

# FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS: CURRENT ISSUES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Dr. Wasim Khan\*

Dr. Sadia Shaikh†

Dr. Tasleem Arif‡

## Abstract

*The participation of women in sports is an imperative issue today, concerning the developing countries where women's participation, their rights, and authority are radically repressed. The subject is vastly taking breadth in global research discourse in the current times when gender inclusiveness is a curial topic. In this context, the current research study was conducted to determine the factors influencing the sport participation tendency of university's female student-athletes of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a province of Pakistan. Of the 38 universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, two hundred and seventy (270) female athletes were randomly selected from 18 universities. To obtain relevant data on the topic, a structured questionnaire was developed after a thorough review of literature and direction by the field experts. The scoring procedure was done based on the 5-point Likert scale. After the omission of incomplete forms, two hundred and fifty (250) valid questionnaires were retained for data review. To test the hypotheses, appropriate statistical tests were applied including mean, standard deviation, and one sample t-test. Owing to multiple factors, including parental considerations, social pressures, cultural standards, and coaching and preparation, women's participation in sports is found to be decreased ( $p < .05$ ) significantly. In conclusion, the study suggested ways of enhancing the participation of women athletes in sports in the region and especially in the conservative areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which ascribe to parental concerns and societal and cultural norms. Moreover, the study findings*

---

\*Assistant Professor, Department of Sports Sciences and Physical Education, Gomal University, D. I. Khan, Pakistan

†Assistant Professor, Benazir School of Business, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University, Karachi, Pakistan. Email: [sadiakhurram@live.com](mailto:sadiakhurram@live.com)

‡Assistant Professor, Department of Sports Sciences and Physical Education, Sarhad University of Science and Technology, Peshawar, Pakistan.

*postulate that the coaching and training practices are substantially considered as motivating factors for all athletic efforts and accomplishments.*

**Keywords:** *Female University-Students, Sports, Sports Participation, Inclusiveness, Gender Biasness*

## INTRODUCTION

In the overall development of a society and towards the betterment of its constituents, sports activities have a vital role to play without any gender discrimination [1]. Throughout this opinion, due to certain cultural norms and social constraints in developing countries in general, and in the Muslim world in particular, there persists a wide gap in providing equal opportunities to both genders in sports. The cultural norms and traditionalist approach facilitate males over females, thus women, who are considered as the lesser gender, face multifarious problems related to sports participation [2] [3] [4]. Likewise, factors such as societal limitations, cultural boundaries, religious beliefs, parental support, and attitude of the community can have a deep mark and massive influence on sports participation of females. Research findings have demonstrated that women's participation in different sports activities depends on factors such as the parental attitude, cultural norms, and traditional practices of any society [5] [6].

Family is the fundamental aspect of every culture that directly influences the overall growth of related people. [7] [8]. In terms of participation in sports, the findings of the study revealed that family support and encouragement have a significant relationship with sport participation of their wards/children [9]. In another similar research study, [10] it is found that parents provide their children with an important support network for participation in sports. In a related report, it is also found that parents make a substantial contribution to their children's participation in sports by providing them moral, psychological, and financial support.

Culture is another essential feature of societal structure, to which every individual, group, and family is expected to follow obligatorily. The people of a community are thus required to act according to the cultural norms and customs to remain a passable part of that society. The traditional constraints of any community however affect the behaviors of the member of society.

In this present review, despite this notion, it is asserted that sports practice has often been influenced by cultural norms and practices [12]. Chalabaev et al. [13] in this context stated that cultural stereotypes have a major impact on female participation in sports. Similarly, Asif et al. [14] also mentioned that the cultural and folkloric elements, religious aspects, and physical challenges are creating obstacles for females to openly participate in sports.

An outstanding performance in sports needs proper skills and techniques which can be developed and promoted through organized coaching and training. An organized coaching system can easily increase the success of athletes and enhance their self-motivation mechanism. It is believed that the lack of appropriate coaching facilities for female athletes is one of the fundamental factors which impede female sports participation in conservative societies. Similarly, a research conducted by Kirk [15] found that coaches with comprehensive physical education backgrounds are more likely to have additional expertise in teaching sporting skills. The less involvement of female student-athletes in sports, due to a non-conducive environment, is, therefore, a critical problem, as it evidently suppresses inclusiveness, and ceases equal opportunity prospects for females to choose sports as their career choice. Keeping this important issue into consideration, the current study was conducted to determine the influential factors in the perspective of female participation in sports at university level and recommend suggestive remedies.

In this regard, this study aims to achieve the following research objectives:

- To assess the factors that affect the participation of female student-athletes in sports.
- To identify the most dominant factor in the way of sports participation among female student-athletes.

## **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

H1: There is a significant influence of different factors upon sports participation of female student-athletes. Ha 2 Cultural norms are perceived as the most dominant issue in the way of sports participation among female student-athletes.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A cross-sectional survey research method was applied, and the required data were collected with the help of a closed-ended questionnaire. The sample population consisted of female student-athletes who participated in university sports competitions. Of the 38 universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, the sample size for this analysis was 270 athletes who were randomly selected from 18 universities.

