

# **EFFECTS OF ATHLETICS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PAKISTANI FEMALE STUDENTS AT GRADUATE LEVEL**

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## **Abstract:**

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*The present research aimed at determining the effects of athletics on academics of Pakistani female students at graduate level. The study focused on finding out whether athletics are helpful in their academic performance or they tend to be more disadvantageous. Data was collected from seventy female graduate athletes using a survey questionnaire, comprising of closed ended questions based on likert scale. The results of the current study revealed that athletics appears to be beneficial to female students in their academics. The results further showed athletics helped them in successful transition to college life, better management skills, enhanced their motivation to attend classes regularly and their persistence towards completion of their degree.*

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*Key words: Academic Performance, Athletics, Management Skills, Motivation*

## **Introduction:**

There is a plethora of researches conducted to report the academic performance of students. However, in Pakistan there is a common misconception that only academic performance of a student matters towards the attainment of a successful life. As a result of this, students who are academically performing very well do not consider athletics to be important. According to Kosma (2003) athletics not only affects healthy preservation but also facilitates students to develop interpersonal skills. Since athletics has been globally recognized as an institution that plays an integral role in making students a

valuable contributor to the society, several researches have been conducted to find the correlation concerning athletics and students' academic output. In Pakistan, female students of athletics who attend graduate programs come from diversified cultural experiences and social backgrounds. Thus, it is imperative to find out the effects of athletics on their levels of academic achievements. Next, this current study will be beneficial to the sports department of higher education institutions since they face difficulties in helping the athletes to maintain a balance in their athletics and academic performances.

## **Research Objectives**

**The objectives of the current research were:**

- To determine the effect of athletics on academic performance of female students at graduate level
- To find out the effect of participation of athletics on their life skills, career decisions, motivation and time management

There are remarkably fewer researches on the relationship of sports and academic outcomes in Pakistan that mainly focus on elementary and secondary students (Daniyal, Tahir, Hasan, & Mu-been 2012; Khan & Iqbal, 2014). However, there is no study on female graduate students at g in Pakistan. Hence, this present research will fill the gap in the earlier literature.

## **Literature Review**

The Pakistan Sports Boards and Higher Education Commission (HEC) are working collaboratively to form a sports university at a sports complex in the capital city Islamabad (Amin, Naseer & Abro, 2019). Regardless of the announcement of sport policy (2015),

most of the educational institutions offering graduate programs lack basic sports facilities. Such institutions encourage their students to concentrate on their academics rather than taking time for athletics. Involvement in athletics is still considered as wastage of time by most of the students, parents as well as such educational institutions.

The premise under discussion is whether graduate athletics has disadvantages or advantages. There are some researchers who have attempted to find out the relationship between the motivation and the levels of academic achievements of the athlete students (Nonis & Hudson, 2006). A survey carried out by Grimit (2014) on sixty-seven student-athletes in October 2013 determined the impact of games involvement on their personalities. The result of the study brought forward highly favorable impact in the development of personalities of the participant athletes. The participant athletes showed relatively better achievement in studies and grades, built effective time management skills, cultivated self-motivation to accomplish the degree, exhibited eagerness to

attend lectures, and experience a secure and confident adoption to college life. Similar researches have revealed the fact that sports have a very strong influence on acquisition of knowledge (Bonfiglio, 2011). Another research showed that young athletes performed well in classrooms. (Byrd & Ross, 1991). Responses from 379 pupils comprising of both athletes and non-athletes were documented. The research results revealed that 70% of them agreed to the motivation they received from games. 71% shared the fact that they gained the skill of punctuality and maintaining schedules as athletes.

On the contrary, it is argued that athletes lack in academic performance considering that after sports and rigorous training they are hardly left with the time to grasp the concepts and put that knowledge into practical life. Pascarella, Bohr, Nora, & Terenzini, (1995), indicted the performance of the athletes of first year graduates towards their cognitive developments. The research assessed the mathematics, reading comprehension and critical thinking skills of students. This student learning survey was conducted at national level where 2,416

