

## **BARRIERS TOWARDS FEMALE STUDENTS REGARDING PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES IN CHITRAL, A REMOTE NORTHERN AREA OF PAKISTAN**

Rubina Inayat<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Muhammad Azam<sup>2</sup> and Tahira Naz<sup>3</sup>

### **ABSTRACT:**

*Persistent discrimination against women who prefer to adopt an active lifestyle may be found all over Pakistan, but it is particularly prevalent in rural and remote places. The goal of this research was to have a better understanding of these challenges and develop strategies for overcoming them. In this study, a sampling technique known as the random selection was utilized to select one hundred twenty people from the surrounding locations. For the purpose of collecting information from each of them, a standardized questionnaire was used. According to the research on the data, both religious and cultural factors played a part, although the analysis revealed that religious influences played a more substantial effect. It has been demonstrated that factors of a religious and cultural nature play an important part in the gender discrimination that is directed toward women who live in rural regions and take part in activities that require a high level of physical exertion. In addition, students' low self-esteem was a substantial impediment to their engagement in extracurricular activities, particularly those involving physical activity and sports.*

**Keywords:** Gender Discrimination, Female Students, Remote Areas, Physical Activity

### **Introduction:**

Gender discrimination is a commonly used term that has historically been associated with concerns about women's rights. Gender discrimination has been a part of society for millennia, and it continues now. When an individual is denied opportunities and rights based on gender, it is considered gender discrimination in any system. A form of gender discrimination is also deemed to occur when females, particularly young girls, are barred from participating in sports or physical activities in this setting.

---

<sup>1</sup> MSc Student, Government College University, Lahore, Pakistan

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Government College University, Lahore, Pakistan

<sup>3</sup> Director Physical Education, Government Dr I H Zuberi (H) Girls College Hyderabad, College Education Department, Government of Sindh.

On the other hand, physical and sports activities must be taken seriously because of their health advantages and effects on people's physical, social, and emotional development. Despite this, many current social orders have not had the choice of providing equal rights and freedom to females when it comes to participating in physical activities. The physical, social, and emotional growth of those who do not play a sport or engage in physical activity might be negatively affected by inactive situations. Furthermore, according to research findings, individuals are not required to stay away from or participate in active activities at any cost (Yu, Liaw, & Barnd, 2004). In many countries, several studies (Laar, Zhang, Yu, Qi, & Ashraf, 2019; Nanayakkara, 2012) have been conducted on female participation and dedication to physical activities. However, there have not been many studies done in Pakistan on various factors that keep women from participating in recreational activities, and there is not much information available. Some studies suggest that allowing female empowerment in sports will act as a scaffold and assist in advancing girls and empowering them in sports participation (Story & Markula, 2017).

Generally, females from the western world contribute more to sports than females from eastern countries. Many previous studies have shown that religious beliefs impose specific limitations on sports involvement. When it comes to the role of gender in Pakistan, females' devotion to physical activities is solely confined by societal and strict constraints (Hussain, 2019). And much like the atmosphere of the school, fundamental teaching, and sports offices and administrations (Laar et al., 2019). Despite the hassles and restrictions, Pakistani girls are rising to the challenge and demonstrating positive views toward sports participation. Because of this, it is imperative that females' participation in sports in Pakistan be better understood and that social and friendly aspects be taken into consideration, as well as how these factors affect girls' sports participation in Pakistan.

Given the significance of physical and sporting activities for female students, the current study sought to determine what obstacles female students believed prevented them from engaging in these activities in a remote northern area of Pakistan. Hopefully, the findings of this study will be helpful to those who organize and promote extracurricular physical and sporting activities for college students.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

### **Females' Participation in Sports:**

Due to gender norms, stereotypes of women as weaker and servile exist. Men's dominance threatens women's sports participation (Messner 1988). In order to preserve male superiority, he claims that women were not permitted to join the games in the Ancient Greek Olympic stadium. The concept of inequity that dominates modern society has its roots in Ancient Greece.

