

Obstacles for Female Students Regarding Physical Activities in Backward Areas of Pakistan (Khyber Agency)

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Abstract

This research aims to comprehensively analyze the multifaceted discrimination faced by women in Pakistan, with a particular focus on the challenges encountered by those in rural and remote areas. A sample of 120 individuals was randomly selected, and data was collected using a standardized questionnaire to ensure accuracy and reliability. The findings indicate that both religious and cultural factors significantly contribute to the discrimination experienced by women, with religious influences emerging as particularly pronounced. Additionally, women in rural areas face unique challenges that limit their participation in physically demanding activities. The study also highlights how low self-esteem among female students hampers their engagement in extracurricular activities, notably in sports and physical education. This underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions and community programs aimed at empowering women, fostering self-confidence, and addressing the root causes of discrimination. Ultimately, the research advocates for a holistic approach to mitigate these issues, promoting gender equality and enabling women to participate fully in all aspects of life.

Keywords: Knowledge, Women, Education, Skills, physical activities, self-esteem

Introduction

Physical and sports activities are crucial for promoting health and emotional development. Despite their benefits, many societies still do not provide equal opportunities for women to engage in these activities. The lack of participation in sports or physical activities can negatively impact individuals' growth in these areas. Research indicates that there is no reason to avoid or be excluded from active pursuits (Yu, Liaw, & Barnd, 2020).

Research on women's participation in physical activities has been conducted in various countries (Laar, Zhang, Yu, Qi, & Ashraf, 2019; Nana Yak-kara, 2019), but in Pakistan, research on the factors preventing women from participating in recreational activities is limited. Existing studies suggest that women's empowerment in sports can provide a foundation for girls' participation in

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physical activity and the promotion of their rights (Story & Marcela, 2017). In general, women in western countries are more active in sports while in eastern countries their involvement is less. Research suggests that religious beliefs often limit participation in sports. In Pakistan, women's participation in physical activity is largely limited by social and rigid norms (Hussain, 2019), including the school environment, basic education, and sports facilities (Laar et al., 2019). Despite these challenges and restrictions, Pakistani girls are showing increasing interest and positive attitudes towards sports. It is therefore important to better understand the issue of women's sports participation in Pakistan, and consider the impact of social and environmental factors.

Considering the importance of physical and sports activities for female students, this study aimed to identify the barriers faced by these students in a remote area of northern Pakistan that hinder their participation in such activities. The aim was to understand the specific challenges faced by these students. Insights from this study will be useful to those who design and promote extracurricular physical and sports programs for college students, to address these barriers and promote greater participation.

Literature Review

Involvement of Women

Messner (1988) notes that such gender biases led to women being barred from competing in the Ancient Greek Olympic Games, reflecting an early example of male dominance meant to uphold male superiority. Gender norms and stereotypes have long portrayed women as weaker and more submissive compared to men, which has historically undermined their participation in sports. This notion of inequality, originating in Ancient Greece, continues to influence modern societies.

Women often have minimal financial responsibilities and are primarily expected to manage household duties (Jackson & Henderson, 2019). Additionally, religious and cultural restrictions further limit their roles. For example, due to Islamic dress codes, female athletes in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Brunei were prohibited from participating in public sports events until the 2012 Olympic Games. Kuwaiti culture also restricts women's involvement in sports life. Similarly, Confucian beliefs historically deemed women inferior to men, discouraging them from higher education and leadership roles (Yu et al., 2020). These cultural & religious constraints have perpetuated the marginalization of women in various spheres, including sports.

Previous research highlights several key factors that contribute to lower sports participation among women compared to men. These factors include lack of time, long travel distances to recreational facilities, insufficient support from friends and family, and financial constraints. Shaw (2016) identifies gender-related

disparities in various life aspects, including jobs and leisure activities, as significant barriers, along with time and energy limitations.

However, some studies John-son, Bowker, & Cordell, 2021; suggest that financial resources are more influential than gender, age, or ethnic background when it comes to sports participation. Individuals with higher incomes are more likely to participate in sports, while individuals with lower incomes are less likely to participate in sports (Kara & Demirci, 2020). Financial barriers, such as coaching and training costs, are a major reason for the underrepresentation of women groups in sports (Laar et al., 2019).

