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AGE SCANDAL IN SPORTS AND LIABILITY AGAINST IT

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INTRODUCTION

Age Scandal in Sports refers to the misuse, fraud, age fabrication, or misrepresentation of one's age. This age scandal has now become a more serious concern in the nation. Competitions are often divided into categories to ensure physical clarity. A 19-year-old competing against a 21-year-old in the same event could be at a major risk both mentally and psychologically. Several renowned sports persons have also talked about this topic, and they have also suggested the reform of the rules and laws based on the age scandal.

Age falsification is not only a fraud but also leads to ignoring true talents, and creating an unfair field to play. This will lead to some psychological effects on the players who aspire to become dedicated sportspeople and genuinely embody sportsmanship. This has always been a serious problem that has motivated athletes with great aspirations and talents to quit their beloved sports. The very cruel thing of all is to let go of things which the sportsperson loves to do, and the issues such as age scandal, and doping have caused very serious pain to many honest sportsmen. The authorities who are responsible for preventing the malpractices have also turned a blind eye and are supporting those illegal activities. It is our goal to bring this issue to the attention of common people with a love for sports.

ROOT CAUSES OF AGE SCANDAL

Despite being illegal and unethical to the very soul of fair play and the mother of the ground, age scandal still remains a major issue. The main root causes behind this are to gain incentives, popularity, scholarships, admission for educational institutions, reservations, government jobs,

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sponsorships, financial and career incentives, and pressure from his/her institutions. The sportsmen whoever is playing will also get the pressure to qualify as soon as possible because of the institutional pressures.

Age fraud becomes a tool to prolong their careers or access benefits early. Scholarships, cash prizes, government jobs under the sports quotas, and sponsorships are often linked to performance in age-group events. Getting into a national team or league at a younger age often translates to longer professional earnings. Over-aged players can stand out in junior leagues and attract club scouts. Sometimes all of this results in even breaking national records.² The other major reason for the age scandal is the lack of a birth registration system. This makes it easier to commit fraud, manipulate, or create false birth documents to support the age scandal.

MAJOR INSTANCES

Age Scandal has been found in numerous sports across countries. Here are a few notable scandals that popped up as headline news.

- Gourav Mukhi, a professional football player who played for Jamshedpur Football Club in the Indian Super League (ISL), was found guilty of submitting fake documents and for the age scandal.³
- More than 51 young athletes were implicated in an age fraud scandal during the National Inter-District Junior Athletics Meet, which was held in Tirupati.⁴
- Nishar Ahmad participated in the Asian athletics championships in Doha from April 19-24. Nishar and 40 other persons who failed the age verification test. They were declared overage at the youth nationals in Raipur and not allowed to take part in the championship.⁵

² Janani, Age Fraud in Sports and its Legal Framework (Dec. 4, 2024), LawArticle.in, <https://lawarticle.in/analysis/age-fraud-in-sports-and-its-legal-framework/> accessed on 10th July 2025.

³ Rohan Bachhav, ISL's 'Youngest Goal Scorer' Gourav Mukhi Suspended for Age Fraud But Can Register Back with Fake Age Again, edTimes (Dec. 19, 2018), <https://edtimes.in/isls-youngest-goal-scorer-gourav-mukhi-suspended-for-age-fraud-but-can-register-back-with-fake-age-again/> accessed on 9th July 2025.

⁴ Press Trust of India, 51 Players Caught Over-Age in Biggest Talent Hunt Programme in Athletics, BUS. STANDARD (Dec. 20, 2019, 5:15 PM IST), https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/51-players-caught-over-age-in-biggest-talent-hunt-programme-in-athletics-119122000929_1.html accessed on 9th July 2025.

⁵ Chucked Out of Youth Nationals, Nisar Competes in Indian Grand Prix, Times of India (Feb. 21, 2019, 6:55 PM IST), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/sports/more-sports/athletics/chucked-out-of-youth-nationals-nisar-competes-in-indian-grand-prix/articleshow/68194800.cms> accessed on 10th July 2025.

- He Kexin, Jiang Yuyuan, Li Shanshan, Deng Linlin, and Yang Yilin, Chinese gymnasts who participated in the Beijing Olympics, were alleged to be underage, the investigation and the report after that say that the allegation was not true.⁶
- The Cameroon football team of 21 members was disqualified after failing the age test and was found to have committed an age scandal in the Under 17 squad. They took an MRI test, which was also against them.⁷
- In 1988 Mexico National Football Team Scandal happened where several players were found to be older than their registered ages.

MEASURES TO PREVENT AGE SCANDAL IN SPORTS

The prevalence of age scandal in almost every sport in the country is a direct indicator of the inefficiency of the current system responsible for upholding the integrity of the sports and protection of athletes in the country. Such an inadequacy to solve such a fundamental problem might be a direct cause of various factors including corruption, nepotism, partiality and discrimination based on religion, gender, caste and language, carelessness of the officials. Hence to solve this issue of age scandal a new system in place is efficient. The primary concern of every system must be the checks and balance characteristics of the system. Such a characteristic is necessary to prevent tyranny and discrimination based on the personal bias of the officials.

CONCLUSION

Sports in India is not just a means of entertainment but a lifestyle. It is seen as a chance for upliftment in life by many youngsters and cheating in such a sacred form of activity is an injustice not only to athletes but the society itself. Hence it is a necessity to address the issue of age scandal in sports immediately to prevent and preserve the authenticity of the age-old tradition.

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⁷ Fresh Age Fraud Scandal Rocks Cameroon as 21 U-17 Footballers Disqualified for Failing MRI Tests, Indian Express (Jan. 3, 2023, 6:49 PM IST), <https://indianexpress.com/article/sports/football/fresh-age-fraud-scandal-rocks-cameroon-as-21-u-17-footballers-disqualified-for-failing-mri-tests-8359255/> accessed on 11th July 2025.

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