Socio-Cultural Constraints Affecting Secondary School Girls Participation In Sports Activities

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Abstract

Girls' participation in sports is declining due to some limitations and restrictions of the society. Therefore this study aimed to explore the societal and cultural constraints that hinder the participation of girls in secondary schools. Descriptive study was conducted and survey method was used to collect data from randomly selected girl's respondents for the study. The Data was collected from those secondary classes' girls who did not participate due to some reasons through a valid and reliable questionnaire. Reliability was found 0.77 for the whole scale. The major constraints were family constraints as they not allowing girls to participate in sports, societal attitude is negative and they consider it as wastage of time, marriage (sports participation hinder their marriage), sports uniform (consider as unsuitable for females), and misinterpretation of religion Islam, lack of media role (not give proper coverage to female sports).

Keywords: activities, constraints, participation, social and culture constraint, Sports.

Introduction

People participate in physical and sports activities to remain physically and mentally fit (Horst, Paw, Twisk & Mechelen, 2007) In 2004 the UN General Assembly also asserts that sport is a means to promote peace, education, and health among people.

Formal participation in different sports activities i.e. hockey, cricket, football, volleyball, tennis, badminton running, and other games are encouraged by all Pakistani educational institutes. Students join these games for fun and enjoyment but it has other positive effects on health too. Bangsbo, Krustrup, Duda, Hillman, Andersen, Weiss and Elbe (2016) found that physical activities are effective for health and cognitive functioning and it is helpful in treating many severe diseases in young generation. Khan and Khan (2004) reported that due to participation in sports the students not only learn interaction with peers, discipline, and tolerance but also showed good academic results. Sports activities are beneficial for both girls and boys. But female participation in sports is deteriorating during adolescence (Beadleston, Beadleston, O'Donnell, McMahon, McMahon, Kinsella, Kearns & Muldoon, 2019).

Everyone born in a social environment; and for a peaceful and happy life, each society has certain principles and values. Each society provides different socio-cultural opportunities to its people to shape their lives in a better way. A specific group of individual controls these socio-cultural opportunities and involvement and participation in sports activities depends upon their willingness. According to Twin (1979) males are actively involved in sports while females cannot participate due to socio-cultural problems. Females are discouraged in the field of sports. Coakley (1990) well stated that the field of sports is controlled by males where they shaped their abilities.

Bauzon (1997) asserted that in a society girl's participation in sports activities affected due to its traditional norms and values. These restrictions are considered as cultural and ethnic centered limitations in a social setting

(Little, 2002). The main restriction for female participation in sports activities is social and cultural dogmas. Humans are born with a free mind, spirit, and free to progress in life but people themselves create restrictions and limitations to participate in sports.

Literature review and theoretical framework

Females cannot participate in sports activities due to the stated cultural and social dogmas. Sport is a social event. Sports reflect societal norms and cultural values (Chalabaev, Sarrazin, Fontayne, Boiché & Clément-Guillotin 2012; Crane & Temple, 2015; Hardin & Greer, 2009). The female's participation in sports activities depends on the attitude of people. It's the negative attitude of people of a society that restrict female participation in sports. Greendorfer (2002) asserted that we are socialized into a particular gender role from birth according to our physiological distinctiveness which is responsible for the transformation of our societal customs and cultural beliefs from one generation to the next generation. They were inborn patterns of our thinking that sort out males and females based on their biological characteristics, (Neuveu & Guionnet, 2004). Female contribution to physical and sports activities is considerably very low as compared to male due to different socio-cultural constraints. Lane (2016) defined that any restraint and limitation that prevent a person from attaining their desired goals is called a constraint.

