

Situational Analyses Of Gender In Sports At District Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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Abstract

The present study is an attempt to analyze the status of sports facilities available to women in district Mardan both at official level and in private sphere. The study also delineates the Pakhtun cultural perspective on women in sports. The study is carried out at district Mardan with qualitative research design. Interviews are conducted with different sports officials, sports persons and community members of district Mardan. It is revealed that no separate sports gym or ground is designated in the study area for women sports persons by government. Similarly, no such facility is available in private spare in the locality. Hence, women participation in sports is non-existent. In order to encourage and motivate women participation in sports, the government needs to provide separate grounds to women of the district along with bringing awareness in masses regarding gender mainstreaming in sports.

Key Terms: Gender Mainstreaming, Sports, Facilities, Pakhtun culture, Analyses, Mardan

Introduction

Gender mainstreaming is the subject of research since the first wave of feminism encountered by world in the United States (Breines, 2006). Hence then, different disciplines analyzed the issue with their close orientation and focused objectives including the field of sports psychology and its concern with gender differences and achievement in sports (e.g. Branta, Painter, & Kiger, 1987). Most definitions of gender mainstreaming across institutions adhere closely to those set out by the United Nation Economic and Social Council (UN, 1997). Gender mainstreaming is a perspective which evaluates repercussions of planned action, policies, programs or legislation for men and women both at all level and in all areas. It is for the purpose to ensure equality for both genders in all societal spheres like politics, management,

administration, economic etc. The strategy of gender mainstreaming aims at a multiplication of the actors, policy areas and policy levels that are involved in working towards gender equality (Council of Europe, 1998).

The impediment to gender mainstreaming is the prejudice, stereotype, discrimination which are woven into cultures by reinforcement through male-dominated institutions like schools, religion, economic, politics etc (UN, 2007; Wadesango, Machingambi, Ashu, & Chireshe, 2010). Like other fields, a sport is also dominated by male, although in recent years women participation is increased (Connell, 1998; Gogol, 2002; Wadesango, Machingambi, Ashu, & Chireshe, 2010). The underrepresentation of women in sports structure like administration, coaches, officials is reflecting their marginalization in sports (Goslin, 2006; Lapchick et al. 2008). Study about community level sports in Canada reveals that less than 5% are female coaches (UN, 2007). Study reports that even such underrepresented females are neither recognized nor rewarded for their active participation which further de-motivate female (Mills & Eng, 2010).

The sport is known to be a male activity and is associated with masculinity (Kane & Disch, 1993; Coakley & Pike, 2009; Fink, 2008). This hegemonic culture is not limited to a particular country or continent; it is reflected in almost every culture of any level of civility (Massengale, 2009; Wadesango, Machingambi, Ashu, & Chireshe, 2010). Mostly study reveals that gender equality in sports is the least concerns of the countries (Wadesango, Machingambi, Ashu, & Chireshe, 2010). Similar circumstances and approach of the government could be observed in the study locale. This could be one of the reasons that gender mainstreaming through sports caught little attention of the researcher particularly in the discipline of sociology or sociology of sports. In addition, very little is written on the subject with in Pakhtun society (Ullah & Skelton, 2016).