## **PROCEDURE**

### **Participants**

The participants included in the survey consisted of those female athletes who competed in the inter-varsity sports championship held in different Universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the year 2019. Two Hundred and Seventy (270) athletes were randomly selected from 18 universities out of the 38 universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

## **Research Instrument**

For obtaining the required data on the topic at hand, a structured questionnaire was developed after a thorough review of related literature and guidance of the experts in the field. The scoring procedure was done based on the 5-point Likert style scale ranged from strongly agree (SA=5) to strongly disagree (SDA=1).

## **Data Collection Procedure**

The questionnaire was circulated to 270 elite female athletes from 16 different games through personnel of the sampled universities. While several questionnaires were also sent to the respondents via the research teachers and student research groups. A total response rate of 86.66 percent was received by two hundred and fifty-four (254) athletes. Out of (254) questionnaires, 04 spoilt questionnaires were excluded and finally, 250 valid questionnaires were used for data analysis.

## **The process of Scoring**

Each respondent's answers were separately counted. The answers obtained were translated and coded into the model of quantitative analysis. The undermentioned values were fixed for the options:

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
05	04	03	02	01

## **Statistical Analysis**

The data obtained was analyzed by testing the mean and standard deviation values using descriptive statistical methods, while hypotheses were checked with the t-test of a single sample. The decision was taken using the p-value to consider or deny the null hypotheses. The significance level of the conducted test was 0.05

## RESULTS

The outcome of the data collected was presented below;

**Table 1: Sport-Wise Frequency and Percentage of the Participants (n=250)**

<b>Sports Played</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%age</b>
Volleyball	32	12.8
Badminton	50	20.0
Netball	66	26.4
Chuck ball	76	30.4
Table Tennis	26	10.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.0</b>

To measure the influence of different factors i.e. Parental Concerns, Societal Factors, Cultural Norms, and Coaching & Training, the items in the questionnaire that measured the motivation factors were summed, the descriptive statistics for these variables was computed and the results are presented in the table below

**Table 2: Influential Factors for Athletes (n=250)**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Parental Concerns	250	3.1237	.74
Societal Factors	250	3.0752	.71
Cultural Norms	250	3.1456	.68
Coaching and Training	250	3.0861	.84

**Table 3: t-Test Analysis for Significance of Cultural Norms**

Factors	t	sig	df	Mean	95% Confidence Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Parental Concerns	21.720	.000	250	1.12371	1.0222	1.2262
Societal Limitations	21.615	.000	250	1.07617	.8875	1.1748
Cultural Norms	23.800	.000	250	1.14555	1.0511	1.1420
Coaching and Training	18.568	.000	250	1.08609	.8606	1.20136

## DISCUSSION

The current research study was conducted to determine the factors influencing the participation of female student-athletes of universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Through data analyses, it was noticed that parental concern put an average level of impact on female sports participation with a mean value of 3.1237 and std. deviation .74. This finding implies that the student-athletes have agreed about the influence of parental concerns. To find out whether the influence is significant, one sample t-test was applied, and the decision was made according to the statistics of significant level .05. The sig..000 which is lesser than the significant level.05 defines that the parental concerns significantly affect female athletes' sports participation. Therefore, the findings of the current study agree with those of other studies that have previously reported similar findings in terms of the involvement of athletes in sports. These findings are consistent with the findings that parents are an important element for children's development and decision-making in all areas including education and sports [17]. Likewise, parents' participation in physical education and athletics is

perceived differently in terms of how it impacts the child's interest in sports and in later life.

Likewise, the average level of influence of societal limitation was found with a mean value of 3.0752 and std. deviation .71. These statistical inferences indicated that on average, the sampled agreed of the influence of societal limitations upon their participation in sports competitions. The single sample t-test was conducted to determine whether or not the effect is significant. Since the p-value (0.000) is smaller than the threshold of significance, it means that at university level, social restrictions greatly affect women's participation in sports. Therefore, the results of the current study agree with those of other researchers who have previously identified a related impact on the participation of athletes in sports by social limitations [19] [20].

Similarly, the analyzed data revealed an average level of cultural norms influence on female sports participation with a mean value of 3.1456 and std. deviation .68. This implies that the sample respondents have agreed regarding the influence of social norms upon sports participation of female student-athletes. To find out whether the influence is significant, one sample t-test was applied, and the decision was made according to the statistics of significant level .05. The sig..000 which is lesser than the significant level.05 defines that the social norms significantly affect female athletes' sports participation. Various studies revealed that in the Middle East female athletic participation has been growing for the past 20 years. Female fitness has been met with a degree of ambivalence in the conservative Gulf region, as concerns arise about the correct role women play in society. Although women's sports were studied in Gulf countries such as Kuwait and Bahrain, Qatar, the region's emerging powerhouse, remains under-examined [21].