Female involvement in sports depends on parent's willingness and family support (Cooky, Begovic, Sabo, Oglesby & Snyder, 2016; Elliott, Bevan & Litchfield, 2020; Elliott & Drummond, 2017; Strandbu, Bakken & Sletten, 2019), gender, tradition, and culture (Babatunde, 2001; Okonkwor, 2007). Socio-cultural value, socio-economic condition, lack of facilities and inaccessible facilities are some of the barriers to the active involvement of female in sports and physical activities (Adeyanju, 2011; Amusa, Toriola, Onyewadume & 2008; Seefeld., Malina &

Clark, 2002; Yu, Liaw & Brand, 2004). Dagkas and Stathi also identified that students' social class, home environment, and socioeconomic status are directly linked with student's physical activities (2017). Kay (2000) reported that the financial condition of the families is an important consideration for sports participation. Besides these, gender influence on female participation, family background, religion, and peer grouping were also reported as barriers to female sports participation (Agergaard, 2016; Joshua, Adeoye & Ibrahim, 2013; Khan, Jamil, Khan, Kareem & Imran, 2012; Khan & Khan 2004). Scheerder, Vanreusel, Taks and Renson, (2005) found that Parental sports participation, gender, school program, and Social background are the key determinant of sport participation.

Parent's education and involvement in physical activity are associated with each other in developed countries (Horst et al., 2007). Fernandes, Reichert, Monteiro, Júnior, Cardoso, Ronque and de Oliveira (2012) described that there is a significant relationship between the parent's educational level and female sports participation. Watson, Eliott and Mehta (2015) identified that "gender appropriateness, maturation, and bullying/teasing were explicit barriers for girls participation" (p. 1). There are societal and cultural norms and tradition which cannot be violated by females for participation in sports. Eftekhary (2000) and Whitehead and Biddle (2008) pointed out that Race and social class also matters for males and females in sports. That's why Francis and Le Roux (2011) recommended that "all educators have a role to play in dismantling oppression and generating a vision for a more socially just future" (p. 299)

Sport is a male-dominated activity and this concept becomes a restraint for female participation (Ghazi, 1999; Hargreaves, 2000; Lensky, 1990; Pfister, 2003). This perception is inculcated in the young generation by elders. Therefore, less interest in females is shown in sports and physical activities as compared to males (Peral-Suárez, Cuadrado-Soto, Perea, JNavia, López-Sobaler & Ortega, 2020). That

is why in such male-dominated games females are not taking an interest. Without any gender disparity sports always fully encourage its participants in the events. It is the right of every citizen to participate freely in the social life of the community. Snodgrass and Blunt (2009) highlighted the benefits of sports and play that "it can facilitate change by allowing learners freedom to change their behavior and opportunities to explore their new identities" (p. 53).

Parent prefers to marry their daughter as soon as possible and they have not let them take part in sports as it hinders their proposal for marriage. After marriage, it becomes difficult for a female to show contribution and involvement in sports. A marriage is a strong bond for a couple in which they may have children through birth and facilitate each other (Strong, DeVault & Sayad, 1998). Females are mentally prepared for all such responsibilities after leaving their father's home. Coakley (1990) and Corr, McSharry and Murtagh, (2019) reported that females cannot participate in sports activities due to involvement in baby caring activities and domestic responsibilities. According to Joshua et. al (2013) her ideal role is associated with childbearing, rearing and housekeeping. Besides this females kept protected inside the boundary of home due to the tradition, norm, and religious beliefs (Loucks, Verdun & Heath,1998).

Female physique is considered weak for sports activities as compared to males (Biddle, 1993). By avoiding childcare and household responsibilities a female can't join sports activities. Ikhioya (1999) indicated that many females leave sports because of their baby caring duties. Females face great difficulties to manage and get their positions in sports, this creates clash in our culture which often demands special concern for the social status and privacy of females. Carig and Bittman (2005) suggested that family members' support in daily household activities may be helpful for females to take part in sports. whenever female is involving in sports activities her physical appearance raises issues

in society. Our society confined female role only on the roles assigned to them (Bessis & Belhassen, 1992; Borrmans, 1977; El Khayat, 1985).