students participated. It was a longitudinal study that aimed to evaluate the elements that affect the cognitive development and learning of first year college students. The findings showed that the male football and basketball players did not perform adequately in mathematics and reading comprehension. These young professional players could not manage studies and games simultaneously, like the non-athletes or the boys who participated in other co-curricular activities. On the other hand, female players also showed slow progress towards reading comprehension as compared to regular girls. So unlike non-sports students, young boys and girls both exhibited a lapse in the composing of analytical skills and inquiry of learning (Pascarella et al., 1995). According to these statistics though some college sportsmen showed slower progress, but it also brought forward the aspect that their progress was hindered by the demands of professional sports. Certainly, the long practice hours of training for major leagues put the studies into background. Maloney and McCormick (1993) worked with 595 students at Clement University to assess if playing sp-

orts hindered studies. The findings showed that academically, on a grade point scale the athletes performed three-tenths poorer than the regular students of the respective colleges. A similar finding by Maloney and McCormick (1993) was shared where the performance of the basketball and football athletes (revenue sports) on the grade point scale was one-tenth poorer to their parallel athlete students. Hence, findings in lieu of the revenue sports reveal the fact that these sports are tiring and students find no time for revising concepts related to academics.

Another study by Burns, Jasinski, Dunn, & Fletcher (2013) aimed to find the impact of facilitation in academic programs arranged for the athletes. In this survey, eleven different universities sent their student athletes during their freshman years to join the academic support programs offered. These student athletes reported that the academic support services arranged for them facilitated their academic performance. This study implies that such support programs helps the athletes to establish a balance between athletics and their academ-

ics in such a way that helps them to be successful in the two areas.

There will never be an ultimate answer to conform to the opposing opinions and attitudes on this subject, but these researchers' information and research provide the necessary information to the public. It depends on the people to make a wise decision on involvement of athletics at graduate level.

## **Methodology**

### **Research design**

In order to gather the quantifiable data and perform the mathematical operations a quantitative approach was used in the current research

### **Sampling Technique**

Purposive sampling design was used for the selection of the research participants. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2011) when a researcher employs purposive sampling actually he selects a sample that truly represents the study.

### **Research Instrument**

Questionnaire was administered to collect quantitative data for the study. Questionnaires are

used as a research tool as it is cost effective and the simplest and most straightforward research tools. Moreover, respondents find it convenient to answer the required questions (Denscombe, 2014; O'Boyle, 2013).

The first two questions were based on the demographics. The rest of the questions aimed to find out the impact of participation in athletics on their levels of academic achievements, time management skills, their beliefs about their grades, academic support service, life skills and career direction, motivation to attend lectures, college transition, persistence to degree completion and their present GPA.

### **Sample Size**

A sample of seventy female athletes enrolled in different graduate programs were selected for the present research

### **Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

The reliability and validity of the questionnaire was established after conducting a pilot study (Cohen et al., 2013). For the current research, the closed ended questionnaire was pilot tested in two ways. Firstly, the questionnaire was approved by col-

leagues and experts from the relevant field so that ambiguities could be removed. Secondly, after making recommended changes suggested by the experts, was administered to fifteen students.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Quantitative data was collected using closed ended questionnaire based on likert scale. It comprised of sixteen items and Goggle Forms were to the Heads of the Physical Education Departments of three colleges and three universities.

### **Data Presentation**

The quantified data was descriptively analyzed as it enables one to meaningfully present the data so that simpler interpretation of the data could be drawn.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

The study was delimited to female athletes at graduate level. The present study was carried out over a limited period of time; future study should be conducted over a longer period of time. Polling both the gender athletes would provide an insight and a comparison into how both function in relation to athletic and academic achievements.

## Results and Findings

**Table-1: Demographic Information of the Participants**

Statement 1	Under 18	18-20	21-23	24-25	26-27	28plus
What is your age?	2	40	23	4	1	

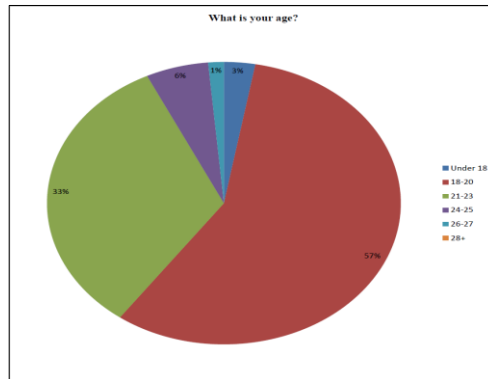


Figure-1. Shows that 57% of the participants were between 18-20 years of age and 33% of the participants were between 21-23 years of age and 1 % of the participants were under 18 years of age.