Women typically have little to no financial responsibility and are mostly in charge of taking care of the home (Jackson & Henderson, 1995). Religious and cultural restrictions are also placed on women. Due to Islamic dress rules, female athletes were not allowed to field in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Brunei until the 2012 Olympic Games. Their culture restricts Kuwaiti women from engaging in sports and living in public. Women were also considered inferior to men in Confucianism and were discouraged from pursuing higher education or holding positions of power because of this belief (Yu et al. 2004).

Prior research has determined that A lack of time, long commutes to recreational areas, lack of friends and family, and a lack of money are also significant factors in why fewer women than males participate in sports (Kara & Demirci 2010; Stanis, Schneider, & Pereira, 2010). According to Shaw (1994), the biggest obstacles to female engagement in athletics include gender differences in all

facets of life, including jobs and other leisure pursuits, and a lack of time and energy. However, some studies (see Johnson, Bowker, & Cordell, 2001; Shores, Scott, & Floyd, 2007) have revealed that the amount of money is more important in influencing whether a woman participates in sports than gender, age, educational level, or ethnicity. According to studies by Kara and Demirci (2010), persons with higher earnings participated in sports more frequently than those with lower incomes. Different socioeconomic groups and well-known people control the sport. Plenty of resources needs to coach any player (national or international). If they are lucky, some athletes might be able to find training sponsorship, but others will have to foot the bill (Laar et al., 2019). Financial constraints are the primary reason for the under-representation of women and other underrepresented groups in sports.

#### **Females' Sports Participation in Remote Areas of Pakistan:**

The male-centric strategy has enabled men to control many facets of life, including sports, in a conservative nation like Pakistan. According to Laar et al. (2019), there is a shortage of research on women's sports in Pakistan.

Women's sports in the West have been the subject of numerous academic investigations, but previous research has scarcely touched on women's obstacles in Pakistan. Laar et al.(2019) stated that nearly 90% of women and girls do not participate in sports or other forms of physical activity. To boost female participation in sport, two international organizations, "Insan Foundation Pakistan" and "Right to Play," oversee the "Sports Works" project in Pakistan. Local authorities and members of the community who opposed the project opposed them. The study further stated that on May 21, 2005, it was decided to hold a short marathon by the "Joint Action Committee for People's Rights and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan" in Pakistan. Authorities physically stopped competitors during the race, and the first mixed-sex race failed.

In addition to gender and economic inequality, Pakistanis also struggle with a shortage of services. Facilities and fitness centers are located far from athletes' localities and are nearly unavailable for free. Supervision, financial support, equipment, maintenance, safety, accessibility, and a decent site are a few common requirements for top-notch sports participation. (Olajide, 2004). Individuals rarely have access to these facilities in Pakistan. Most Pakistani women and girls, especially the working class, have difficulty finding the time to participate in sports because of family responsibilities. Parents can significantly influence their children's participation positively or negatively in the family by encouraging or discouraging them. Siblings, especially girls, can greatly impact a child's athletic participation. There is a correlation between the family environment, the ease with which youngsters can participate in sports, and the ability to set and attain goals in these endeavors (Laar et al., 2019). For various reasons, including apprehension about getting hurt, worries about their bodies, and a desire to avoid missing class, most kids in Pakistan choose not to participate in organized sports at school. Activities for physical education frequently conflict with those for other academic sessions (Laar et al., 2019).

According to the study reports mentioned above, Pakistan is a predominantly male country, which explains why so few women participate in sports there. Furthermore, such a social structure reduces the engagement of female students at the collegiate level. Our study primarily examines the hurdles to sports participation faced by female students, especially those from remote areas (e.g., Chitral) of Pakistan.

**Significance of the study:**

Participation in sporting activities is seeing a slow but steady rise worldwide. In many traditional societies, it is still frowned upon for women to participate in athletics. They are still restricted in their ability to participate in sporting events openly. This study can assist in determining whether or not there is a gender-based participation gap in sports in far-flung areas of Pakistan like Chitral.