Finally, the analyzed inferences showed an average level of influence of coaching and training at the mean value of 3.0861 with std. deviation of .84. These statistical inferences indicated that on average,



the sampled agreed of the influence of coaching and training upon their participation in sports competitions. The single sample t-test was carried out to determine whether or not the effect is significant. Since the p-value (0.000) is smaller than the level of importance, coaching and preparation have a major effect on female involvement in sports at university level.

## **CONCLUSION**

The analyzed data revealed that various factors like parental concerns, societal limitations, cultural norms, and coaching and training significantly affect female sports participation at the university level in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. These findings confirm that, if parents have a clear perception about the benefits of sports then the sports will not only flourish, but the students/wards will freely participate in sports. Similarly, it can be interpreted that athletes are constrained due to social restrictions, and cultural norms of society, whereas coaching facilities, proves to be the contributory ingredient of competition and performance improvement.

## **Practical Implications**

The findings of the study may help the educational institutions and sports personnel to understand the influence of various factors that will help them to enhance female sports participation. It is possible for athletes to achieve maximum sports standards if the above factors are identified and then addressed accordingly. It should be made clear to sports stakeholders that factors such as parental issues, social constraints, cultural norms impede sports participation. Provision of better facilities of coaching and sports preparation on the other hand can augment the physical performance of female athletes and which would help them achieve their targets of excelling in their sports career.

### **Conflict of Interest**

No conflict of interest was declared by the authors.

### **REFERENCES**

- Messner, M. A. (2010). *Out of play: Critical essays on gender and sport*. Suny Press.
- Sofian M, Omar-Fauzee UP, Abd-Latif R. The perspective of Arabic Muslim women toward sport participation. *J Asia Pacific Stud*, 10 (1) 364-77.
- Walseth K, Fasting K. Islam's view on physical activity and sport: Egyptian women interpreting Islam. *International review for the sociology of sport*. 38(1):45-60.
- Pfister G. Outsiders: Muslim women and Olympic games—barriers and opportunities. *The international journal of the history of sport*. 1 (27) :2925-57.
- Mirsafian H, Dóczy T, Mohamadinejad A. Attitude of Iranian female university students to sport and exercise. *Iranian studies*. 47(6), 951-66.
- Bibi, I., Khan, D. and Khan, W., 2016. Influence of Sociocultural Problems on sports participation: A case of female Elite athletes in Pakistan. *International Journal of Scientific and Engineering Research*, 7(6), pp.363-369.
- Conger RD, Conger KJ, Martin MJ., 2010 Socioeconomic status, family processes, and individual development. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 72(3), 685-704.
- Morris AS, Silk JS, Steinberg L, Myers SS, Robinson LR., 2007. The role of the family context in the development of emotion regulation. *Social development*. 16(2), 361-88.

- Kimiecik JC, Horn TS., 2012 Examining the relationship between family context and children's physical activity beliefs: The role of parenting style. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*. 13(1), 10-8.
- Sánchez-Miguel PA, Leo FM, Sánchez-Oliva D, Amado D, García-Calvo T., 2013 The importance of parents' behavior in their children's enjoyment and a motivation in sports. *Journal of human kinetics*. Mar 36(1), 169-77.
- Kay, T. (2004). The family factor in sport: A review of family factors affecting sports participation. *Driving up participation: The challenge for sport*, 39.
- Fisher LA, Butryn TM, Roper EA., 2003 Diversifying (and politicizing) sport psychology through cultural studies: A promising perspective. *The Sport Psychologist*. 17(4), 391-405.
- Chalabaev A, Sarrazin P, Fontayne P, Boiché J, Clément-Guillotin C., 2013 The influence of sex stereotypes and gender roles on participation and performance in sport and exercise: Review and future directions. *Psychology of sport and exercise*. 14(2), 136-44.
- Asif J, Abdur R, Saeed A., 2009 Perceptual experience of stakeholders regarding role of sports participation in uprooting social evils from society. *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences*. 7(2), 148-54.
- Lauder, A., & Piltz, W. (2013). *Play practice: The games approach to teaching and coaching sports*. Human Kinetics.
- Kirk D., 2005 Physical education, youth sport and lifelong participation: the importance of early learning experiences. *European physical education review*.11(3), 239-55.
- Cumming SP, Ewing ME., 2002 Parental involvement in youth sports: The good, the bad and the ugly. *Spotlight on Youth Sports*. 26(1), 1-5.

Kanters MA, Bocarro J, Casper J., 2008 Supported or pressured? An examination of agreement among parents and children on parent's role in youth sports. *Journal of sport behavior*. 31(1).

Walseth K, Fasting K., 2003 Islam's view on physical activity and sport: Egyptian women interpreting Islam. *International review for the sociology of sport*. 38(1),45-60.

Stodolska M, Livengood JS., 2006 The influence of religion on the leisure behavior of immigrant Muslims in the United States. *Journal of Leisure Research*. 38(3), 293-320.

Harkness G., 2012 Out of bounds: Cultural barriers to female sports participation in Qatar. *The international journal of the history of sport*. 29(15), 2162-83.