

# Factors Influencing the Frequency of Female Sports Participation in Pakistan

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim of the Study:** This study was primarily conducted to identify the factors influencing the frequency of female sports participation in Pakistan.

**Methodology:** The population of the study was comprised of female student-athletes from four (04) universities i.e., Government College (GC) University Lahore, Government College (GC) University Lahore, Faisalabad, Peshawar University, and University of Karachi. Data were collected through a self-made questionnaire with a type Likert scale. Each university distributed 150 questionnaires. Out of 600 questionnaires, 400 were valid (66.67%). The collected data were processed through a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS, version 26).

**Findings:** Based on the analysis, the researcher found that the lack of sporting facilities (18.8%), laziness (12.6%), social-cultural limitations (11.5%), religious limitations (42%) and parental constraints all are the basic factors affecting female sports participation.

**Conclusion:** The study concluded that social-cultural limitations, parental influence, lack of facilities, lack of financial facilities and lack of interest are the main factors affecting female sports participation in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Women Sports, Physical Activities, Constraint, Females, Culture, Religion Limitations.

## Introduction

Sports activities play a vital role in the overall development of society and its participants without any discrimination of gender. In this view, sports share equal opportunities and encourage the participation of both males and females but females are facing numerous problems in Pakistan that are due to certain societal norms, and social constraints (Bibi et al, 2016).

Women and girls face many problems in sports participation; their family's economic status is an important factor that plays a major role in their involvement in sports, especially for girls. Religion and culture are listed as second (Johnson et al, 2001; Walseth, and Strandbu, 2014). Likewise, the lack of participation of Muslim women in sports depends upon many factors such as state of origin, religious

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bane, traditions, parents, family, relatives and moral support of society members. Different researchers argued that the participation of females in various sports activities depends upon factors like parental approach, cultural norms and traditions of any society, and some guided religious principles (Harkness, 2014; Islam, et al, 2014). The study further illustrated that the aforementioned factors form different approaches and viewpoints on sports participation of their wards. Regarding this notion, it is asserted in this present study that cultural norms and traditions also influence sports activity. In this connection (Grewal, and Kaplan, 2016) cultural limitations have a significant influence on the sports participation of females. Similarly, (Jamil et al, 2009) stated that a cultural and folkloric factor, spiritual and physical challenges create hindrances in the way of sports participation, particularly among female folk. Similarly, family is the fundamental element of any society, which has a direct influence on the overall development of related individuals. As far as sports participation is concerned, it can be said that there is a positive relationship between sports participation and family support. In a research study, McKenzie, and Van Der Mars (2015) asserted that parents provide an essential support system for their children in sports participation. In a similar study, Kirk, et al.,(1997) found that parents make a substantial contribution in terms of financial support to their children in sports participation.

In addition to family, culture is another important unit of any society. The people of any society are expected to behave according to the prevailing cultural norms and traditions of that society. The customary constraints of any culture may influence the activities carried out by the members of any society. Following this argument, though contrary, to a general misconception that sports activities are not allowed in Islam, but it is evident that Islam not only encourages sports and physical activities but also recommends for the welfare and prosperity of humanity. Upon the recognition of the significance of sports in the religion namely Islam, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, “Entertain yourself and play, for indeed I dislike harshness to be seen in your religion.” Similar has been the view point of Allama Shami who says that sports competition is not prohibited in Islam if the activities are conducted by the principles of Islam. In a similar study, Khan (2003) argued that Islam does allow females to participate in sports activities, but there are certain restrictions where the female is caged inside the four walls. The author further argued that females should not be seen, and they should be fully covered during participation in sports activities.

The behavioural and lifestyle choices made by people early in their lives go a long way to impact their subsequent health status (NIEKERK, and Barnard, 2011). Starting life as a fresh student at the university can be a life-changing experience for many as it goes with elevated stress levels and the need to acclimatize to changes in lifestyle (Janse van Rensburg, and Surujlal, 2013). Particularly pertinent during this time are increased risky behaviors such as alcohol consumption (George, G.E., et al. 2013). Smoking (Janse van Rensburg, and Surujlal, 2013), poor dietary practices (NIEKERK, and Barnard, 2011) and lack of physical activity. Sports are vital for university students. Sports create character in students. Students can express themselves, meet social needs, and become community members by playing team sports. Sports-oriented students are energetic, stable, and confident. Depending on cultural and economic development, university physical activity averages 23% in north-western Europe and the US, 30% in Central and Eastern Europe, 39% in Mediterranean countries, 42% in Pacific Asian countries, and 44% in developing countries (Haase, et al, 2004).

