

# Exploring the dynamics of sports culture in Pakistan: A qualitative study

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## ABSTRACT

The importance of sports and physical activities is understood in all kinds of societies around the globe. The current study aimed to understand the dimensions of physical culture in Pakistan (a developing country that is not well-renowned in the context of sporting identity) that need to be addressed earlier. A qualitative study was conducted with 26 experts (athletes, journalists, sports managers, and sociologists) to discuss the research questions about the characteristics of the sports culture of Pakistan and the factors affecting it. The study identified socio-cultural factors (age, gender, demography), economic factors (facilities, social status, unemployment), and personal factors (enjoyment, physical fitness, social interaction, hobby) as characteristics of sports culture. Additionally, national culture, celebrity culture, and family culture were found to significantly affect Pakistani sports culture.

## KEYWORDS

Sports Culture; Physical Culture; Sports Participation; Physical Activities; National Culture

## 1. INTRODUCTION

"A healthy body holds a healthy mind" is a famous proverb. Physical health and physical activities are vital in people's emotional, mental, psychological, social, personality, sportsmanship spirit, and physical development. Different societies put particular focus on people's physical development by different means; sports is one of them. The importance of sports is understood in all societies around the globe (Hasaan et al., 2024).

Pakistan differs significantly from many developed and Western countries in various aspects. As the sixth most populous country in the world, a large portion of its human resources remains unskilled (Begum Sadaquat & Sheikh, 2011). In daily life, physical fitness and sports activities are generally not prioritized as there is a widespread perception that sports and physical activities hold little importance for professional career development and skill enhancement outside of sports (Khalid & Shah, 2024). Ganjera (2018) reflected this cultural outlook, highlighting how such perceptions undermine the value of sports and physical fitness in the broader societal context.

Moreover, Pakistan faces substantial challenges in sports development due to inadequate infrastructure and cultural barriers (Wray, 2002). The lack of modern sports facilities and investment in physical education contributes to a limited scope for skill development and professional growth in sports (Tanveer et al., 2024). Cultural barriers, such as traditional views on gender roles and the prioritization of academic and career achievements over physical activities, further exacerbate the situation (Ge et al., 2022). These factors collectively hinder the advancement of sports culture and physical fitness in Pakistan, setting it behind many developed countries where sports are more deeply integrated into societal norms and professional pathways (Manzoor et al., 2019). As a result, Pakistani participation in international and regional sports events such as the Olympics, Asian Games, FIFA, National Games, and SAARC Games is minimal.

Although sports culture in different countries is a ubiquitous topic among academia, there is a lack of studies discussing sport culture and its dimensions in Pakistan. Therefore, the current study aims to fill that gap. Countries around the globe have different levels of sports culture or people's participation in sports. People's engagement and participation in different sports-related activities varies from society to society (Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018). The reasons behind such variations need to be explored in the country's context. Therefore, the present study attempts to determine the factors necessary to develop an overall sports culture in a country. In this context, the current study aimed to understand the elements of sports culture (i.e., sports participation) in Pakistan and what factors can affect these settings.

### **1.1. Literature Review**

Physical culture or *sports culture* is defined as cultural practices such as sports and dance within which the moving physical body is central (Hargreaves & Vertinsky, 2007). The term "culture" characterizes "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede et al., 2005, p. 28). Sport is one dominant

form of physical activity that can be crucial not only for public health but also for psychological and social benefits as well (Kim et al., 2020). Beyond its physical and social benefits, sport also holds cultural significance, operating as an alternate dimension of culture that reflects and shapes societal values and practices (Gemar, 2020). This cultural framework profoundly influences individuals' engagement in physical activities by shaping their motivations and behaviors. Motivation is a pivotal force driving individual behavior, guiding people toward specific objectives, and fostering coordination among them (Moradi et al., 2020). It plays a crucial role in sustaining physical activity (Zhou et al., 2020), and is deeply intertwined with sports culture and physical culture. Within these cultural contexts, motivation can be shaped by the prevailing norms, values, and practices surrounding physical activities. For instance, various motivations, such as self-determined motivations (Halldorsson et al., 2012), ego-oriented motivations (Gillet et al., 2013), and psychological factors like enjoyment and anxiety (Van de Pol et al., 2015), are influenced by the broader sports culture and its impact on individual behavior. The relationship between sports culture and motivation is evident through factors such as coach associations (Gillet et al., 2012), the motivational climate (Keegan et al., 2014), and experiences of burnout (Holmberg & Sheridan, 2013). These elements reflect the cultural context in which motivation operates, illustrating how the cultural environment shapes and reinforces individual motivations. Furthermore, variations in motivational levels and reasons across different competition levels and genders underscore the influence of sports culture on motivational dynamics (Clancy et al., 2016).