Females' Sports Participation in Remote Areas of Pakistan

In conservative Pakistan, men have traditionally dominated many areas of life, including sports, leading to limited research on women's sports participation in the country (Laar et al., 2019). While extensive studies exist on women's sports in the West, research on Pakistani women's sports barriers is sparse. Laar-- al. (2019) report that almost 90% of women's and girls in Pakistan do not engage in sports or physical activities. Efforts to increase female sports participation include the "Sports Works" project, managed by the " Insaan Foundation Pakistan" and "Right to Play," but have faced resistance from local authorities and community members. Additionally, a mixed-gender marathon organized by the "Joint Action Committee for People's Rights and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan" on May 21, 2005, was disrupted by authorities, highlighting ongoing challenges in promoting gender-inclusive sports events.

The study reports indicate that Pakistan's male-dominated society is a key reason for the low levels of female sports participation. This gender-biased social structure also diminishes the involvement of female students in sports at the collegiate level. Particularly those from remote areas like Khyber Agency, in participating in sports.

Significance of the Study

Globally, participation in sports is gradually increasing, but in many traditional societies, women's involvement in athletics is still discouraged and restricted. such as Khyber Agency. By examining this issue, the study seeks to highlight any disparities and provide insights into the challenges women face in engaging in sports in these areas.

Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on identifying the barriers that female students in Khyber Agency perceive as hindrances to their participation in physical activities and sports. The research aims to explore how these barriers differ based on specific demographic and contextual factors. Additionally, the study seeks to understand if female students view gender as a significant obstacle to participating in sports

and whether their reasons for not engaging in physical activities vary.

Hypotheses

H-1: A girl's motivation to engage in sports is significantly influenced by her self-esteem.

H-2: Religious beliefs significantly influence girls' participation in sports in rural Pakistan.

H-3: Economic constraints severely restrict female students' opportunities to engage in physical activities and sports.

Research Methodology

Target Population

The target population for this study includes female students enrolled in degree programs in Khyber Agency, a remote area in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. To select participants Specifically, 120 students were randomly selected from the population using this approach.

Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, researchers used a validated question naire by Al-Tawel & AlJa'afreh (2017), which was adapted for this research, to gather data. The questionnaire aimed to assess female students' views on various barriers, religious, financial, and personal— The questionnaire covered five key dimensions.

Before using the questionnaire, a panel of physical education experts reviewed and improved it to ensure reliability. This review process involved adjusting the questions based on their feedback, which included removing irrelevant questions and adding new ones to better capture the necessary data.

To analyze the collected data, researchers employed SPSS 21 statistical software. They used both descriptive statistics, Specifically, they applied multiple linear regression to understand the relationships between variables and ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) to examine differences among groups.

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:

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

The table provides a summary of the educational levels and ages of the students who participated in the survey:

1. **Educational Levels:** Out of the 120 students who completed the survey:
 - **Bachelor's Degree Holders:** 109 students (90.8%)
 - **Master's Degree Holders:** 9 students (7.5%)
 - **M.Phil. Scholars:** 2 students (1.7%)

This indicates that the majority of respondents were undergraduate students, with only a small number pursuing higher degrees.

2. **Ages of Respondents:**
 - **Ages 18-20:** 69 students (57.5%) were in this age group.
 - **Ages 20-28:** 49 students (40.8%) were in this range.
 - **Ages 28-30:** Only 2 students (1.7%) were in this age bracket.

The data shows that most respondents were relatively young, with the majority being between 18 and 20 years old.

Descriptive Statistics

Table No. 2

	NO	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Cultural factors	120	1.50	5.00	3.5361	.67784	-.958	.221
Religious factors	120	1.00	5.00	3.4952	.68020	-.938	.221
Financial factors	120	1.00	5.00	3.5278	.91933	-.917	.221
Self-esteem	120	2.33	4.67	3.708	.65474	-.421	.221
Valid N (listwise)	120						

The term "statistical mean" refers to the average value in a dataset, which helps identify the central point or typical value of the data. To calculate the mean:

1. **Sum All Data Points:** Add together all individual values in the dataset.
2. **Divide by the Total Number of Data Points:** Take the sum and divide it by the number of values.

This process provides the mean, which represents the central tendency of the data. The specifics of these calculations and the resulting mean values are presented in Table 3.

Table No. 3: *Model Coefficients and Collinearity*

Model	Unstandardized	Standardized	t	Sig.	Correlations	Statistics	Partial	Partial	Tolerance	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta	--	--	Zero order				
Cultural factors	-.053	.118	-.055	.47	.656	.266	.042	.005	.374	2.61
Religious factors	.008	.132	.008	.62	.951	.320	.066	.122	.360	2.78
Financial	.145	.099	.203	1.44	.148	.396	.133	.188	.383	2.66

factors				57			5	4		1
										0
Self esteem	.267	.121	.297	2.197	.030	.420	.201	-.037	.467	1.339
a. Dependent Variable: Self-esteem										

Table 3 provides an analysis of how various independent variables predict the dependent variable, satisfaction. Here's a breakdown of the findings:

1. **Standardized Beta Coefficient:**

- **Feeling:** This independent variable has the highest standardized beta coefficient of 0.297. This indicates that "feeling" has the strongest relationship with satisfaction among all the independent variables, suggesting it is a key predictor.