Few studies have been conducted on the attitudes and involvement of students in physical exercise and sports. It has been reported that out of the four groups that were tested in an Iranian university, the two groups that had members from the university's athletic teams had stronger attitudes toward sports and/or were involved in sports and physical activities more compared to students who had neither passed any physical education course nor were from the university athletic teams who were not (SalehNia, et al., 2012).

Boys had more positive attitudes than girls towards physical education in a Chinese university and this was attributed to different perceptions of enjoyment, competence and success (Li, Chen, Baker, 2014) Previous studies on elite constraints to participation in female sport (Coyle, Kinney, 1990; Walker,

and Virden, 2005) mapped hindrances of female students in sports participation. It is important, however, to also compare constraints among female students in different cities and between different institutions of a Muslim country. In this study, our purpose is to investigate and examine barriers experienced by female college students to sports participation and how to tackle them, to enhance female sports participation in Pakistan. This study also focuses on the impact and intensity of these barriers to participation, as well as comparing them in four provincial capital cities of Pakistan and public and private institutions.

No studies could be found that have explored the link between female undergraduate students' sport participation rate as well the perceived barriers to sport participation among female students in the context of Pakistani universities. This study therefore seeks to investigate female students' participation in sporting activities and their perceived barriers towards sports participation in a university setting.

## **Methods & Materials**

### ***Nature of the Study***

In this study, a survey technique was used to obtain desirable results. Survey research is a type of social scientific research that studies large and small populations, by selecting and studying samples chosen from the population, to discover the relevant incidence. The survey technique is an important tool used to gather information relating to social problems (Ponto, 2015). The main method of this study was a KAP poll, which stands for "knowledge, attitude, and practice." The KAP survey is a quantitative method that gives access to both numeric and qualitative information. It shows what was said, but what was said and what was done may be very different (Du Monde, 2011).

### ***Research Design***

This study was a cross-sectional quantitative study design. The study was university-based. The study was carried out at Pakistan Universities. Four Universities in Pakistan were randomly selected to participate in this study. These Universities are Government College University Faisalabad in the Punjab Province, University of Karachi in the Sindh Province, University of Peshawar in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Province and Government College University Lahore. Our survey technique, a self-designed KAP questionnaire, was based on literature, statistics, and our own research experience (Ramezankhani et al, 2013; Alsulami et al, 2017). The questionnaire was created in English, the official and second-most-spoken language in Pakistan. We strictly observed ethics. Before starting the survey, all participants consented. The study procedure was approved by the Shaanxi Normal University School of Physical Education Institutional Review Board. (PE/SNU/ G807.4-2020-06-09) The study population was female university students who are studying for their bachelor's degrees in these four different universities. The demographic information and the rate at which they participate in physical and sporting activities as well as the barriers that prevent them from partaking in physical and sporting activities were obtained from the participants through a well-structured questionnaire.

### ***Sample, Sample Size and Selection of Sample***

Finding a sample of people to observe or question is crucial to research. After contacting department heads, the authors used snowball sampling (Laar, Shi, and Ashraf, 2011; Laar, et al, 2020) to reach out to respondents. All subjects supplied written informed consent before the study. All participants gave their informed consent in written form before they participated in the study. The researcher used a multi-stage sampling technique for the study. As Rashid, et al. (2021) indicated that, "In multistage sampling, the subjects of the sample are obtained by applying some combination of the various methods of sampling in a step-by-step process. Each step (or stage) of the process utilizes one of the basic methods of sampling". Proportionate Sampling is a sampling strategy or a method for gathering participants for a study used when the population is composed of several subgroups that are vastly different in number. Thus, their number relative to the entire population determines the number of participants from each subgroup). A representative sample of 400 female students from the entire female student population belonging to different areas of the country was selected.

## **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using SPSS (IBM, 2013). The analyzed data were presented in tables, graphs and charts.