Hence the present study is an attempt to initiate discussion on the issue with focus on the facilities available for sports to female in the study locale, as the study is carried out in Mardan, one of the districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa dominantly residing over by the Yousafzai tribe of Pakhtun nation. Hence, the paper also look into the subject in the perspective of Pakhtunwali known as unwritten code of life that defines the role of male and female in the Pakhtun society. Pakhtunwali is flexible but a male dominated code in which females of the Pakhtuns have limited social space in outdoor activities (Taj, 2011; Gandhi, 2004). This not only restrict women to domestic sphere, rather very few are in public sphere face hurdles in all walk of life including the research area. This keeps them aside in the sphere of sports and games. From very beginning through socialization both the genders are educating that women will be confined to four walls while due to masculinity men will do the public sphere activities including sports. In the context of this type of socialization boys are more interested than girls to participate in outdoor sports activities that involves complex rules and team work (Lever, 1978). Highlighting most of the reasons that why Pakhtun women are not permitted to sports, already available data regarding female, argues that females are considered physically inferior to men on the basis of biological stereotype. Adherence to such discriminatory approach leads to sports stereotypes. These stereotypes have no relationship with the actual capacity and performance of female sports persons (Morris, 1996). Such notions has been culturally approved and accepted as natural as it is transferred through media, parents, community and education from one generation to another throughout the centuries (Crandall, 1994; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Gould, 1996). Therefore, in the present study, perception of the community is also taken into consideration on women participation in sports.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical base for the current study is derived from a gender discourse analysis where particularly, hegemonic masculinity (Whisenant, 2003), homologous reproduction (Lovett & Lowry, 1994), homophobia (Rotella & Murray, 1991) and gender mainstreaming is focused. Hegemonic masculinity prevails in the situation when attributes of femininity are considered inferior and masculinity superior. Masculinity in such context not only dominates but controls the discourse and pave way for gender inequality through reinforcement (Massengale, 2009). Whereas theory of homologous reproduction (Lovett & Lowry, 1994) argues that a dominant group works as dominant ideology with the purpose to safeguard its power and privilege carefully. In the theory of homophobia it is described that how the fear of sexuality contributes to institutionalization of the sexism (Heilman, 2001). Mainstreaming gender in sports consider female as part of sports organization (Gogol, 2002) who needs their full participation in decision making and access to equal rights in order to achieve gender equality in sports (Wadesango, Machingambi, Ashu, & Chireshe, 2010).

Methodology

The study is carried out with a qualitative design. A critical discourse analysis is employed while interpreting the data by highlighting that how gender mainstreaming is embedded in the sports structure and Pakhtun culture in district Mardan. The study is conducted by the researchers in district Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. District Mardan is a city where Pashtun majority is living since long, following particular dress code and Pashtun culture in their way of life. Male using their local made *qamis* and *partoog* covering body and knee from the two shoulders. The Pashtun woman uses *lopatta* and traditional long *Sadar/Parhoone* (Pashto language terms) a printed piece of cloth, in order to ensure their *Parda* (seclusion) (Sanauddin, Chitralli, & Ahmad, 2015; Khan, 2007).

The sports structure of district Mardan consists of District Sports Officer (DSO) who is male, coaches who are male and support office staff. District Mardan hosts a university which is also providing chances of sport participation to both male and female. Therefore, their skills, practical experience, and stack in the sports interest compel the researchers to consider them for interview. Similarly, one of the aspects of the present research paper is Pukhtun perspective or simply community perception about women in sports. Therefore, few interviews were conducted with community members and cultural experts in order to investigate the association of Pakhtunwali with female sports participation. Interview guide was used as a tool of data collection to assess their knowledge and opinion about the issue. Frequent questions were asked during interviews while examining their expressions and feelings carefully. The collected date was critically analyzed and wherever required discussed with the available literature for inferences.

Data Analyses and Discussion

The application of the aforementioned methodology to the available literature, collected primary data, and personal observations produced the following discussion which is divided under two themes i.e. District sports structure and facilities and Pakhtun cultural perspective.

1. District Sports Structure and Facilities:

Sports facilities are all the equipments needed for the sports players to play. The tools, grounds and places, sport persons use to play in are included in sports infrastructure. Government or the concern authorities who have power and access to the resources has the duty to provide sports facilities to all the sportspersons playing different games. Government provides these resources through sports

structure/infrastructure prevailing in the districts. On Provincial Governmental level there is Sports Secretary who is assisted by two Director Generals, one Male and one Female. They are further assisted by District Sports Officer (DSO) at District level. In some of the districts the offices are run by Deputy District Sports Officer. These offices include staff like assistant, junior clerk and Naib Qasid. DSOs are responsible for managing sports activities at district level for both male and female (Directorate of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, n.d.).

a. Structural problems:

It is revealed that sports management is no exception to corruption if that is moral or financial (Maennig, 2005). Such perceived atmosphere may discourage sports women to participate in competitions (Nyamu-Musembi, 2007). It is also pointed out that most of the authorities in the sports management are either non sports persons or non technical. This could be one of the reasons that lead to lack of will and commitment on the part of management to promote sports and produce opportunities for female sports and games (Sundstrom & Wängnerud, 2016). Mostly the higher management is politically appointed or deputed officers. They may not have any interest in sports rather in perk and privileges of the seat assigned to them. In such a milieu sports promotion in general and female participation in particular may be affected. It could also be possible that such scenarios may provide chances of plundering the allocated budget and reduces the already marginalized field further. It is also perceived that the level of recognition and reward are not appropriate to attract and keep continue the sports' talent.

b. *Structural Favoritism:*

The sports infrastructure tilts toward certain families and personalities and ignores equal opportunity to attract potential players, coaches and associations (Dixon & Bruening, 2007). Since long such families have hegemony over the sports and games processes, policies, and decisions effecting growth. New scope and talent for inclusive visionary policies are minimal and the available structure performs a routine duty with a traditional outlook. It is also revealed that selection is the criteria rather than election, ascribe status is critical than achieved one. In true sense no neutral, transparent, and accessible strategies are followed in most of the sports activities at district level (Seppänen & Virtanen, 2008). There is no proper check and balance nor any monitoring mechanism to observe that funds are properly utilized and sports activities are carried out in true letter and spirit by ensuring female participation. Training for hunted players to polish their skills and support them are not satisfactory.

c. *Women representation in district administration:*

Women representation in all tiers of management is essential for ensuring to devise a gender balanced sports policy and strategies. Such doctrine got appreciation from the United Nations (2007) which was followed by Kenya and Zambia for making efforts to involve women in decision making in sport. This could be replicable in other countries. In Kenya, a football and peer-led health education project for rural girls has trained girl referees to officiate at matches during the project's annual tournaments. Zambia has started a "Go Sisters" project which aims to empower girls through sport by training them to become peer leaders, offering them scholarships and involving them in decision making.

However, at district level, there is neither place nor representation of women in the administration to have say in policy making, budgetary provision/allocation, scheduling sports activity etc. Homologous, as a theory, reproduction proposes that a dominant group within an organization will work to "carefully guard power and privilege" by systematically reproducing themselves in their own image. This systematic reproduction is accomplished by men in leadership roles hiring and promoting other men. The

homologous reproduction is an important underlying variable that contributes to the continued under-representation of female leaders in sport (Massengale, 2009). The district structure is male dominated structure of administration and male may not be able to address the problems of female. For that the voice of female is needed to address the women sports participation issue at hand.

d. *Educational based facilities and opportunities:*

Educational institutes as co-curricular activities organize sports and games, however not all (Gordon, 1994). Neither all institutions participate nor are all sport and game events organized. The reasons are lack of will and interest on the part of decision makers, scarcity of fund, non-availability of grounds and other sport goods, no suitable female coaches, non-supportive academic environment for sports persons, and ridicule by teaching staff and fellow students. With the existing socio-administrative conditions, participation of female in sports and games is if not impossible but difficult.

e. *Insufficient support for female sports:*

Studies reveal that female sports team and persons do not get the attention of media nor recognition from the society as compared to men. They even are not paid their dues in descent way (see e.g., Mills and Engh 2010; Richardson, 2001). As observed by Mills and Engh (2010), one female player complained last year as follows; 'We perform well, we come back with trophies of tournaments, and then ... we don't get recognized for it'. Similarly, one of the sports women working in the study district reveals that mainly basic sports facilities are neither available nor provided to players. Sports persons are compelled to beg for small items like shoes, kits etc. Their personalities are damaged with in such organizational norms. Through interaction with players of other provinces, we sometime dare to ask for facilitation in our district however, most of the time in vain. A small amount of Travelling and Daily Allowance is allowed to sports persons when they participate in sports and games. This is now we got that government has a lot of fund and duty to provide females with full stuff and reward.