**Table 2: Demographics of the survey participants**

Statement 2	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year
Which year of Graduation are you in?	19	25	14	12

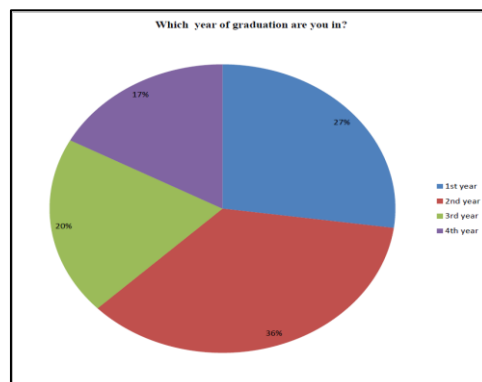


Figure-2. Shows 36% of the participants were in the second year of graduation, 27% participants were in the first year of graduation and 17% of the participants were in their last year of honors program.

**Table-3: Number of students who agree and disagree that athletics help them in better management skills**

Statement 3	A. Strongly Disagree	B. Disagree	C. Neutral	D. Agree	E. Strongly Agree
Has Athletics helped you in developing effective time management skills?	6	8	1	38	17

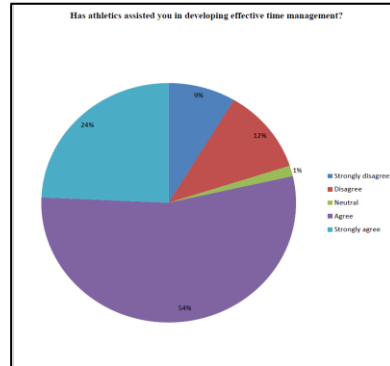


Figure-3. Depicts that 54% of the participants agree that their active participation in sports has helped them in improving their time management skills whereas 9% strongly disagreed to the statement.

**Table 4: Time per week devoted to different athletic commitments**

Statement 4	A. Less than 10 hours	B. 10-15 hours	C. 15-20 hours	D. More than 20 hours
Approximately how much time per week do you give to your athletic commitments (practice, training room, etc)?	3	23	41	3

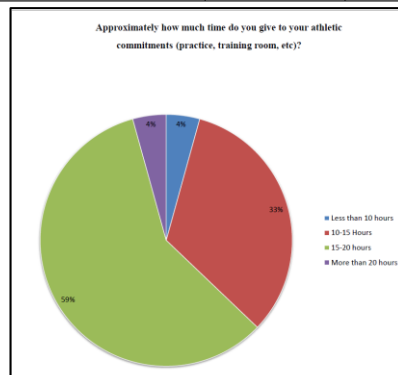


Figure 4. Presents that 59% of the participants spend 15-20 hours on performing various athletic activities, 33 % of the participants devote 10-15 hours per week to sports practices whereas only 4% of the participants spent less than 10 hours per week on all athletic commitments.

**Table-5: Hours per week devoted to academics**

Statement 5	A. Less than 10 hours	B. 10-15 hours	C. 15-20 hours	D. More than 20 hours
Approximately how much time (in hours) do you allocate to your studies every week?	17	39	10	4

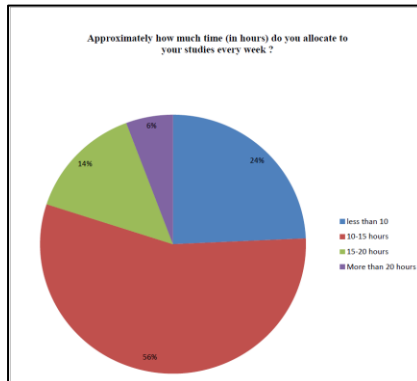


Figure 5. Exhibits that 56% of the female students give equal time to their studies that is spending 10-15 hours per week, 14 % students spent little more time on academics whereas 24 % gave less than 10 hours per week to their studies.