Media is a source that can educate the society regarding female participation in sports and physical activities. Media take no interest in female related sports programs. Media experts claim that they are projecting events according to the demands of the public (Knight & Giuliano 2001). According to Knight and Giuliano (2001) media roughly conveys females' sports importance as compared to male sports. Media expert's negative attitude toward female sports coverage led the society to consider that female sports are not much important.

There are numerous factors that affect girls' sports participation but till date no such study was conducted to identify them. Therefore this study aimed to investigate the socio-cultural constraints that hinder the participation of secondary school girls in Pakistan. Direct opinions of the girls was obtained and this study also determined the extent of socio- cultural constraints.

Methods
The study was descriptive and the survey method was used for the collection of data through a questionnaire. A descriptive study was utilized to explore the existing socio-cultural constraint and its level as a major, moderate and minor constraint that girls are facing in the sports participation. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 400 students for the study. The Data was collected from those secondary schools' girls who did not participate in sports activities due to some reasons A questionnaire consisted of twenty-seven items covering six factors based on five-point Likert type scale regarding different socio-cultural constraints in Pakistani society was developed after thorough review of related literature. It was validated through experts. The reliability of the scale was found at 0.77. After getting permission from District education officer, the researcher personally

visited the schools and distributed the questionnaire among the respondents and collected. The whole procedure took two months. The collected data was analyzed through the Means score.

The mean score was categorized into three categories in terms of the extent of

constrains. 1.00-2.49 was categorized as a minor constraint; 2.50-3.49 as a moderate constraint while 3.5 to 5.00 as a major constraint.

Results and discussion

Table 1 Socio-cultural constraints for girls participation in sports in schools

	Socio-cultural constraints	Mean	Level of constraint
1	Family-Constraints	3.58	Major constraint
2	Male-dominated society	3.73	Major constraint
3	Societal-Attitudes	3.60	Major constraint
4	Marriage-constraints	3.98	Major constraint
5	Religion-dress code	3.87	Major constraint
6	Role of Media	3.87	Major constraint

Table 1 reflects that Mean score of socio-cultural constraints i.e, Family-Constraints, Male-dominated society, Societal-Attitudes, Marriage-constraints, Religion-dress code and role of Media declared as the major constraints for girls participation in sports activities. These finding are in lined with the findings of Gatouillat, Griffet and Travert (2020) who also found that family is a reason for girls dropout from sports in France. Department of Health

(2011) in UK identified that Males participants in games are more in number than females. According to Bauzon (1997) societal attitudes effect females' participation in sports and physical activities. In some sports, Muslim females found it difficult to participate (Guerin, Huntley & Olaizola (2003). Media professional for sports, are not willing to share even the best performances of females in the world of sports.

Table 2 Family Constraints for girls' participation in sports

	Family constraints	Mean	Level of constraint
1	Parent do not allow their daughters to participate in sports	3.58	Major constraint
2	Brothers oppose their sisters' participation in sports activities	3.29	Moderate constraint
3	Sports Participation limits females to contact with their family	3.20	Moderate constraint
4	Excessive attention of family for academic activities prevents females to participate in sports	4.27	High constraint

Table 2 shows that parent and brothers does not allow girls to participate in sports and oppose their involvement in such activities because they want to make their attention on academics rather than sports. These findings are in line with Pule, Kubayi, Toriola and Amusa (2013) and Scheerder, Taks and Lagae (2005),

who also found that parents, fellows, and elders of the family are not supportive of girl's participation in school sports activities. Parent's role is important for motivating their girls' to take part in sports because it is only possible they allowed and facilitate them in the participation of sports activities because if their

parents give permission then they can participate. Some parents hate their children to take part in games as they consider it as wastage of time. (Jordan, Nigg, Norman Rossi & Benisovich 2002). According to Brady and Kahn (2002), family honor in a traditional male-dominated are in the hands of father and females are not allowed to act on their own will, so they are unable to take part in sports (Amuchie, 1978). Gatouillat et al. (2020) also found that family is a reason for girls dropout from sports in France. The family members i.e. father, brother, and other elders discourage their daughter's participation in sports. These findings are in line with Pule et al. (2013) findings that parents, fellows, and elders of the family are not supportive of girl's participation in school sports activities. Yu et al. (2004) reported that a Chinese women is affected due

her womanly bearing and work responsibilities and preferences for house from other activities e.g. education, physical and sports activities.

