



Contribution of Social Support, Social Cultural, and Social Interference Factors in Sports Participation of Female Athletes – A Qualitative Approach

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Abstract

The primary purpose of the study was to investigate the social and cultural factors which provide support to female athletes as well as to explore the interferences in their sports participation. Total 43 female student-athletes of secondary schools participated in six focus group interviews. Interviews of these focus groups were recorded and prepared notes from them. The findings revealed that parents support and appreciate their girls in sports at their achievements at a low level. It was revealed from the findings that female athletes have fewer facilities and rewards/incentives. It was found that female athletes were also criticized on their sports dresses in rural areas of Pakistan. On the other hand, few opportunities, sports dress, and gender inequalities were found as big hurdles in sports participation of female athletes due to male dominance. Parents, peers, siblings, and sports teachers should support their females in their sports participation.

Key Words: Social Support, Culture, Interference, Female Athletes, Sports Participation, Pakistan

Introduction

Sport socialization procedure covers three constituents (attitudes, values, and knowledge) of the socialization in sports that express the social impacts and form a person's primary magnetism to sports (Xhakaza, 2005). Socialization through sports represents the achievement of attitudes, values, and knowledge as the significance of female sports participation (Xhakaza, 2005). Participation in school sports remains advantageous for health, drive, and intellectual growth of female athletes' as well as produces the social interactions within teenagers (Khan, Jamil, Khan, Kareem, & Imran, 2012).

In recent decades, Pakistani females have a remarkable presence in altered sports events comprising athletics, cricket, karate, mountaineering, and swimming. Rubab Raze (13 years age swimmer) and Sara Nasir (20 years old, karate player) were secondary school md bachelor students respectively when they got laurels, and both are belonged to the rural area of Pakistan along with other successful athletes (Abbas, 2011).

Parents have a vital impact on children sports participation, even selecting their events or directions providing their social support to them (Marcen, Gimeno, Gomez, Saenz, & Gutierrez, 2013). Parents deliver a central part in the development of the sport in case logistical and additional forms of support to their talented young athletes (Domingues & Goncalves, 2013). Socialization within the sport and physical activity may be well-thought-out, demonstrating development wherein family supporters are considered contributor role models (Miguel, Leo, Oliva, Amado, & Calvo, 2013). Parents and siblings must have an important effect on a child's physical and sports movements (Willson, 2007). Furthermore, extreme sibling relationships with a successful athlete predominantly concentrate on the effect that parents and siblings make sure on athletes on the way to the socialization and participation in sports. A peer who proves durable leadership abilities might perform a dynamic

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part in the achievement of the group ([Moran & Weiss, 2006](#)). In almost the world, sports events are provided outstanding significance at the school level, and students can be supported to participate in numerous sports events ([Marcen et al. 2013](#)).

Cultural traditions make sure a countless impression on the participation of females in sports. In consequence of socio-cultural boundaries, females are faced with countless limitations and obstructions (sports facilities and incentives/rewards) in their purpose of rapid participation in sports. Despite this, the participation of schoolgirls and females in Pakistan is growing progressively, along with other Muslim states ([Marcen et al. 2013](#)). Although, the stride of movement is seemed tiny, however, various indications of confidence, hopes, and possessions have seemed considerable optimistic regarding female sports participation.

Physical inactivity has been attributed, through small impartial indication, and one is communicated about the social disparity of approach to sports facilities due to their expenses (Voss et al., 2008). The versatile stadiums can multitude a range of extracurricular events, high school sports, along with public interest events ([Cook, 1998](#)). On the other hand, parental income affects the practice of sports facilities or the complete physical movement of youngsters (Voss et al., 2008). Inadequate availability of little closeness to sports facilities might discourage the practice ([Reimers, Wagner, Alvanides, Steinmayr, Reiner, Schmidt, & Woll, 2014](#)). Since the primary era, males and females are entertained in different ways. It is a central thought inside the sport and media setting for the reason that sport has usually been looked upon predominantly as a masculine region and one and only wherever the socio-cultural standards are reflected and at the time made ([Trolan, 2013](#)).