Additionally, emerging research emphasizes the role of digital media and technological advancements in shaping contemporary sports culture (Fişne & Hasaan, 2020). Digital platforms have revolutionized how individuals engage with sports, providing easier access to live events, training resources, and athlete interactions (Qi et al., 2024). This shift has expanded sports culture beyond traditional boundaries, allowing for greater global participation and influence (Angosto et al., 2022). In countries like Pakistan, where access to sports facilities might be limited in certain regions, digital media bridges this gap by providing exposure and motivation to participate in sports activities. This digital integration influences sports consumption patterns and reshapes cultural narratives around sports participation.

Moreover, the commercialization of sports has had a profound effect on sports culture. The increasing visibility of sports through media and marketing campaigns has turned sports into a significant cultural commodity (Origi & Deya, 2019). Athletes are now seen not only as sports figures but also as influencers and brand ambassadors (Hautbois et al., 2024). This dual role of

athletes impacts how sports culture is perceived, especially among the youth, who may look up to these figures for both athletic and lifestyle inspiration. In Pakistan, this trend is becoming increasingly apparent, as successful athletes are celebrated in media campaigns, influencing public perceptions and aspirations regarding sports participation.

However, past studies have demonstrated that sports culture varies from country to country, like a common culture. For instance, Pfister (2003) mentioned that different concepts of physical culture developed in various countries, which were connected with the prevailing conditions in each country. This difference is not only based on countries but also on different features such as demographics, sex, age, economics, and others. For instance, for girls, physical fitness often declines during adolescence (Battista et al., 2021; Malina et al., 2010), while for boys, physical fitness usually increases or even exponentially increases over time (Malina et al., 2004). Sports participation significantly decreased among less educated and older individuals (Balaska & Kouthouris, 2014). Moreover, sports participation increases or decreases based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, and other participants' characteristics (Berger et al., 2008).

Sports involvement and sports culture usually vary based on different aspects, i.e., (1) enjoyment, (2) Sports skills, (3) physical fitness, (4) social interactions, (5) sportsmanship and fair play; and (6) habits (Malina, 2009). Also, Balaska & Kouthouris (2014) found that lack of time, facilities/services, and partner-related constraints are the main factors contributing to sport culture. Furthermore, physical competence, appearance self-concept, and global physical and general self-esteem are also highlighted as sports consumption factors (Findlay & Bowker, 2009). In addition, Berger et al. (2008) found that socio-individual characteristics, psychological predispositions, socio-cultural influences, and environmental factors are significant determinants of sport participation. Clark et al. (2015) found strong connections between sports and positive psychological and social outcomes (i.e., self-esteem, self-regulation, general life skills, and pro-social behavior).

Past studies also identified associations between sport participation and demographic factors such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status (Seabra et al., 2008). Sallis et al. (2000) found that gender and age are significant factors in sport participation, as boys are more active than girls and younger children are more active than adolescents. For instance, a study in the United States found that the rate of sports participation among younger women is higher than that of older women (Pharr et al., 2020). Regarding socio-cultural factors, several authors indicate that social influences on physical activity participation in children and adolescents include parents, siblings, peers, and teachers (Sallis et al., 2000; Seabra et al., 2008). In this vein, Moradi et al. (2020) noted that

characteristics such as age, gender, and experience decide whether to continue or discontinue sport participation. Furthermore, İnal & Tunçer (2020) demonstrated a decrease in physical activity rates among the participants during the university period compared to before the university (i.e., younger age).

Culture influences youth's motivation to participate in physical or sports activities (Yan & McCullagh, 2004). However, sports culture is affected by many forms of culture, including popular culture and traditions (Gavrilova & Donohue, 2018). Among the various cultural influences shaping sports culture, family culture, celebrity influence, and national culture play particularly significant roles, each contributing uniquely to participation patterns and public perception.