### **Purpose of the study:**

According to the researchers' experiences, girls in remote and poor districts are less likely to participate in physical activity and sports. Researchers felt there were obstacles to their participation. Therefore, this research aimed to investigate the barriers female students in Chitral perceive when engaging in physical activity or sports and identify any differences in these perceptions which may exist regarding specific demographics and contextual factors. This research aimed to determine whether female students see gender as a barrier to engaging in physical activity and sports. The study also wanted to see if female students' reasons for not participating in sports and other forms of physical activity varied.

### **HYPOTHESES:**

Based on the literature presented above, the following hypotheses were generated for the intended study:

**H1:** Girls in remote/rural areas of Pakistan are less likely to participate in sports because of various cultural circumstances.

**H2:** In rural Pakistan, religious beliefs majorly impact girls' engagement in sports.

**H3:** Female students' access to physical activity and sports is severely limited by economic factors.

**H4:** Girls' motivation to work out and play sports is greatly influenced by their sense of self-esteem.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

#### **Target Population:**

The population consisted of female students attending degree programs in Chitral, a remote district in the province of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A probability random sampling

procedure was used to choose 120 students for this study. Any sampling approach that relies on random selection is referred to as a random sampling method. There must be some process or technique in place that ensures that each unit in your population has an equal chance of being chosen using random selection.

#### **Data Collection and Analysis:**

A prior validated questionnaire (Al-Tawel & AlJa'afreh, 2017) with modifications was used as a data collection tool to help researchers get the information. Female students' perceptions of cultural, religious, financial, and internalized barriers to engaging in physical and sporting activities were measured across five dimensions in the survey instrument. A group of professionals reviewed the questionnaire to ensure it was reliable. Faculty members from the fields of physical education consisted of the panel. The questionnaire items were revised and improved based on experts' feedback, including removing some questions and adding new ones.

SPSS 21 statistical software was used in order to examine the responses to the questionnaire. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to gain insight into the acquired data. Multiple linear regressions and the ANOVA test have been used for this purpose.

## **RESULTS:**

### **Respondent's Demographic Profile:**

The respondents filled the entire questionnaire directly by asking four demographic questions: age, education, and family income.

**Table No. 1**  
**Respondents' Demographic Profile**

<b>Demographic Profile</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Age</b>	18-20	69	57.4
	20-28	49	40.8
	28-30	2	1.7
<b>Education</b>	Bachelors	109	90.8
	Master	9	7.5
	MPhil	2	1.7
<b>Family income</b>	<40,000	23	19.2
	40,000 - 80,000	64	53.3
	>80,000	33	27.5

As seen in the table above, participants were bachelor's, master's, and M.Phil. programs students. In total, 120 questionnaires were filled out, 109 by bachelor's degree holders (90.8%), nine by master's degree holders (7.5%), and two by M.Phil. scholars. This table also indicates the ages of the students who completed the survey. Most of the students were in the bachelor's program. Out of 120 responders, 69 were between 18 and 20 years old (57.5%), 49 were between 20 and 28 years old (40.8%), and just two were between 28 and 30 years old (1.7%).



**Descriptive Statistics:**

**Table No. 2**  
**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Mini mum	Maxi mum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
<b>Cultural factors</b>	120	1.50	5.00	3.5361	.67784	-.958	.221
<b>Religious factors</b>	120	1.00	5.00	3.4952	.68020	-.938	.221
<b>Financial factors</b>	120	1.00	5.00	3.5278	.91933	-.917	.221
<b>Self-esteem</b>	120	2.33	4.67	3.7083	.65474	-.421	.221
<b>Valid N (listwise)</b>	120						

When discussing the statistical mean, it is important to note that this phrase refers to the average or mean that is employed to locate the central tendency of the data. A population's mean was determined by summing all of the individual data points and then dividing by the total number of data points. The details are given in Table 3.