According to [Al-Qattan \(2005\)](#), participation in sports is an essential portion of the social and cultural substructure of any country. The researcher highlights that females still participate in sports, but they face to inadequate financial support, negligible media attention, and too much uncertainty about their sexual weakness. Moreover, girls and females, who participate in sports, boost their confidence level, advanced stages of pride, durable self-esteem, and low level of hopelessness. So, it is likely to suppose the sports participation of successful female athletes may be significantly associated with social culture factor.

The word hijab has numerous meanings: an object that prevents an object that covers or defends because it avoids seeing the body parts ([Mcgee, 2011](#)). Furthermore, most of the girls' students perceive family stress and social requirements as the central causes of covering their bodies ([Javed, 2014](#)). The sports females recognize that clothing, and the veil in specific, are dominant shapes of non-verbal communication ([Stemp-Morlock, 2012](#)). The hijab or veil consider a sign of cultural variance: it delivers the idea that Muslim females are the entities of domination ([Mcgee, 2011](#)). Furthermore, the wearing of sports dress for movement events caused awkwardness for girl students who preserved and did not expose their certain body parts in the community. On the other hand, females are further interested in remaining fit, refining their physical look, holding their body weight, and maintaining their health ([Basow, 2004](#)).

Gender is an achieved behavior that supports how culture supposes males and females to performance ([Appleby & Foster, 2013](#)). It is frequently acknowledged as a statement in the culture that females are physically pathetic than males. Furthermore, females are smaller, slighter, have fewer power, can encouragement less, and slow runner ([Basow, 2004](#)). [AbdulRazak, Sofian, Fauzee, and Abd-Latif \(2010\)](#) described that it might be practised within sports that the females ensure their belief through not involving in mixed-gender sports and through noticing a dress code. By the way, boys are less probable than girls to backing gender equity in school sports because of the boys' leading position in school sports structures ([Shehu, Kasale & Moreri, 2012](#)). Furthermore, in this sense, female student-athletes are more probable and less supportive of equal sports chances to observe gender inequality in school sports. So, it is likely to suppose the sports participation of successful female athletes may be significantly associated with the interferential social factor.

This current study was keen to what extent of contribution of social support, socio-cultural, and interferential social factors on sports participation of successful female athletes at secondary school level in rural areas of Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To investigate the social support behaviors that strengthen sports participation more frequently as perceived by successful female athletes.
- ii. To investigate the social culture equipped with the facilities to boost sports participation as perceived by successful female athletes.
- iii. To investigate the social interferences that successful female athletes are faced in their way to sports participation.

Research Question

RQ1: Which are the social support behaviors that strengthen sports participation is frequently as perceived by successful female athletes?

RQ2: How social culture equipped with the facilities to boost sports participation as perceived by successful female athletes?

RQ3: Which are the social interferences faced by successful female athletes in their way to sports participation?

Methodology

Qualitative Research Approach

Focus group interviews were implemented to collect the qualitative data in the existing research. Because, too us, group interviews have turned into very popular and are used widely ([Sagoe, 2012](#)). However, focus group interviews as a qualitative approach provided backup to quantitative data of the existing study so that all the areas can be covered comprehensively on the topic because it provides vast, deep, and inner thoughts and information about the participants through conducting interviews with open-ended questions. Qualitative study is concerned with internal opinions, outlooks, views, feelings, intents, and involvements of the respondents ([O'Donoghue, 2010](#)) as well as, qualitative approach directs to non-numeric data or the data that is not quantified.

Group Number and Size

The existing study was comprised of six (6) focus groups interviews. Due to the limited resources of the researchers, only six focus groups are selected. Because, the researchers cannot afford more than six focus groups due to budget deficient. Purposeful sampling was used in the existing study because only those successful female athletes considered for focus group interviews who achieved medals in one of the five sports school competitions (Inter-School, Inter-Tehsil, Inter-District, Provincial Inter-Board, and All Pakistan Inter-Board Competitions). However, the study contained (n-43) samples in this qualitative approach. Six focus groups were further divided as six (6) participants in group one, eight (8) participants in group two, seven (7) participants in group three, eight (8) participants in group four, seven (7) participants in group five, and seven (7) participants in group six who were interviewed and the details of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Details of Focus Groups

Group No.	Participants Affiliation Codes	No. of Participants
1	GGHS 1	6
2	GGHS 2	8
3	GGHS 3	7
4	GGHS 4	8
5	GGHS 5	7
6	GGHS 6	7

Therefore, the number of participants in all six focus groups fulfilled the sampling requirements mentioned by many researchers. Several researchers ([Anderson, 1990](#); [Bender & Ewbank, 1994](#); [Denscombe, 2007](#); [Morgan, 1997](#); [Rennekamp & Natl, 2000](#); [Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990](#)) with slight differences proposed the size

of the focus group ranging from six (6) to twelve (12) participants. They also claimed that if participants are less than six (6), it is problematic to deliver the synergy needed. In contrast, a group having more than twelve (12) numbers is practically challengeable to manage ([Dilshad & Latif, 2013](#)).

