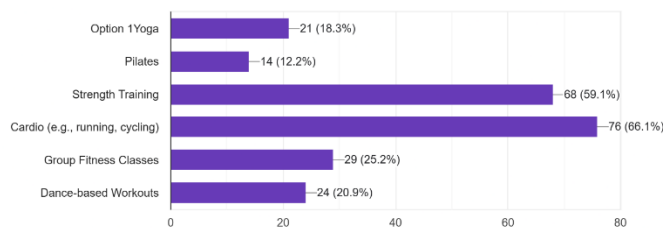
9

Have you been diagnosed with or are you managing any of the following conditions? (Select all that apply):  
115 responses



10

Preferred Type of Exercise (Select all that apply):  
115 responses



11

**Interpretation**

The survey results represented pictorially in (chart 1-11) indicates that the majority of respondents fall within the 18-25 age group (70.4%), with a smaller portion from the 26-35 age group (17.4%) and other age groups (12.2%). This reflects a strong interest in fitness among younger audiences, particularly students (76.5%) who likely juggle their studies with other responsibilities. Despite this, only 9.6% are full-time employees, suggesting that career commitments aren't a primary concern for most respondents at this stage in their lives. Gender-wise, the survey found a near-equal distribution, with 50.4% female and 49.6% male respondents, emphasizing the need for women-focused fitness spaces like EmpowerFit to address the unique needs of women. In terms of exercise frequency, 30.4% of respondents rarely exercise, 19.1% exercise once a week, and 27.8% exercise 2-3 times per week, with 22.6% exercising more frequently. This highlights the potential for EmpowerFit to encourage consistent fitness habits, especially for those in the "rarely" and "once a week" categories.

The survey also uncovered significant barriers to fitness participation, with 54.8% citing lack of motivation and 47% mentioning time constraints. Additionally, 40.9% of women reported feeling uncomfortable in gym environments, underscoring the importance of creating a women-exclusive space. A majority (74.8%) prefer female trainers, with many also expressing interest in attending social awareness programs (62.6%) to combat fitness-related misconceptions. Health concerns, including obesity (33.9%) and PCOS (16.5%), were also common among respondents, emphasizing the need for specialized fitness programs. As for exercise preferences, 66.1% favor cardio and 59.1% prefer strength training, reinforcing the necessity for EmpowerFit to offer these types of workouts in a supportive, women-centered environment. These insights collectively highlight the demand for a fitness space that addresses both physical and psychological barriers, encouraging more women to prioritize their health and fitness.

**Findings**

The findings reveal a clear demand for women-exclusive gyms, with many women expressing discomfort in mixed-gender fitness environments, emphasizing the need for spaces where they feel comfortable and supported. Strength training and cardiovascular exercises emerge as the most preferred workout options, underscoring the importance of offering structured gym programs that cater to these needs. Additionally, a significant concern is the lack of female trainers, with 74.8% of respondents preferring to receive guidance from women professionals, highlighting the role of relatable and empowering instructors in boosting participation.

Women also face several barriers to fitness, such as lack of motivation, time constraints, and societal expectations, which affect their engagement in regular exercise. To address these challenges, awareness programs are crucial in dispelling fitness misconceptions and encouraging more women to participate in structured fitness routines. These programs can play a key role in promoting long-term health and fitness habits by addressing both physical and psychological barriers, ultimately supporting women in achieving their fitness goals.

**IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Establish EmpowerFit Gyms: Develop women-exclusive gyms in Tier 1, 2, and 3 cities, ensuring a comfortable and supportive environment for female members
- Hire and Train Female Fitness Professionals: Increase the availability of certified female trainers to provide guidance and motivation to women seeking fitness support.
- Develop Targeted Fitness Programs: Introduce specialized workout plans catering to women's health concerns, such as PCOS, obesity, and osteoporosis prevention.
- Incorporate Social Awareness Campaigns: Organize workshops and educational sessions to dispel common myths about strength training and promote the long-term health benefits of exercise.
- Flexible Membership Plans: Offer affordable and flexible membership plans to encourage long-term engagement in fitness routines.
- Leverage Digital Platforms: Provide online fitness guidance and virtual workout sessions to expand reach and accessibility.

**V. CONCLUSION**

EmpowerFit represents a transformative step towards addressing the gender disparity in fitness participation in India. The study has successfully highlighted the numerous barriers that prevent women from engaging in regular physical activity, including social stigma, lack of supportive gym environments, and misinformation regarding strength training. By establishing women-exclusive gyms that cater specifically to their fitness needs, EmpowerFit has the potential to bridge this gap and encourage more women to adopt healthier lifestyles.

The research findings emphasize the necessity of providing a safe, inclusive, and motivating space for women to engage in fitness activities. With structured programs focusing on strength training, cardiovascular health, and awareness campaigns about women-specific health concerns like PCOS and osteoporosis, EmpowerFit aims to create a lasting impact on women's health and well-being. By ensuring the presence of female trainers, flexible membership plans, and digital engagement opportunities, this initiative can remove barriers to access and foster long-term fitness commitment.

**REFERENCES**

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## Proof of Outcome for EmpowerFit

### Crosstabs

[DataSet1]

#### Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Gender * Do you feel comfortable in mixed-gender gyms?	115	100.0%	0	0.0%	115	100.0%

#### Gender \* Do you feel comfortable in mixed-gender gyms? Crosstabulation

Count

		Do you feel comfortable in mixed-gender gyms?			Total
		1	2	3	
Gender	1	31	24	2	57
	2	14	40	4	58
	Total	45	64	6	115

#### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.081 <sup>a</sup>	2	.004
Likelihood Ratio	11.298	2	.004
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.816	1	.002
N of Valid Cases	115		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.97.

#### Interpretation:

- This study asked 115 people if they feel comfortable in gyms where both men and women exercise together.
- Among 57 men, 31 felt comfortable, 24 felt somewhat comfortable, and only 2 felt uncomfortable.
- Among 58 women, only 14 felt comfortable, 40 felt somewhat comfortable, and 4 felt uncomfortable.
- The Chi-Square test result shows a p-value of 0.004, meaning there is a big difference in opinion between men and women. Women are much less comfortable in mixed-gender gyms compared to men.