f. *Participation without career:*

Suitable and culturally appropriate facilities are inevitable for attracting female participation in sports. Culture and religion is woven in societal and individual psychology. Any move by any formal or informal authority which is contradictory to the cultural normative perception and or belief would get a setback. As revealed by a sports coach and teacher, Mardan is participating in sports and men are getting chances of representing WAPDA, Army, Police and other department, however, for female we do not have such opportunities or at least not equitable. Further, women have no platform for sporting their skills and development. Sport authority mentions that some females came to me for asking career opportunity in sports; however I sadly discouraged them as we find no accommodative sports environment for female. I feel that the talent of such girls is wasted. Similarly, due to lack of sports facilities or platforms, we do not utilize the talent and potential of rural sports women. We need to have a women sports board (women wing) in our sports structure. I have observed personally female wants to participate in sports and choose it as their career and profession but could not get place in that. Although, Iran and Bahrain are Islamic countries but they provide Islamic friendly environment for both male and female covering body of the female while using scarf play games.

2. Pakhtun cultural perspective:

Pakhtuns have already described mode of life in which gender roles and statuses are constructed according to their norms and values. Usually, Pakhtun people construct the personality of male and female in the way in which they have distinctive roles and social positions. Like male are given roles

based on strength, power and public dealings, however on the basis of the physique and emotional capacity, women are limited to their domestic chores, to cook or care and nurture their children.

a. Sexism and sports:

Societal cultural discourses give certain role to particular gender on the basis of its biological differences, strength and weaknesses (Kimmel, 2000; Creedon, 1994). Such discourses sometimes have weak points which in result dominate one category while subordinate other. Such belief has exclusionary effects for women to participate in sports. Similar effects are identified by researchers while referring to female subordination and absence from sports decision making bodies including FIFA organizing structure. FIFA organizing structure was referred to be the manifestation of the patriarchal attitude associated with African countries (Fink, 2008; African Women & Sports association, 2002; FIFA.com, 2010). As evident from the study of Coakley & Pike (2009), sports in American society is also male friendly. This indicates to a relationship of sexism with culture of sports in America. Boys and girls are taught that male-only sports are a fundamental and 'natural' male initiation rite. It shows that not only in African culture the male only sports are woven but also in American culture as well. Similar belief is found in the current study area where females are labeled as weak, irrational, delicate. This belief works like double edge sword. On the one hand, society considers them not fit for sports and other works demanding physical strength, on the other, female gradually adapt to such belief and do not consider it important to question the male dominated statuesque. They not only remain out of the sports fields and grounds but also from the sports policy making bodies. In this part administration and Pukhtun community members play its role with hegemonic and discriminatory attitude by not willingly allowing female to be part of sports infrastructure and field due to unequal treatment by community and government. To some extent, government institutionalized sports in educational sector where specifically girls' institutions are also providing a chance to female sports students. However, the cultural restraint and weak infrastructure do not encourage these sports girls to take part in sports out of schools and colleges. This stereotypical attitude towards female obstructs the way towards sports career for female in Pakhtun society. It is also revealed that facilities are laying in the current sports infrastructure for female however, in the influence of the socio-cultural pressure, parents, peer groups and even sports coaches are not motivating female sports students to keep continue participation in sports. Such practice of division of sports which got its approval from culturally transmitted norms requires a wisely and visionary challenge from all stakeholders with in the society. Similar conclusion was also drawn by Gogol (2002). He further argues that impact of development is only meaningful if it provides equal opportunity to both genders in all sphere of life including sports.

b. Dress code as barrier:

Sports discourse is not an exception, like other fields it is also dominated by male. The dresses designed are somehow defined to be suitable for male but not for female. Although, the technical experts while producing such stuff have taken into consideration the effects of the dress on performance of the sports person. However, they might not have taken into consideration the culturally defined and perceived notion of dresses. Dress codes are divided into types on the basis of gender in normal life. Although the developed countries might have reached to the level of diminishing this divide however, the developing, conservative, closed and or religious societies might not be in a position to set aside this dress segregation from their culturally approved normative scheme. As envisages from the study conducted by Wadesango, Machingambi, Ashu, & Chireshe (2010) that sports administrations demand from Banyana Banyana team

members regarding attendance of etiquettes classes and skirts wearing were negatively perceived and considered a potential threat that could further reduce female participation in sports. As reported in the same study by Mills and Engh (2010) while citing the male coach of the Banyana Banyana team that “ladies need to learn how to be ladies”. Such a role strain for the female sports participants from the societal folk and from the male dominated sports bodies cause reduction in sports participation. Pakhtun society has an exclusive dress code for both male and female. Even Islamic principles contain complete description of dress code for both genders (Medjadji, 2007). Dress code is considered a symbol of honor and shame in Pakhtun society. At present it seems quite difficult for the women to deviate from the dress code approved by Pakhtun culture. Most of the sports dresses are almost absolutely in conflict with the dress code prevailing in district Mardan. This is the reason that male restrains women to participate in sports publicly in the study area. The situation adds fuel to the fire when the sport structure is also not accommodative enough to allow culturally appropriate dresses to female sports persons. Similar results were drawn by (Dagkas & Benn, 2006).

c. *Feeling insecure:*

The sports environment is not appropriately conducive and supportive for female to maintain dignified status as a member of society. There are many chances of exploitation within the sports structure and its correspondence social environment as reported by (Pittman et al., 1999). The homophobia's effect is also reported to be limiting the chances for women sports participation (Rotella & Murray, 1991). Heilman (2001) also acknowledged and highlighted the contribution of this fear as to produce sexism, discrimination, and prejudice against women. In the same context, Pringle (2005) has listed lesbian fear as a significant factor contributing to women's difficulty in attaining leadership positions in sports. Massengale (2009) additionally lists sexual orientation as a notable factor in the under-representation of women in coaching. It was also observed during the interviews that low participation of female is due to the non conducive environment rather more exploitative one in the study area. Such perception of the people about the sports environment is altogether negatively affecting progress in female sports participation. Apparently, the dress code of the sports female is producing negative feelings among the community members where then even hearsay statements about the exploitative sports environment gets blind recognition and approval from society members.

d. *No Demand No Supply:*

Demand and supply is a simple rule. As most of the respondents consider female responsible for low participation in sports and games on the pretext that they do not ask for facilitation. As both demand and supply are associated actions, hence no demand corresponds to any supply.

Conclusion:

On one hand government unequal attention to women and on the other hand, Pakhtun masculine attitudes have limited the participation of women in sports. Sport as leisure activity and or as professional field does not carry support from both government and community. From the current study we draw few conclusions as follows:

1. Sports infrastructure in the study area is available and providing chances to female to be involved in it, however, there are major gaps and weaknesses which do not allow female participation in both on ground and in decision making bodies.

2. The available sports structure is political dominated, has sources of corruption, favoritism for certain families and personalities and ignoring appropriate rewards and recognition of the talented sports women.
3. It is also concluded that in the sports structure there is very less chance for female to be part of decision making bodies which reduces the chances of preparing and implementing gender balanced sports policy. Such situation produces chances for further discrimination, marginalization and exclusion of the women folk from the any sort of sports discourse and or policy.
4. The sports structure is mainly male dominated and they have a hegemonic position over the sports infrastructure which paves no way for female sports persons.
5. The debate between masculinity and femininity is dominated by male in the study area and mostly sports are considered as male activity.
6. It is concluded that in such a bleak situation of female sports, neither media, nor peer, parents, teachers support and encourage them. It further devastates the already miserable situation and hence female sports participation is not responding actively.
7. The sports policies and standardization locally, nationally, internationally are not cultural sensitive. Mostly it seems that such policies are not evaluated on the basis of cultural normative orders which results into low participation from Pakhtun women.
8. The sports environment within the prevailing structure is not such where easily a sports women can maintain her dignified status as approved by the Pakhtun society. The environment is exploitative for female.
9. In a nut shell, women do not put forward their demands for improving the situation where they could participate in sports safely. Hence, there is no appropriate supply from government or other responsible organizations for the subject.

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