Interview Protocol

A series of six to ten open-ended questions suggested for focus group interviews ([Rennekamp & Nall, 2000](#)). The current interview protocol was comprised of nine (9) open-ended questions under one main question that was used during focus group interviews and presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Interview Protocol

How much non-school factors contribute to female sports participation in rural areas of Pakistan?
Q 1: Sub-Questions — Social Support
a. How much are you satisfied with the overall support provided by your parents?
b. How much your parents appreciate you towards your sports participation?
c. Do your parents celebrate your success towards your sport achievements?
d. How much do peers and physical education teacher (PET) contribute to your sports participation?
Q 2: Sub-Questions — Social Culture
a. How much sports facilities fulfil the needs of female athletes provided by the institution?
b. Do you think that the rewards are enough provided on your sport achievements?
Q 3: Sub-Questions — Social Interference
a. Do you understand sports dress is an obstacle in the way of female sports participation?
b. How much gender inequality exists towards female sports participation in Pakistan?
c. In your opinion, what steps are needed to overcome on dress code and gender inequality issues?

Rationalization of the Participants

Although the participants in a focus group are similar owing to one or two preferred characteristics the group should contain sufficient variety in further characteristics also to deliver a precise description of the group's combined opinion ([Rennekamp & Nall, 2000](#); [Williams & Katz, 2001](#)). Therefore, all the participant of the existing study were those successful female athletes who had a rich sports background with almost similar sports characteristics. The purposeful sampling was used under the focus group data collection in the misting study. The determination of purposeful sampling was to choose information-rich participants whose understandings were light up the questions under this study. The purposeful sampling for focus groups characteristically contained those individuals who had the same backgrounds and understandings bringing together to contribute to a group discussion about main problems of a topic that upset them ([Patton, 2002](#)).

Procedure of Data Collection

In each focus group interview, the headmistress of the school was approached through getting the contact details from the district education offices (DEO) of Sahiwal, Faisalabad, and Khanewal districts. Before collecting the information from focus group respondents, it was assured to the school management and participants that the collected data would be kept with full confidentiality and used for only research purpose. The researchers contacted and fixed one-to-one meetings with all six school headmistresses by explaining them the purpose of the study and requested permission to interview the participants as well. The researchers assured the management (headmistresses) that all the collected information will only be used for research and kept in confidential. The school name will only be mentioned instead of participants' names in the existing study while interpreting the data.

The researchers made sure to the management that focuses group interviews may be persisted approximately one hour to one and half hour. Keeping in mind that participants may be uninterested in sharing more due to intensive long discussions and fed up, the researchers tried their best to close the interviews in time discussing the specific issues straightforwardly and avoid the unnecessary discussions. The focus group interviews are

generally completed contained by one and a half hour ([Dilshad & Latif, 2013](#); [Gibbs, 1997](#); [Sagoe, 2012](#); [Rennekamp & Nall, 2000](#)).

Role of the Moderator

At the time of each interview, one of the researchers performed as moderator or group facilitator with the assistant moderator and facilitate the interaction between group participants as well. Therefore, the audio devices with the permission of management and participants were used to record the whole discussions of the focus group handled by the assistant moderator. Moreover, the moderator with assistant moderator also prepared the important notes and Valuable key Words along with audio devices recording during the discussions with focus group participants so that in-depth information could be gained from participants of the focus group that made sure the validity and truthfulness of the existing study.

Conducting the Focus Group Interview Sessions

The sessions are considered more effective for discussions if the participants are in a relaxed position to answer the questions better. Atmosphere conducting focus group interviews must be at ease, chairs of participants must be in round, and tape-recorder must be utilized ([Krueger, 2002](#)). The room/office selected inside the relevant school was that where minimum or no interference was expected during the discussions. The sitting set-up was made sure in such a way that permitted every athlete to look at every participant promising them to pay attention to and involve each other keeping in view of the availability of infrastructure at the venue.