**Table-6: Students' response to the question about grades if they were not in athletics**

Statement 6	A. Better	B. Worse	C. The Same
If you were not a student athlete, you believe your grades would be?	30	4	36

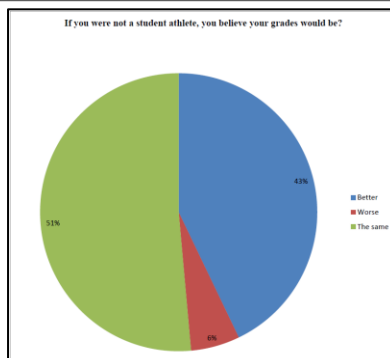


Table 6. Illustrates that 51% of the athletes believed that there would no effect on their grades and they would remain the same. 43% of the athletes thought that they would attain better grades if they were not in athletics.



**Table-7: Students' response to the question about the negative effects of athletics on their academics**

Statement 7	A. Strongly Disagree	B. Disagree	C. Neutral	D. Agree	E. Strongly Agree
Would you still choose to compete at Graduate level even when research proves that athletics has negative effects on academics?	16	6	4	29	15

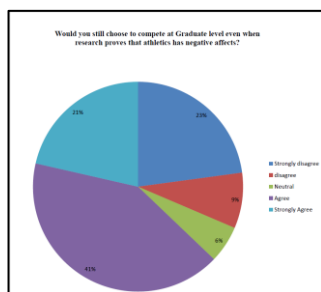


Table 7. Shows that 41% of the students were of the opinion that they would continue to take part in athletics despite its negative effects. 21 % agreed that things would remain the same and they would continue their athletic endeavors. 23% strongly disagreed that spending time on athletics would not be any worth because of its detrimental effects. 6% remained neutral in their response.

**Table-8: Students' response to question about academic support services**

Statement 8	A. Strongly Disagree	B. Disagree	C. Neutral	D. Agree	E. Strongly Agree	F. Had not utilized these services
Do you think academic support services offered by your institution help you perform better?	10	8	7	37	8	0

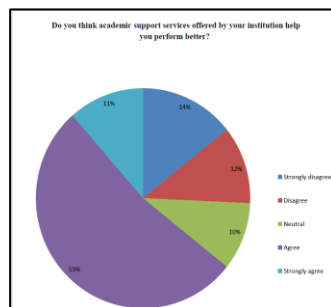


Figure 8. Depicts that 53% of the athletes strongly agreed that academic support services provided by their institution helped them in enhancing their performance in academics whereas only 12% disagreed to it.

**Table-9: Number of students who have attended academic events arranged by their institution**

Statement 9	Yes	No
Have you ever availed the opportunity to attend any workshops, seminars, conferences, panel discussions, tutorials & training sessions provided by your institutions?	53	17

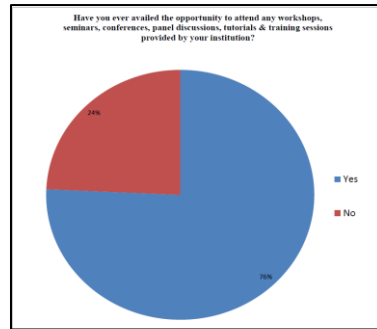


Figure 9. Illustrates that 76% of the students attended various academic events like seminars, workshops, conferences, panel discussions and tutorial classes organized by their institution and 24% did not attend any of the above mentioned events.

**Table-10: Students response towards the benefits of academic events**

Statement 10	A. A Great Deal	B. Quite a Bit	C. Somewhat	D. Very Little	E. Not at All
If you had a chance to attend any of these above stated events how beneficial do you think they were toward identifying your life skills (self-control, critical thinking , taking on challenges) and determining your career direction?	25	18	12	8	7

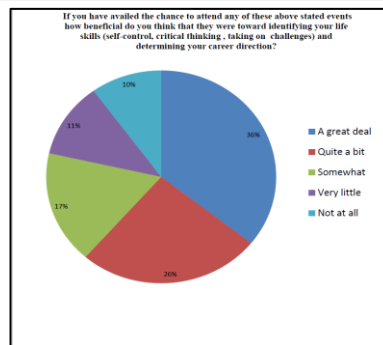


Figure 10. Displays that 36% believed that these events tend to have a great deal of effect in developing self-control, critical thinking and taking on challenges, 26% were of the opinion that these events helped them quite a bit whereas only 10% did not find these events beneficial to them.