2. **T-Statistics and P-Values:**

- **Self-Esteem:** With a t-statistic of 2.197 and a p-value of 0.030, self-esteem is the most significant predictor of satisfaction. The p-value is less than 0.05, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant.
- **Cultural Factors:** This variable has a t-statistic of -0.447 and a p-value of 0.656. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, cultural factors are not considered significant predictors of satisfaction.
- **Financial Factors:** The t-statistic here is 1.457 with a p-value of 0.148. Although the p-value is above the conventional 0.05 threshold for significance, it is below 0.10, suggesting a weaker but still potentially relevant effect.
- **Religious Factors:** With a t-statistic of 0.62 and a p-value of 0.951, religious factors are also not significant, as the p-value is much greater than 0.05.

In summary, "feeling" is identified as a crucial predictor of satisfaction, while self-esteem is statistically significant. Cultural, financial, and religious factors are not significant predictors in this context, with only financial factors approaching a weaker level of significance.

Discussion

This study provides fresh insights into the challenges faced by female students in northern Pakistan, specifically in Khyber Agency, regarding their participation

in sports. It examines the current state of sports involvement among girls in this remote region and investigates the barriers they encounter. The focus is on understanding how these barriers relate to broader issues of girls' rights in sports. Key findings from recent research indicate that female students face several unique obstacles, including:

- **Fear of Insecurity:** Concerns about personal safety while participating in sports.
- **Disapproval from Society, Family, or Educators:** Negative attitudes or lack of support from the community, family members, or teachers.
- **Social Barriers:** Broader social constraints that limit opportunities for girls to engage in sports.

Lack of Attention: Insufficient emphasis or resources dedicated to promoting and supporting female sports participation.

Social obstacles impact different aspects of sports participation in varying ways. In this context, this lack of support often leads girls to abandon sports altogether, with many not even attempting to participate.

The study finds that most female students have a negative attitude towards sports and physical activities. The lack of encouragement from their cultural and familial circles, coupled with societal barriers, limits their involvement. Male members of society and social constraints play a significant role in restricting girls' participation, acting as gatekeepers and enforcing cultural boundaries. Friends also contribute to these limitations in various situations.

Many scholars believe that Islam supports physical fitness, suggesting that exercise is valued in the religion. However, Miles and Benn (2016) observed that women's lack of interest in sports isn't directly due to their religious beliefs. Instead, they highlighted differences between Western and Islamic approaches to sports, particularly regarding social needs and expectations. While Islam itself isn't opposed to sports, the interpretation and application of religious practices can affect how Muslim women engage in physical activities.

Islam supports female participation in sports, as long as it aligns with cultural and religious standards. The Quran does not prohibit women from engaging in sports. Instead, Muslim women are encouraged to follow educational and societal guidelines for sports and exercise.

To promote sports among female students, teachers should consult with them and their parents to integrate sports into their schedules. Schools and organizations need to provide proper facilities, including private changing rooms and safe access, and allocate resources for sports programs.

The Pakistani government should also revise its dress code and revive sports culture. Increased awareness among guardians, society, and educators about the

benefits of sports is essential. While media influence on female sports participation was not covered, it also plays a significant role.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the primary obstacles preventing females from participating in sports activities are religious beliefs, cultural norms, financial constraints, and parental discouragement. In remote areas, deeply ingrained religious practices and cultural traditions play a significant role in limiting female engagement in sports. These factors collectively discourage.

Limitations of the Study

Sample Size: Initially the objective of the study was to collect data from as many students as possible. However, due to work and study interruptions, the sample size was reduced to 120 students.

Data collection period: The data collection is planned for a specific period which was prepared as an outline in advance.

Recommendation

This research aims to benefit future generations by highlighting the barriers that limit female participation in sports. By identifying these challenges, it provides a foundation for addressing issues and working towards equal sports opportunities for all genders.

The study is intended to pave the way for further study, encouraging efforts to develop a supportive environment in remote areas of Pakistan. It opens up new avenues for exploring and implementing strategies that can promote gender equality in sports and enhance participation for both males and females in these regions.

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