**Table No. 3**  
**Information regarding model coefficients and collinearity**

Model	Unstandar dized Coefficien ts		Standa rdized Coeffic ients	t	Sig .	Correlations			Collinear ity Statistics	
	B	Std. Erro r				Zer o- ord er	Par tial	Pa rt	Toler ance	VI F
<b>Cultural factors</b>	-.053	.118	-.055	- .44 7	.65 6	.266	- .04 2	- .03 7	.467	2.1 39
<b>Religious factors</b>	.008	.132	.008	.06 2	.95 1	.320	.00 6	.00 5	.374	2.6 71
<b>Financial factors</b>	.145	.099	.203	1.4 57	.14 8	.396	.13 5	.12 2	.360	2.7 78
<b>Self-esteem</b>	.267	.121	.297	2.1 97	.03 0	.420	.20 1	.18 4	.383	2.6 10
<b>a. Dependent Variable: Self-esteem</b>										

Table 3 shows that the independent variable feeling has the highest value of the standardized beta coefficient, 0.297, which can be taken as one of the most vital independent variables to predict satisfaction.

It was determined where each independent variable fell in relation to the dependent variable using t-statistics. So, again, the highest level of importance came from self-esteem, with a t-stat of 2.197 and a *p*-value of 0.030. Although cultural factor carried lowest t- state = -0.447 and *p*-value = 0.656 (>0.05) which is not notable. Financial factors contain t-stat =1.457 and *p*-value = 0.148 (>0.05) not significant it is liberal as (*p*<0.10), religious factors are t-stat 0.62 and *p*-value = 0.951 (>0.05) it is also not significant.

## **DISCUSSION:**

This study offers a new perspective on a Pakistani northern area female students' concern about sports participation. This investigation focused on the current situation of girls' involvement in sports relating to a remote area (Chitral), as well as the constraints to this, through a hypothetical focus on girls' rights in sports. According to the most recent research, female understudies have distinct assents, ranging from the fear of insecurity, or a disapproving society/own family/educator, to social hindrances and a lack of attention.

Different elements are swayed by social obstacles differently, depending on the situation. Many individuals in this society, including parents and coaches, do not encourage young girls to engage in sporting activities because of a lack of cultural support. These barriers prompted understudies to abandon all pretense of participating in open-air athletic activities; in many cases, they did not even try. The findings show that almost all female understudies negatively toward sports and physical activities. This study demonstrates how various individuals from their cultural borders' affiliations, including their families, are hindered by a lack of discrete focuses, which limits their support in sports. According to the evidence presented, male members of society and social limitations are the ones who authorize interest and serve as ethnic boundary watchmen. Mates take on this role in a variety of situations.

Regarding religion, many academics agree that Islam promotes physical fitness, which leads people to assume that exercise is important in Islam. Although Miles and Benn (2016) noted that females' disinterest in sports is not a direct result of their religious beliefs, they did note that dissimilarities exist between "the social needs" of Western and Islamic games. The tactics concerning the Muslim's confidence must be vigorously tested, as shown by the reflections of the delusory techniques; Islam is far from an opponent of sporting enthusiasm. Muslim women's rights

advocate back up this assertion that "Islam is a steady faith that upholds females' participation in sporting activities" (Benn, 2010). And assert that if they adhere to the standards of Muslim culture, the Quran does not contain any verses that restrict females from participating in sporting activities. Muslims are often advised to prioritize educational initiatives and support Islamic society's games and exercise rules. Sports inclusion producers assist Islamic pioneers and members of the Islamic people group (Benn, 2010).

Additionally, instructors are recommended to consult with female students regarding their wants and requirements and to get in touch with parents to identify where and why sports should be included in the timetable. In addition to professionals, organizational entities must grant female undergrads weekly sports privileges. To increase sporting activity facilities for female students, experts should give resources to the game's workout area. Moreover, efforts should be made to ensure that girls visit more important authoritative sites.