**Table-11: Students' response about the effect of athletics on motivation**

Statement 11	A. A Great Deal	B. Quite a Bit	C. Somewhat	D. Very Little	E. Not at All
Has your involvement in athletics effected your motivation to attend lectures?	25	22	11	5	7

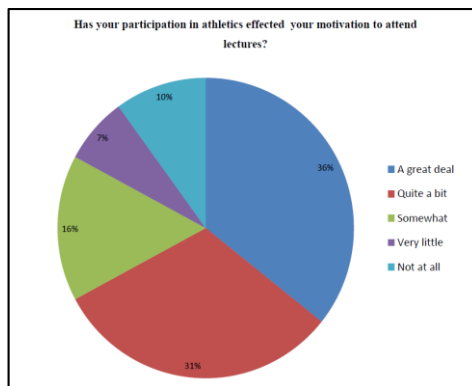


Figure 11. Presents that 36% believed that athletics motivated them a great deal to take their classes regularly and 31% found athletics motivated them quite a bit to attend their classes whereas 10% did not find athletics motivating at all.

**Table-12: Students' response to the effect of athletic involvement in their lives**

Statement 12	A. Best Choice of your Life	B. Just Ok	C. Worst Choice of your Life	D. No effect on your life
Explain what effect participa- tion in athletics has on your life?	50	15	2	3

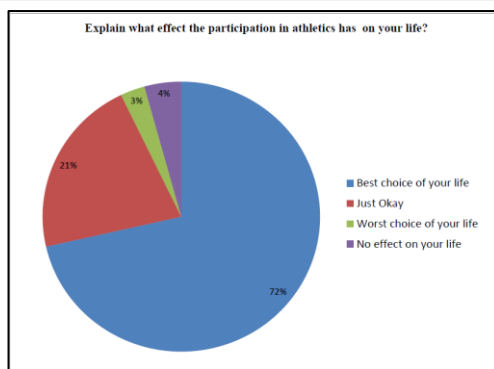


Figure 12. Shows that 72% of the athletes considered it as the best choice of their life , 21% considered it as just ok whereas only 3% regretted and thought it was the worst choice of their life.

**Table-13: Students' response towards involvement in athletics and transition to college life**

Statement 13	A. Strongly Disagree	B. Disagree	C. Neutral	D. Agree	E. Strongly Agree
Do you think that participation in athletics has made transition to college life easier?	10	8	6	31	15

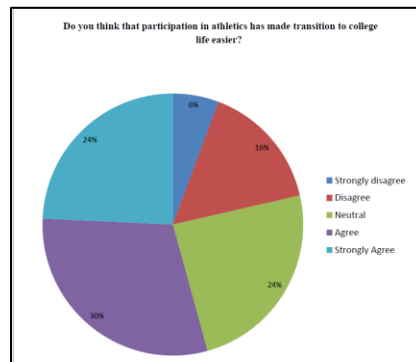


Figure-13. Presents that 30% athletes agreed that involvement in athletics helped them in successful transition to college life, 24% strongly agreed that college transition becomes easier due to athletics. 16% disagreed and 24% remained neutral to it

**Table-14: Students' response to the question that that athletics has more advantages than its disadvantages**

Statement 14	A. Strongly Disagree	B. Disagree	C. Neutral	D. Agree	E. Strongly Agree
Do you believe that your participation in sports is irreplaceable and its benefits of Outweighs its negatives?	4	11	17	21	17

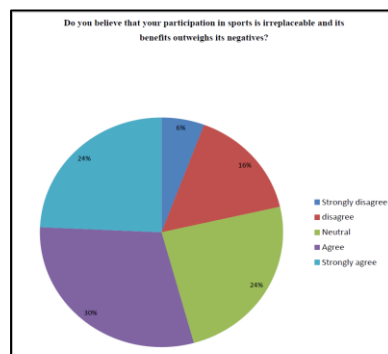


Figure 14. Depicts that 30% athletes were of the view that advantages of athletics outweighs its disadvantages. 24% strongly agreed to the belief that participation in sports has more advantages than its drawbacks whereas 16% disagreed to it.