The researcher also cleared to all participants that they were independent and free to express openly in their opinions either positively or negatively without bearing any pressure or stress. The researcher neither interfered in the responses of the participants nor forced them to change their opinions or views during discussions. The focus group interviews session started with the participants' introduction. The researcher used the cards putting in front of the participants on which mentioned their names to address them easily. Thus, the researcher highlighted the importance of the study and briefed the participants about the overview of the topic. Afterwards, the researcher came to the key questions and thereafter, closed the interviews with inclusive and pleasant discussion endings.

Data Analysis Technique

After completing each focus group interviews, the next step for the researcher was to transcribe the interviews to arrange them for analysis. The term transcribing provided meanings as forming a written record accurately relied on what was said ([Driscoll, 2011](#)). The transcription or recording with audio devices or tapes is much important for converting and analysis the text data ([Creswell, 2014](#)).

Narrative Analysis

Qualitative researchers have been investigating with numerous methodological approaches to control the complexity of their empirical data, and one of these is narrative analysis (Robert & Shenhav, 2014: [Sosulski, Buchanan, & Donnell, 2010](#)). Therefore, narrative analysis technique was employed to explore the focus group interviews finding for the existing study. This interpretive approach ponders words, framework, reliability, occurrence or breadth, strength, specificity, and discovering big ideas, themes/sub-themes once evaluating the data ([Krueger, 2002](#)). The procedure contained on developing of a summary report that was true of every quotation or text in the group. The reports were also converted into main themes as well as sub-themes that were linked to statements of the study. Finally, at the completion of every focus group interviews, the interview data was written upon a similar day with immediate effect so that could be summarized in a deliberate way to make simpler the analysis. The researchers interpreted the data with the help of the notes prepared during the focus group interviews and tape-recorder. All the extracts were interpreted through the main themes and sub-themes for analyzing the data.

Findings and Discussions

This existing research is widely concerned with social support, social-cultural, social personal, and interferential

social factors, and their effectiveness regarding females' participation in sports. In conclusion, the existing research also discussed the broad results of the qualitative analyses to know whether the qualitative results supported the findings or not.

An in-depth look at the focus group interviews (qualitative) results was reviewed in an organized way. These represent the most salient and recurrent sub-themes and overall themes that evolved from the existing study's qualitative data. The qualitative data were aggregated to form sub-themes. Sub-themes were then combined into overall themes. Six main themes and 18 sub-themes were selected from the collected data, as followed in Table 3.

Further investigation in the focus group interviews revealed that successful female athletes believed that there are several personalities who have a close link or involvement, but the foremost are parents and peers. The findings of focus group interviews of [Keegan, Harwood, Spray, & Lavallee \(2014\)](#) study revealed that parents' belongings were associated to their unique roles such as providing material and emotional support and facilitate their children. However, most female athletes attributed that their parents' support and appreciated them very much and celebrate upon their achievements in rural areas. The findings of [Knight, Neely, & Holt \(2011\)](#) confirmed that parents interactions simplify some apparently complex systems that characterized parents' experiences. Consequently, they encourage their girls to exert most of the energy and discuss their sports progress even in the homes. On the other hand, maximum uttered that less contribution, feel jealousy, and lesser appreciation towards peer' association decreased the sports participation of females. The existing findings associated with prior studies ([Dorovolomo & Hammond, 2005](#); [Seymour, Reid, & Bloom, 2009](#); [Wallhead, & Ntoumanis, 2004](#)).

Table 3. Themes and Sub-Themes

S. No	Main Themes	S. No	Sub-Themes
1.	Parents Involvement	1	Parental Support
		2	Parental Appreciation upon Success or Failure
		3	Less Contribution
2.	Peers/PET Association	4	Feel Jealousy
		5	Lesser Appreciation
3.	Facilities	6	Inappropriate Sport Equipment
		7	Uneven and Few Playgrounds
		8	Less Changing Rooms
4.	Incentives	9	Encouragement from Sport Teachers
		10	Deficiency of Rewards
		11	Less Stimulation
		12	Lack of Interest
5.	Dress	13	Criticize the Dress
		14	Lack of Education
6.	Gender Discrepancy	15	Male Dominancy
		16	Unequal Opportunities
		17	Fewer Competitions
		18	Lake of Awareness