Furthermore, this is a serious problem for young females, so there should be privacy in the offices, changing rooms, and enough foundation for easy and safe access. The Pakistani government should return to its old clothing code, and the sports subculture should resurrect. Sports can only be energized if guardians, society at large, and educators are aware of the advantages of participating in them. Although the media problem was not addressed in our proposal, it has a direct and sporadic impact on female participation in sporting activities.

### **CONCLUSION:**

It is concluded from the findings that the main barriers to the involvement of females in physical activities are religious, cultural, somehow financial, and parental discouragement. In remote areas, the rituals and principles of religion have deep roots, as well as culture, and these factors, keep females away from these kinds of activities.

### **Limitations of the Study:**

The sample size was 120 students from a remote area of Chitral studying in different colleges and universities. Initially, it was assumed to collect data from 250 students through random sampling. Later, the primary researcher was bound to collect data from only 120 students due to the pandemic. The duration of the data collection took two months as the COVID-19 pandemic shut down everything.

### **Recommendation:**

This research would be helpful for the coming generation to work on the barriers and make equal sports opportunities for both genders. This study will open a gateway and create avenues for further research to build a favorable sports environment in Pakistan's remote areas.

### **REFERENCES:**

- Al-Tawel, A. M., & AlJa'afreh, I. A. (2017). A study of female students' perceptions of the barriers to participating in physical and sports activities at al-Hussein Bin Talal University. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 8(11), 1-10.
- Benn, D. W. (2010). On realpolitik and its limitations. *International Affairs*, 86(5), 1191-1197.
- Hussain, F. (2019). Gender discrimination in media as workplace: A study of media environment in Sindh. *Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies*, 18(1), 23-42.
- Jackson, E. L., & Henderson, K. A. (1995). Gender-based analysis of leisure constraints. *Leisure Sciences*, 17(1), 31-51.
- Johnson, C. Y., Bowker, J. M., & Cordell, H. K. (2001). Outdoor recreation constraints: An examination of race, gender, and rural dwelling. *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*, 17(1), 6.
- Kara, F., & Demirci, A. (2010). Spatial analysis and facility characteristics of outdoor recreational areas in Istanbul. *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment*, 164(1), 593-603.

- Laar, R., Zhang, J., Yu, T., Qi, H., & Ashraf, M. A. (2019). Constraints to women's participation in sports: A study of participation of Pakistani female students in physical activities. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 11(3), 385-397.
- Messner, M. A. (1988). Sports and male domination: The female athlete as contested ideological terrain. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 5(3), 197-211.
- Miles, C., & Benn, T. (2016). A case study on the experiences of university-based Muslim women in physical activity during their studies at one UK higher education institution. *Sport, Education and Society*, 21(5), 723-740.
- Nanayakkara, S. (2012). Crossing boundaries and changing identities: Empowering South Asian women through sport and physical activities. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 29(13), 1885-1906.
- Olajide, O. A. (2004). Sports facilities: a problem of school sports in Nigeria. *International Journal of Emotional Psychology and Sport Ethics*, 6, 19-23.
- Shaw, S. M. (1994). Gender, leisure, and constraint: Towards a framework for the analysis of women's leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 26(1), 8-22.
- Shores, K. A., Scott, D., & Floyd, M. F. (2007). Constraints to outdoor recreation: A multiple hierarchy stratification perspective. *Leisure Sciences*, 29(3), 227-246.
- Stanis, S. A. W., Schneider, I. E., & Pereira, M. A. (2010). Parks and health: Differences in constraints and negotiation strategies for park-based leisure time physical activity by stage of change. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 7(2), 273-284.
- Story, C., & Markula, P. (2017). 'I had one year in junior and then I was too old:' structural age rules and the girlification in Canadian elite women's figure skating. *Sport in Society*, 20(9), 1223-1240.
- Yu, C.-C., Liaw, Y.-H., & Barnd, S. (2004). Cultural and social factors affecting women's physical activity participation in Taiwan. *Sport, Education and Society*, 379-393 2004