**Table-15: Current GPA of the participant athletes**

Statement 15	A. 0-2.0	2.0-3.0	3.0-3.5	3.5-4.0
What is your current GPA?	0	35	25	10

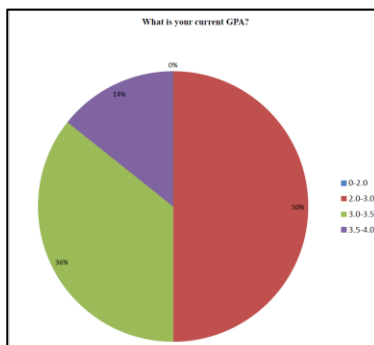


Figure 15. Illustrates that 50% of the participant athletes scored GPA between 2.0-3.0. 36% participant athletes had grade point average between 3.0-3.5. 14% had GPA between 3.5-4.0 and nobody had it between 0-2.0 which shows that their academics is not effected by sports.

**Table-16: Students' response towards involvement in sports and motivation to complete their degree**

Statement 16	A. Strongly Disagree	B. Disagree	C. Neutral	D. Agree	E. Strongly Agree
Has your participation in sports motivated you towards completion of your degree and persistence towards graduation?	8	5	6	30	21

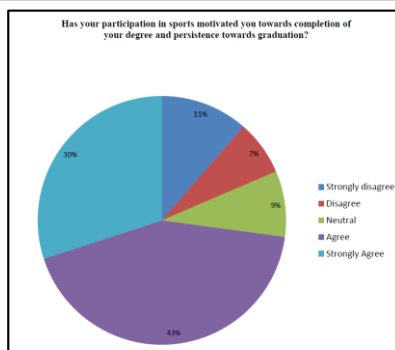


Figure 16. Shows that 43% agreed that athletics has motivated them to complete their graduation. 30% were also persistent in completing their graduation and were motivated to do so due their involvement in athletics whereas 11% disagreed to it. 9% remained neutral in their response to this question

## **Discussion**

Research related to athletics have proved to play an essential role in the students' lives both in high schools as well as in the higher education institutions (Hamilton, 2005; Knox, 2007 & Tublitz, 2007). Therefore, now many years, education plus athletics are found part and parcel to each other, with the conclusion that the culture of sports has been woven into culture of academics at different stages. The general opinion of the public was that the boys who participated in sports transformed into men; who had the spirit of teamwork, were dutiful and possessed the elements of sacrifice and devotion. Moreover, athletics helped these young boys in their character building and inculcated the spirit of good sportsmanship. Keeping this tradition in view, many researchers raised the arguments that in order to have children who are educated and mentally mature there should be sports that are organized to groom them (Griffith, 2004, p. 1). Also, one usually hears at various educational platforms that the athletics played at high school level show a great impact on our younger generation as well as on our communities (Griffith, p. 2).

Researches that strongly recommend the promotion of sports as a pathway towards attaining maturity further add to its importance by relating it positively to academic performance as well as interpersonal development amongst the students (NHSAW, 2001, p. 9). Hence, by participating in sports and other physical activities the students will learn the skills of collaboration and coordination which will help them to be successful citizens for the society (NHSAW, p. 9).

According to Byrd and Ross (1991) student athletes tend to have better time management skills and are more motivated in terms of attending classes. Ryan's (1989) research on student athletes revealed a positive impact regarding the elements of discipline, time management and the sense of competition on the personal growth of the younger generation. Twenty-five athletes shared that due to their athletics they felt motivated in attending the classes 'a great deal' while twenty-two of them responded to 'quite a bit'. Thirty-eight students 'strongly agreed' to the statement that their management skills with regards to time had improved

while fourteen of them opted the choice of 'agree'. Hence, out of seventy respondents only six of them believed that athletics had no impact in enhancing their abilities with regards to managing time. These findings are in accordance with the study carried out by Byrd and Ross (1991) that share the strong impact of athletics on the lives of the students. Another study by Olszewski-Kublius (2004) reports that while the athletes are engaged in their physical activities they learn many skills like time management which turn out to improve their academic capabilities.

According to the study by Pascarella, Truckenmiller, Nora and Terenzini (1999) there is a positive relationship between athletics and contentment with the total college experience, enthusiasm and persistence towards degree completion. The results of this study were aligned with their research outcomes. Thirty athlete participants 'strongly agreed' and twenty-one 'agreed' that due to their participation in athletics they were enthusiastic towards getting good grades and motivation towards completion of their graduation.