According to Khan and Khan (2004) participation of females in sports is badly affected by family attitude, beliefs, norms, customs, and traditions of the society. Parents hate their children to take part in games as they consider it as wastage of time (Jordan et al, 2002). Sohun, MacPhail and MacDonncha (2020) reported that parents have a key role in their kid behaviour towards physical activity. Parent in the society always helps motivate and provide training to their talented daughters for best performance if they show talent in her sports field (Durand-Bush, Salmela & Thompson, 2004).

Table 3 Gender disparity as constraint for girls participation in sports

	Gender disparity	Mean	Level of constraint
1	Parents favor male children to participate in sports activities	3.75	Major constraint
2	Participation in sports activities is considered more suitable for males than females	3.69	Major constraint
3	Males are conservative about female participation in sports	3.59	Major constraint
4	The male-dominated culture of sports itself is a constraint	3.56	Major constraint
5	Females do not have freedom of action as compare to males' participation in sports in the society	4.05	Major constraint

Table 3 disclosed that gender disparity at home and in society is also a major constraint for girls participation in sports activities. Parents and society attitudes is discouraging towards their female participation in sports. This finding confirms results from Tuyckom, Scheerder and Bracke (2010) indicating that men are more active in sports in developed countries i.e. Belgium, France, Greece, Latvia,

Lithuania, Slovakia, Spain, and the UK. Women are affected by socio-cultural factors because of their gender role (Abbasi, 2014, Attarzadeh & Sohrabi, 2007). In Pakistani society, from birth, females are not given equal opportunities and are not encouraged as compared to boys. Women are seen in our society but not heard.

Table 4 Girls perception about Societal Attitudes towards Females' Physique

	Societal Attitudes towards Females' Physique constraints	Mean	Level of constraint
1	There is a lack of Societal encouragement for females' participation in sports	3.86	Major constraint
2	Females are less privileged by the society in sports participation	3.77	Major constraint
3	Males are considered stronger than females to challenge hardship(s)	3.62	Major constraint
4	Females do not take interest in sports activities	2.83	Moderate constraint
5	Low value of sports activities by society affects female sports participation	3.36	Moderate constraint
6	Physique of females is not considered suitable for participation in sports activities	3.72	Major constraint

Table 4. indicates that lack of societal encouragement, physique and less privileged to females are majors constraints for female participation in sports. Males are considered stronger than female to face hardships and low value of sports activities by society also affect females' interest and participation in sports. The physical appearance of femininity is considered as the main cause of the withdrawal of girls from the sports (Falcoz & Koebel, 2005). Females are weak due to her delicate figure and look in the social setup which put them under the control of male. Coakley (1990) indicated that the kitchen is the only right place for females to still serve as a major problem for those who want to join a sports career. Traditionally, females' role is confined to the upbringing of children and kitchen responsibilities while male act as the head of the family and is responsible for the social and financial support. It is a fact that everyone in the family believed about the girls that sooner or later she joins another family, while survival of the family in terms of the addition of family members depends on male child (Human Rights Monitor, 2001).