## **Presentation of Data**

This study used a custom questionnaire to collect data. Since the study focused on female students' issues in our beloved Pakistan, the respondents were women. This study looked at female student sports and physical activity rates. It shows some of the perceived challenges these kids encounter in participating fully in sports and physical activities. The data are evaluated and interpreted to promote female sports. Bar graphs, pie charts, and tables show survey results.

## ***Demographics***

### ***Participating Universities***

A total of 400 female University students were included in the study attending different Universities across Pakistan (Figure 1). The four universities from which the study participants were drawn are Government College (GC) University, Faisalabad, and Government College University, Lahore, both in the Punjab Province of Pakistan. The others are the University of Karachi in the Sindh Province and the University of Peshawar in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Province. The number of students from each university who took the time to answer the survey questions is represented in Figure 1.

### ***Age of Respondents***

The ages of the female students who took part in the survey are represented in Figure 2. It can be seen from the figure that more than half (54.2%) of the respondents who participated in this study were aged between 19–25 years; nearly a quarter (24.14%) was aged 26–30 years; 14.78% were aged 16–18 years and just 14 female students representing 6.70% were aged 31–40 years. The majority of the ages falling between 19–25 is a fair representation of the ages at which most people in Pakistan obtain their first degrees. This is also a clear indication that the study dealt with a broad range of people of varying ages.

### ***Marital Status of Respondents***

The marital statuses of the female students who took part in the survey are represented in Figure 3. It can be seen from the figure that the majority (82%) of the respondents who participated in this study are single ladies and only 18% are married. This finding corroborates the results for the age groups with a majority of the ages falling between 19–25. This is also a clear indication that the study dealt with a broad range of people with varying life experiences.

### ***Physical Activities/Exercises***

This part of the questionnaire was designed to find out which kind of physical exercises (vigorous or moderate) the students do, the duration in which they do these exercises and the frequency and also some of the reasons why they engage themselves in physical activities.

### ***Student' Participation in Physical Activities***

From Figure 4, among the students answering the questionnaire carried out to determine how often they engage themselves in different exercises, the majority of the respondents answered in the affirmative that they do engage in physical activities.

### ***How often do the students engage themselves in physical activities/exercise?***

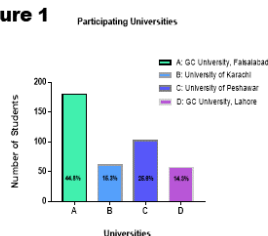
From Figure 3, among the students answering the questionnaire carried out to determine how often they engage themselves in different exercises, the majority; almost half of; the respondents answered that they

do exercises 3-4 times a week (23.2%) and 5 times in a week (21.2%). 15.8% exercise 1 to 2 times a week, 14.3% do exercises less often whereas 5.9% do not engage in any form of exercise at all.

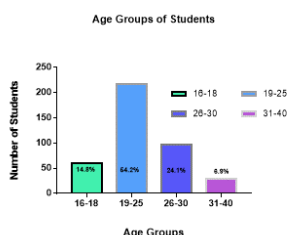
### ***How often do students engage in other physical activities such as cycling from one place to another, dancing, gardening etc?***

When the data regarding the frequency of the participants engage in a physical activity such as cycling from one place to another, dancing or dealing with a garden (figure 4) are examined, it can be seen that 25.6% of the participants engage in such activities 1 to 2 times a week. Only 11.3% of the respondents engage more often in such physical activities whereas 13.3% answered that they never involve themselves in such things. In addition, the rate of the ones engaging in physical activities 3 to 4 times a week amounts to 15.8%, and 1 to 3 times in a month was also 17.7% of all participants.

**Figure 1**



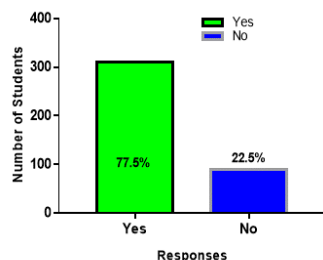
**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**