Family culture plays a pivotal role in shaping sports culture, especially in contexts where family values and traditions significantly influence individual behaviors. For instance, Strandbu et al. (2020) found a clear positive relationship between family sport culture and sport participation. Sporting cultures are transmitted through the family's culture (Wheeler, 2012), directly affecting sports culture by shaping attitudes, access, and participation patterns. In many societies, family support acts as a critical factor in encouraging or discouraging sports participation (Sanz-Martín et al., 2020). Parents who value sports often provide early exposure, access to training, and moral support, fostering long-term interest and engagement (Bonavolontà et al., 2021). Sibling influence can also contribute to the development of sports culture, as younger family members often emulate the activities and interests of older siblings (Eime et al., 2013). Moreover, family traditions related to sports—such as participating in community tournaments or supporting particular sports teams—help sustain sports culture across generations (McMillan et al., 2016). Socioeconomic status within families also determines access to sports facilities, equipment, and professional coaching, thus affecting participation levels (Knoester & Bjork, 2024). In countries like Pakistan, these dynamics are especially relevant, where family approval often determines participation levels, particularly for women.

The influence of celebrity culture on sports participation and perception is equally profound. Sports celebrities have provided fruitful grounds for critiquing the role of sport in late-capitalist culture (Howe & Parker, 2012). Globally, sports celebrities, especially those with significant media presence, enjoy immense popularity and often serve as role models for the younger generation (Taniyev & Gordon, 2022). Their success stories, media appearances, and lifestyle choices significantly impact public interest and engagement in sports (Howe & Parker, 2012). The glorification of athletes through traditional media and social media platforms enhances their

visibility, allowing them to shape narratives around sports culture (Dugalić & Lazarević, 2017). For many young fans, sports celebrities embody aspirations of fame, success, and upward mobility, motivating them to pursue similar paths (Mahmoudian et al., 2021). Additionally, celebrity endorsements of sports brands and involvement in social causes contribute to shaping societal attitudes toward sports (Premeaux, 2006). The growing trend of athletes transitioning into media personalities, brand ambassadors, and influencers further blurs the lines between sports and entertainment (Khosravi et al., 2024). This celebrity influence is not limited to national heroes; international sports figures also impact local sports culture, introducing new sports preferences and global perspectives. In contexts like Pakistan, sports celebrities, especially cricketers, hold national significance, with their public personas influencing sports culture by shaping public perceptions, youth aspirations, and participation patterns.

National culture also plays a fundamental role in shaping sports culture, influencing participation patterns, preferences, and the overall societal perception of sports national culture influences the prominence of specific sports and the ways they are integrated into everyday life (Yarar, 2005). For example, football serves as a cultural unifier in countries like Brazil and Spain, while sumo wrestling is deeply embedded in Japanese cultural traditions (Vaughan et al., 2021). In Pakistan, sports such as cricket have become symbols of national pride, unifying diverse communities across ethnic and regional lines (Chunying, 2021). The performance of the national cricket team, for instance, often becomes a matter of national significance, influencing public morale and identity (Hasaan, 2024). Also, Birchwood et al. (2008) mentioned that national culture cast inter-country differences in rates of sport participation in the region of South Caucasus. Differences in national values, historical significance of sports, and government policies contribute to these variations. In many countries, national policies, political history, and religious norms shape the sports landscape by influencing public interest, funding decisions, and access to sports infrastructure (Tsybanyuk et al., 2025). Government investment in sports infrastructure, the role of sports in diplomatic relations, and religious considerations affecting participation, particularly for women, highlight the deep-rooted connections between national culture and sports culture (Hasaan et al., 2024). National heroes and historic achievements in sports act as collective memories, fostering a sense of unity and inspiring future generations (Künzler & Poli, 2013). In the context of Pakistan, sports such as cricket have become symbols of national pride, unifying diverse communities across ethnic and regional lines. The performance of the national cricket team, for instance, often becomes a matter of national significance, influencing public morale and identity (Hasaan, 2024). Regional

differences based on language, ethnicity, and historical backgrounds also influence sports preferences—for example, hockey's historical importance or the rising popularity of football in certain regions. These elements illustrate how national culture not only influences participation rates but also frames sports as a medium for national expression and identity (Caz et al., 2021). Therefore, this study opted for the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** What are the characteristics of sports culture in Pakistan?
- **RQ2:** What factors affect that typical setting of Pakistani Sports culture?

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1. Design and Participants

The study opted for an inductive research approach and thus used a qualitative method. Semi-structured interviews were used as data collection tools. Study participants were selected based on purposeful, convenient sampling. Suri (2011) mentioned that purposeful sampling could lead to information-rich data. Criterion sampling was used for purposeful sampling; as Patton (2014) mentioned, criterion sampling is a purposeful type of sampling. For this study, participants had to meet the following criteria:

1. They should follow certain sports.
2. They have played or are playing a specific sport at any level.
3. They are still attached to sports activities (playing, managing, or studying).