Further investigation in the focus group interviews revealed that there is consensus among successful female athletes that there are no sufficient and appropriate sports facilities having inappropriate spurts equipment, uneven and few playgrounds, and fewer changings rooms at schools/institutions emphasizing the need to make available more sports facilities. [Steenhuis, Nooy, Moes, & Schuit \(2009\)](#) mentioned in their study that inappropriate sports facilities due to less finance are a barrier in the way to sports participation of female athletes. However, most of the athletes were satisfied with the training and encouragements by their sports teachers. The findings of [Keegan et al. \(2010\)](#) revealed that coaches/sports teachers were also influenced on the motivation of athletes through behavioral reinforcement (rewards and punishments) resulting to performances, outcomes, and

effort/attitude. In addition, when female athletes were asked to what extent they satisfy with existing incentives provided on athletes' sports achievements may enough to develop female participation in sports. They reported that the deficiency in rewards promoted less stimulation and lack of interest in females and affected their sports participation as well. The incentives, in general, are not satisfactory and not motivating students to develop their sports participation and their interest ([Jago, Davis, McNeill, Sebire, Haase, Powell, & Cooper, 2011](#)).

Interestingly, it was also revealed from the data provided in the time group interviews that many female athletes pointed to some negatives associated with the sport dress, athletes think that impeded their performance somewhat. Most participants believed that due to a lack of education in rural areas, the dress is much criticized in society. Further investigation in the focus group interviews revealed that there is also existed gender discrepancy in the community. The findings of [Deaner, Geary, Puts, Ham, and Kruger \(2012\)](#) study highlighted that females do not play sports much compare to males because they have fewer facilities and opportunities than males. Maximum participants believed that the reasons behind the fewer sports participation of females are male dominance, unequal opportunities, fewer competitions, and lack of awareness at school as well as all levels. The existing findings are associated with previous studies ([AbdulRazak et al., 2010](#); [Javed, 2014](#); [Keathley, Himelein, & Srigley, 2013](#); [McGinnis, McQuillan, & Chapple, 2005](#); [Mennesson, 2012](#); [Palmer, 2009](#); [Royce, Gebelt, & Duff, 2003](#); [Yungblut, Schinke, & McGannon, 2012](#)).

Conclusions

Although, focus groups interviews generated a broader and profound understanding of how successful female athletes perceived more support from their parents and though lesser from peers helped them in their sports participation and further good performance as well. Most of the participants believed the physical education teachers provided them too much extent with adequate opportunities for their sports participation as well as performance development. Furthermore, many participants considered sports practices or training to the lack of sufficient sports facilities such as poor sports equipment, uneven and insufficient playgrounds, and inappropriate changing rooms at female educational institutions. In addition, there are lesser rewards provided to successful female athletes. On the other hand, while most of the female athletes were not satisfied with gender inequality as social interference and they believed that gender inequality influence much on sports participation and performance of successful female athletes as well as other fields of females in Pakistan because of male dominance in the society. The athletes were also expressed that dress code was not disturbing their sports participation; however, it certainly caused of decrease in their performance. The consensus was found among female athletes that there are insufficient and inappropriate sports facilities (resources) available such as male sports at Pakistan emphasizing the need to provide more resources to female sports to uplift the sports participation of rural areas.

In conclusion, the results of focus group interviews as qualitative analysis were employed to understand the in-depth information about the topic. This highlights the need for the professional development of schools/institutions to facilitate successful female athletes to find new ways to stimulate them for sports participation. However, the schools/institutions should also develop the sports facilities and sport-based scholarships for successful female athletes to encourage the other female students towards their sports participation. Peers should show up their closeness to their successful sports females for their encouragement and enthusiasm to accomplish further sports achievements. Therefore, their association and support may decrease the anti-culprits in the form of gender discrepancy and minimize the criticism on successful females' sports dress for their sports participation in rural area community in Pakistan.

Limitation and Recommendations

The participants were limited to rural areas and secondary schools, as well. The study was conducted from one province (Punjab) only. The parents have a central role in their daughters' sports participation at the initial level. Thus, parents need to concentrate on their female sports participation to boost their confidence level and physical and mental approach, so that, their female students may achieve good academic grades with a healthy lifestyle in society.

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