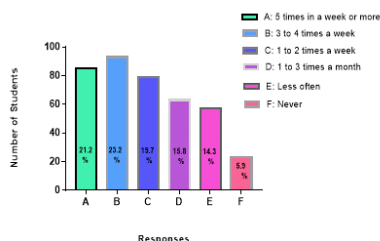


**Students Participation in Physical Activities**



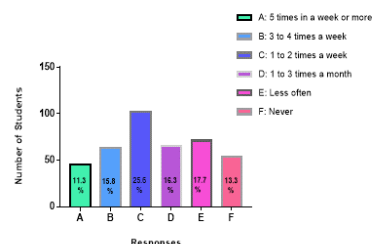
**Figure 4**

**Number of Times Students Do Exercise**



**Figure 5**

**Number of Times Students Engage In Other Physical Activities**



**Figure 6**

**Note:** **Figure 1:** Universities in three different provinces in Pakistan from which study participants were drawn, **Figure 2:** Age of female students that participated in the study, **Figure 3:** The marital statuses of the female students that participated in the study, **Figure 4:** Bar graph showing the percentages of respondents that engage in physical activities, **Figure 5:** The number of times students engage in exercises, **Figure 6:** Engagement of Students in Other Physical Activities.

### ***Number of Days in the Last 7 Days those Students Did Hard Physical Activity***

When the participants were asked how many days they carried out hard physical activities such as lifting heavy objects in the last 7 days, it was seen that 22.54% of them never did such activities as is seen in Figure 5. In addition, it is seen that 15.02% of them did such activities for one day, 10.80% for two days while only 8.92% of them did them for 7 days. 15.49% of the total number did hard physical activities for three days, 9.39% for 4 days and 8.92% for five and six days.

### ***How much time students usually spend on the days when they do hard physical activity***

When the results regarding the total time that the participants spent for intensive physical activities are examined, it is seen that 37.9% spend 30 minutes or less, 29.1% spend 31-60 minutes, 17.7% spend 61-90 minutes while 3.4% spend more than 120 minutes doing hard physical activity. 11.9% of the respondents spend between 91 to 120 minutes doing such hard physical activities.

### ***How Many Days Students Did Moderate Physical Activity***

When students were asked how many days in the past seven days they moderated exercises such as cycling at a normal pace, and lifting light loads, 11.82% of the participants answered that they did moderate exercises for only one day, 15.76% said they did it for two days while 18.72% did it for three days. 17.73% of the respondents did not do any such moderate exercises in the past seven days, 9.36% did it for all the past seven days, whereas 12.81% did moderate exercises for 5 days. In addition, only 2.96% of the total number of respondents did such moderate physical activities for 6 days.

### ***How many days do Students walk for at least 10 minutes at a time***

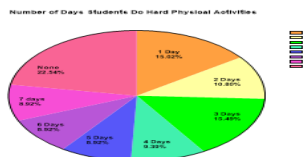
While 34.98% of the participants mentioned that they walked a minimum of ten minutes during 7 days, 4.43% of them said that they did not walk even for ten minutes during the last 7 days. 7.88% walked for 1 day, 6.9% walked for 2 days, 18.72% for 3 days and 9.85% for four days. Moreover, 11.82% walked for 5 days and 5.42% did it for 6 days.

### ***Total Time Students usually spend walking on days when they walk for at least 10 minutes at a time***

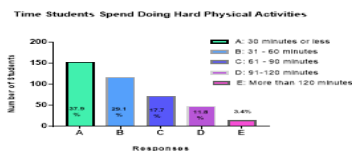
While 35% of the ones mentioning that they went for a walk every day spent 30 minutes or less, 29.6% of them spent between 31-60 minutes. Only 2% mentioned that they did not even walk for ten minutes. 16.7% walked between 61 to 90 minutes, 10, 3% walked between 90 to 120 minutes whereas 6.4% walked for more than 120 minutes.

### ***Time Students spend sitting in a day***

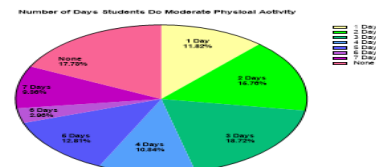
**Figure 7**  
Number of Days Students Do Hard Physical Activities



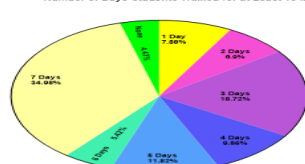
**Figure 8**  
Time Students Spend Doing Hard Physical Activities



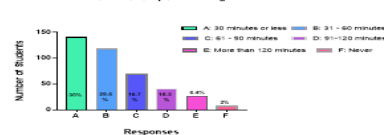
**Figure 9**  
Number of Days Students Do Moderate Physical Activity