The final sample comprised 26 male and female participants from different fields (journalists, athletes, managers, and academicians) (See Table1).

**Table 1.** Participant details

Participant No.	Profession	Age group	Gender M/F	Experience
P1- P6	Sport journalist	22- 38 Years	4/2	2-13 Years
P7- P14	Professional athletes	20-28 Years	5/2	2- 10 Years
P15- P19	Sport governing body members	35-55 Years	4/0	3- 17 Years
P20- P26	Sociologist	30-44 Years	2/5	3- 19 Years

### 2.2. Data Collection

Before conducting the interview, the participants were shown and asked to sign a voluntary participation form explaining the study's purpose, their rights and role in the study, and their acceptance to participate. All participants were assured that their identities would not reveal at any study stage. Thus, to conceal their identities, we assigned pseudonyms to each participant. All Interviews were conducted in participants' preferred settings where they were comfortable participating without obstacles. The interviews lasted 35 to 55 minutes, depending upon the participant's interest and willingness to share his/her thoughts. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interviews were conducted between December 2022 and March 2023.

A semi-structured interview guide was prepared based on the study's research questions while following Lincoln & Guba (1985) interview guidelines. Therefore, the sequence and structure of questions remained the same for every interview. Through the interviews, the study covered the issues mentioned in the literature related to the sports culture of Pakistan. Each interview consisted of questions about the dimensions of sports culture within the country and factors that affected the culture positively or negatively. All data collected during the study, including interview recordings and transcripts, were securely stored on password-protected computers accessible only to the research team. After the study concludes, all audio recordings will be permanently deleted. Transcripts will be anonymized and stored securely for five years in accordance with institutional guidelines, after which they will be permanently destroyed.

The interviewer serves as an instrument to achieve in-depth knowledge of participants by using probing questions (Patton, 2014; Robinson, 2023) (i.e., follow-up questions asked to clarify the interviewee's point of view). The interviews were conducted in Urdu and English to enable participants to express themselves clearly. For Urdu interviews, professional language translators with postgraduate qualifications in linguistics and translation studies were employed to assist with translating the transcripts into English. These translators had prior experience in academic research translation, ensuring the accuracy and contextual integrity of the data.

### **2.3. Data Analysis**

As suggested by Corbin & Strauss (2008), the data analysis process was initiated after conducting the first interview. According to Corbin & Strauss (2008), this strategy allowed researchers to become better familiar with the participant's responses. The process started with listening to the interview and converting the interview into a written state. The first impressions of the interview were noted at this stage. The initial impressions were then discussed with the other

researchers to improve succeeding interviews. This process also helped the researchers to gain a better understanding of the data.

The study opted for two-level coding for data analysis. The first stage of data analysis at the open coding level is "breaking data apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 195). The axial level, the final stage of data analysis, combines interrelated themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Open coding level produced initial themes. Researchers discussed these themes to determine emergent patterns. Axial coding level helped these initial themes to become concrete, defined, and combined themes (if required) based on the patterns and behavior of each theme to produce final results.

Patton (2014) noted that the trustworthiness of the qualitative data analysis is possible via credibility and dependability/ conformability. An experienced researcher with competence in the field of study was included in the research team to achieve credibility and dependability. Also, it was made sure that all possible information about the data collection process and participants would be disclosed. Peer-debriefing sessions and inter-researchers' compatibility processes were also used to enhance the credibility and dependability of the data. To achieve conformity, it ensured that the interviewer remained unbiased during the interviews and avoided angling any opinion. Inter-coder reliability was used to determine the coding agreement between the researchers. A final inter-coder reliability of .95 measured via Cohen's Kappa was obtained. Any discrepancies and disagreements were discussed until an agreement was reached (Campbell et al., 2013).

### **3. RESULTS**

The study's results answered two research questions, i.e., what are the characteristics of sports culture in Pakistan, and what factors affect that setting? For the first answer, participants of the study identified socio-cultural factors (age, gender, demography), economic factors (facilities, social status, unemployment), and personal factors (enjoyment, physical fitness, social interaction, hobby). In this regard, participants of the study identified that socio-cultural factors are the most critical factors that play a role in the participation of any person in the country in the sport. For instance,

**Age:** There is no ideal professional career path available in Pakistan, unlike in Europe, where young athletes begin participating in sports within academic settings from an early age. Therefore, young athletes started to participate in sports not at a very young age. Instead, those slightly older (aged 14 and above) mostly began engaging in sports [P22]. .