Table 5 Marriage constraints for girls participation in sports

	Marriage constraints	Mean	Level of constraint
1	Participation of females in sports is considered a constraint in their marriage by parents	3.73	Major constraint
2	Females are not allowed to participate in sports by their husbands	4.06	Major constraint
3	Household and childcare responsibilities hinder female participation in sports	4.21	Major constraint

4	A steady relationship with family member limits sports participation for married females	3.97	Major constraint
5	Domestic responsibility of married females hinders their participation in sports	3.93	Major constraint

Tables 5 reflect that marriage and domestic responsibilities after marriage is another major constraint for the participation of girls in the sport activities. These findings are in line with Montgomery and robinson (2010) and they found that married men increase their participation in their professional sports more than women after marriage. Muniz, Rodriguez and Suarez (2011) found that in addition to marital status, household activities and having children under age 12 years also effect female participation in sports.

Table 6 Religion and Dress Code as constraint for girls participation in Sports

	Religion and Dress Code	Mean	Level of constraint
1	Religion is misinterpreted by society for females' participation in sports	3.66	Major constraint
2	Religion allows females to take part in sports after observing dress code	4.01	Major constraint
3	The dressing code of sports affects female participation in sports	4.07	Major constraint
4	The veil (Purdah) prevents sports participation of females	3.94	Major constraint

Table 6 revealed that religion and dress code is also proved to be a major's constraint for participation in sports activities. Duvall, Sampson and Boote (2004) disregarded that Islam is usually projected as the reason for not participation of females. This is mostly due to a lack of knowledge and understanding of religion. Walseth and Strandbu (2014) reported culture and religiosity as restricting factors for Young Norwegian-Pakistani women participation in sport. The study found that the dress code of the Muslim society is different from the sports dress and they are not allowed to wear uniforms i.e. short dress for tennis, bikini for swimming, and paints for athletics. Palmer (2009). Reported that parents are not permitting their daughters to play in mixed-gendered setting he further reported that its not religion but the dress code is an essential determinant for parents. Religious restraint problems were linked to hijab practices. Nakamura (2002) found that Hijab is not only clothing but its presentation in behaviour obeys the philosophy of Islam. In some sport, Muslim females found it difficult to participate (Guerin et al, 2003. According to Khan et al. (2012) "Islam encourages participation of women in sports for good health, fitness, and healthy lifestyle after observing the Islamic dress code" (p. 275). Islam granted particular dignity to females and it is obligatory on her part to keep it up. Islam lets females take part in sports activities but under the circle of their self-respect (Mawlawi & Daghi, 2005).

Islam is a complete code of life. Societies with hard religious beliefs have religious constraints. Islam encourages physical and mental health as the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said "Our bodies have rights upon us, our eyes have rights upon us, so give everyone his due right" (Hadith No. 186, 188, 193). Islam encourages both male and female regarding health and fitness.

Islam granted a special position to females from all walks of life. Islam encourages female participation in sports. Muslim history witnessed that Muslim women also took part in battles. For example, Hazrat Ayesha also took part in the battles (war). The cultural concepts about female dress make it difficult for girls to take part in sports. That is why Muslim females cannot participate in sports activities due to their cultural and religious beliefs.

Table 7 Perception of girls about Role of media as a constraint for their participation

	Role of media	Mean	Level of constraint
1	Media usually reflects patriarchal society	3.94	Major constraint
2	Media provides more coverage to males' sports than females'	3.82	Major constraint
3	Media disseminates information about the benefits of sports activity for females	3.85	Major constraint

Table 7 indicates that media role in giving more coverage to male as compared to female is another major constraint for female participation in sports. Frank (2004) argued that less coverage of females' sports is because of rivalry and jealousy among females athletes as compared to their male counterparts. Media experts for sports are not willing to share even the best performances of females in the world of sports. Female athletes are given underrepresentation by all types of media (Bolletino, 2020). Therefore Ahmad (2020) suggested that social media is an alternate way for Muslim sportswomen to be connected globally.

Conclusion

Family and close family members, male dominated society, societal negative attitudes towards females' physique, early marriage and domestic responsibilities, misinterpretation of Islamic religion and dress code, lack of coverage by media and unavailability of women role model in sports are considered as constraints for female participation in sports.

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