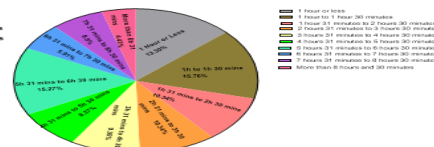
**Figure 10**  
Number of Days Students Walked for at Least 10 Minutes



**Figure 11**  
Time Students Spend Walking



**Figure 12**  
Time Students Spend sitting in a day



When the findings regarding the time the participants spent sitting on a normal day which may include time spent sitting at a desk, studying or watching TV are examined, it is seen that the time that most of them spent formed 15.76% (1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes) of the total. 13.30% sat for 1 hour or less, 10.34% each sat for 1 hour 31 minutes to 2 hours 30 minutes and 2 hours 31 minutes to 3 hours 30 minutes. 9.36% sat for 3 hours 31 minutes to 4 hours 30 minutes, 8.37% sat for 4 hours 31 minutes to 5 hours 30 minutes whereas 15.27 sat for 5 hours 31 minutes to 6 hours 30 minutes. 5.91% of the total

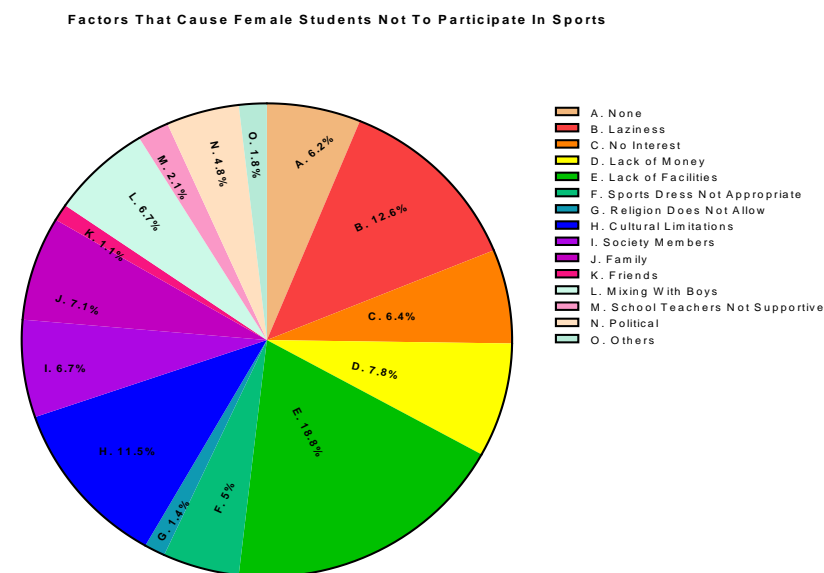
respondents sat for 6 hours 31 minutes to 7 hours 30 minutes, 6.9% sat for 7 hours 30 minutes to 8 hours 31 minutes and 4.43% sat for more than 8 hours 31 minutes.

Note. Figure 3: Number of Days participants do hard physical exercises, **Figure 4:** Amount of time students spend doing hard physical activities, **Figure 9:** Number of days in a week students spend doing moderate physical activities, **Figure 10:** Number of Days Students walked for at least 10

Minutes at a time, **Figure 11:** A bar graph showing the amount of time university female students spend walking daily, **Figure 12:** A pie chart showing the duration in which participants of the study spend sitting down daily.

### ***Factors that mainly cause female university students not to participate in sports***

When female university students were asked to choose the reasons why they do not engage in sports, the main excuse they selected was the lack of sporting facilities (18.8%) in their universities. The second and third main reasons given for non-participation in sports are laziness (12.6%) and cultural limitations (11.5%) respectively. As seen in Figure 13, other minor reasons were given as contributing to female students not wanting to participate in sporting events in their various universities.



**Figure 13:** Respondents answers to a question asking them to select some of the things that hinder female university students from partaking in sporting activities

### ***How female students dress to participate in sports***

Dressing for women in Islamic cultures is very conservative. As such, most females are put off engaging themselves in sports that warrant them to put on attires that expose certain parts of their bodies. As represented in Figure 19, only 42% of the respondents said they dress to engage in sports based on the standard requirement for the game in question. 10% and 24% of the respondents said they would only dress the Islamic way and in Pakistani traditional dresses, respectively, to participate in sports.