One of the questions asked in the survey was to share the impact that athletics had on their lives. Fifty students responded that it was the best decision that they had ever made and that they were proud of it. Moreover, their passion towards athletics has encouraged these students to make their stay in their respective institutions as one of the most memorable experience till the time they graduate. The results from the study of Pascarella et al. (1999) revealed that student athletes in their first year of their graduation program gained a lot of positivity from athletics. When asked about their college transition thirty athletes agreed that involvement in athletics helped them in successful transition to college life and fifteen strongly agreed that due to involvement in athletics their college semester transition became stress-free. The results affirm the findings of the studies as shared by researchers (e.g. Pascarella et al, 1999) and challenge those researches that are of the view that athletes are not performing well academically. Similarly, there are a number of longitudinal researches that declare a very strong association between the two variables that is perfor-

mance of the athletes and their academic success (e.g., Carlson, Scott, Planty, & Thompson, 2005; Eide & Ronan, 2002; Videon, 2002).

Whitley in 1999 gathered data from a school for 3 consecutive years from 1994-1996. The athletes showed a remarkably constant performance in their academics. Similarly, Videon (2002) conducted a study at national level. The data was spread over a number of years and the results showed a very positive relationship between student athletes and their high GPA scores. Likewise, after studying several researches Feldman and Matjasko (2005) have shared the optimistic views regarding athletes. The results of the present research were in congruence with the earlier researches. Out of seventy participants twenty-five athlete participants had their GPA between 3.0-3.5 and ten students had outstanding GPAs between 3.5-4.0 and thirty-five students have scored GPA between 2.0-3.0 and not even one student had GPA below 2.0. These findings are in line with many former researches which show that secondary school athletes obtain better scores (Dar-

ling, Caldwell & Smith 2005 & Eitle & Eitle, 2002), share higher educational as well as professional ambitions (Otto & Alwin, 1977), are serious to complete their home assignments (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002) as well as have very positive views for their schools (Darling et al., 2005) as compared to the non-athletes.

Participation in sports leads to quality time devoted towards homework completion and better scores (Broh, 2002; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003). Another study conducted by O'Bryan (2010) revealed that student-athletes were very enthusiastic for getting admission in higher studies and later such students showed that while participating in athletics they performed academically well. He further shared through his findings that due to the involvement and encouragement of parents these athletes had high levels of achievements.

Participation in sports has a number of advantages that will be beneficial to the students in their practical lives such as through sportsmanship they will become responsible citizens which will lead to a healthy community (Fejgin, 1994). Twenty-one partic-



ipant athletes were of the view that the advantages of athletics outweigh its disadvantages. Eleven participants strongly agreed to the belief that participation in sports has more advantages than its drawbacks whereas eleven 'disagreed' to it. The results of the present survey were similar to the findings by Fejgin (1994) who was of the view that the advantages of athletics help students to cultivate strong work principles by taking part in athletics and practice a carry-over towards higher educational outcomes.

According to a research conducted by Burns et al. (2013) there exists a strong relationship between the educational support programs and satisfaction as well as self-confidence in professional goals and recognition of life skills. To facilitate the students in athletics there are specially employed group of professionals in higher education institutions. The job of these professionals other than their expertise is to design and conduct workshops for the athletes to help them to get ready for the practical lives in relations to career aspirations and life skills. The findings of the current

research presented that thirty-seven respondents 'agreed' and eight participants 'strongly agreed' that academic services have helped them perform better.

### **Conclusion**

Athletics play an important role towards the physical, socio-cultural as well as the emotional development of an individual especially women. As said, a sound mind needs a sound body and for that reason for the right working of our mind our body needs to be more flexible and efficient. Unfortunately, women in athletics are not encouraged as much as men are motivated in societies like Pakistan (Iqbal, 2018).

The findings of present study do not cover the whole higher education athletic association. This study however, does provide the motivation and assurance to the future athletes with regards to completing their graduation. Developing skills of managing time through timely feedback and the expert facilitation of professionals will be result in improved graduation rate. Hence, the self-confidence of every female athlete at graduation level should be to maintain an above average score in her academics.

## Recommendations

- A proper infrastructure and sports complexes are needed in the region so that female athletes could get easily access to it.
- Athletes associations should find out the problems of female athletes in Pakistan.
- More research works should be done regarding female athletes participation in Pakistan.
- Researches should be conducted on a larger population to generalize it.
- Parents or guardians of students should be educated regarding the significance of athletics which are important for the students' holistic development.

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