## **Discussion**

The findings clearly show that age is an important variable which determines the participatory pattern of students in sports. This finding is in line with the findings of the study conducted by Anyanwu (1999). He found that age is a major factor in sports participation because advancement in age decreases one's ability to endure environmental stress, working capacity, physical fitness, strength, endurance and oxygen uptake. In a related study, Babatunde, (2001) also finds that there is a strong connection between the age

of students and their desire to take part in school sports as it is evident that most athletes in universities are often between 21 – 25 years.

The present study that more than half (50%) of these female students agreed that participation in competitive sports could lead to the achievement of physical and mental fitness; prevention of some illnesses; and improvement of the lives of female students on their campus. However, 50% of the sample indicated that they enjoyed studying more than sports and that they thought that sports participation would interfere with their studies. The study also found that female students agreed that sports participation in competitive sports could lead to the achievement of physical and mental fitness; prevent some illnesses; and improve the lives of female students on campus. The main motive for engaging in physical activity or sport indicated by most students (81%) was 'to be fit'. Fitness, particularly when health-related (in respect of muscle strength, muscle endurance, flexibility, cardio-respiratory endurance and body composition), is linked to improved 'health benefits'. It has been found that 'to be fit' ranked highest as a motivator for participation in sport. Two-thirds of the women averred that many female students still think that participation in sports is meant for males only. Educational programs, marketing, and profiling women's sports at the university could help to resolve this problem (Lovell, Ansari, Parker, (2011); Nxumalo, Beetge (2017); Ng et al, 2016; Hogg, Vaughan, 2002). To comprehend the reasoning behind these reasons why female students partake in sporting activities, psychological theories on the nature of motivation and sport and/or health are of significance. Some people might continue to engage in (physical) activities or tasks (sports) not because they are intrinsically motivated but as a result of external rewards (extrinsic motivation) (Wilson, Mack, & Grattan, 2008). This seems the case here, especially given the socio-economic contexts of many students among the sample population.

The results showed that perceived social and religious barriers to participation in physical and sports activities among female students represent important obstacles that would lead to students' reluctance to participate in physical and sports activities. The main reason given as an academic barrier to participate in sports by female students (38%) was that they had 'no time', which is, a scheduling conflict. Studies in psychology point to a lack of willpower. The importance of willpower in achieving a behaviour change has been demonstrated by various authors. Oaten and Cheng (Oaten et al, 2006) assessed willpower after assigning volunteers to an 8-week program of physical exercise and found that those who had completed the tasks fared better than controls on measures of self-control. Moffitt *et al.* (2011) conducted that of the individuals in the cohort, who had better physical and mental health, most had greater self-control. Lack of willpower could be the main reason behind 'lack of time'. There is a common perception that when school leavers enroll at institutions of higher education, they struggle to cope with the transition from the demands of high school work to those imposed by tertiary institutions. The relatively high number of first-year female students, who do not participate in physical activity and sports because of 'lack of time', struggle to adapt to the learning standards at the university. One in 10 participants indicated that indulging in physical activity or sports interferes with their academic work. Better planning of daily schedules could make time available to engage in extramural activities. The results of our study are in line with those of previous investigators who reported 'lack of time' as a limiting factor to sports participation among university students (Halforty, & Radder, 2015).

The sports facilities at Pakistani Universities were considered inadequate by 26.6% of participants. Historically universities in Pakistan do not have a track record of world-class sporting facilities compared to other parts of the world. What bread-and-butter issues at Pakistani universities do not include the maintenance of facilities, such as being able to afford the expense of watering sports fields. Moreover, maintaining these facilities is done on an ad hoc basis where only small budgets are set aside for this important task. There is no full-time maintenance department thus part-time service providers perform this task, which can lead to months of delays when facilities are neglected. The results of the current study are in line with those of previous investigations done elsewhere (Halforty, & Radder, (2015) where 'facilities' or 'overcrowded facilities' are listed as noted barriers to participation in sports.

## Conclusion

On the basis of data analysis and findings, the researcher arrived at conclusion that social-cultural limitations, parental influence, lack of facilities, lack of financial facilities and lack of interest are the main factors affecting female sports participation in Pakistan.

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## Conflict of Interest

Authors have no conflict of interest.


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