**Gender:** Unfortunately, it is challenging for girls to participate in sports like boys in Pakistan. Therefore, being a male is a factor that attracts them towards sport participation. However, sports culture is changing in big cities but is still gender biased [P2].

**Demography:** Cities and villages have different cultures. Physical activities are practiced more frequently in villages compared to cities. The type of sport is also different in cities and villages. Traditional sports are played in rural areas. While regional and administrative divisions, such as provinces or districts also play a significant role in the choice of sport participants adopt. For example, football is more prevalent in Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while Cricket is more prevalent in urban Punjab and Sind. Boxing is the first choice in some regions of Karachi, while Kabaddi and Volleyball are famous in rural Punjab. Therefore, each region plays a significant role in influencing a youth's choice of sport [P11].

The study participants identified three economic factors influencing their role in Pakistan's sports culture: sporting facilities, social status, and unemployment.

**Sporting facility:** There is no doubt that the availability of sport facilities ensures more contribution and participation from people around. A famous film quote says, "If you build, they will come," which is true in this case. For example, having a gym at one's doorstep is more attractive and inviting than being far away. Factors such as the availability of facilities per person, travel time to reach these facilities, and facility quality can attract or discourage sports participants [P5].

**Social status:** An individual's or their family's social status also plays a role in shaping the sporting culture of Pakistan. Sport is particularly prevalent among the very rich, where it is seen as a fashionable, upper-class activity, and among the very poor, for whom it serves as one of the few available entertainment options. Individuals belonging to either of these social classes are more likely to participate in physical activities. [P17].

**Unemployment:** As Pakistan has no route to follow to become a professional athlete, people participate in sports more actively when unemployed. Therefore, this is quite a unique phenomenon that unemployment attracts sport participation [P22].

Apart from socio-cultural and economic factors, study participants identified some personal factors as well. For instance, enjoyment, physical fitness, social interaction, and hobbies.

**Enjoyment:** Sport is pure enjoyment. People participate in it for enjoyment, fun, and positive experiences [P26].

**Physical fitness:** People often participate in sports to remain physically fit. Being athletic is more prevalent in city culture when young and old age groups are attached to some healthy activities to stay fit. City gyms are their prime examples [P3].

**Social interaction:** Sport facilitates social gatherings. It is the source of enhancement of social interactions and relationships with fellows. People participate in sports because it allows them to meet and greet with their friends and new people. It is an excellent source of getting together. That is why young people especially, participate in physical activities, as it offers them quality time with their friends and social interaction [P11].

**Hobby:** Sport as a hobby is a viral phenomenon worldwide. People adopted a specific sport as their hobby. Although non-physical sports as a hobby are gaining more popularity, physical activity is still widespread in any country, as in Pakistan [P18].

The second research question concerned the factors that intercept Pakistan's sports culture and bring changes. The study participants identified that national culture, celebrity culture, and family culture cast their effect on Pakistani sport culture.

**National culture:** Any country's culture directly affects a country's sports culture. For example, a few years ago, hockey was the most popular sport in Pakistan, and most young boys preferred to play hockey. However, when Cricket became the leading media broadcasting sport and became more fashionable and popular, youth stopped playing hockey and became the first choice. Thus, the national culture of a country has a direct effect on its sporting culture [P1].

**Celebrity culture:** Celebrities are heroes and leaders of any nation, especially youth. In Pakistan, celebrities influence their followers to participate in a particular sport. For instance, Jahangir Khan's (former Pakistan Squash player) popularity attracted youth towards Squash, and Aisam-ul-Haq (Pakistan Tennis star) attracted many people to Tennis. In addition, even non-sporting celebrities encourage their followers to engage in sports, either directly or indirectly [P20].

**Family culture:** Family plays a vital role in defining the lifestyle of their members. For instance, girls from sport-loving or playing families participate more in sports than non-sporting families. Therefore, family culture also plays a significant role in the dynamics of sporting culture. The best example is Aisam-ul-Haq or Jahangir Khan, who belongs to a sporting family (Aisam-ul-Haq's mother is a national Tennis champion, while Jahangir Khan's

cousins played Squash at the international level). Thus, they chose to represent a unique and unpopular sport [P20].

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

The focus of the study was to understand the dimensions of Pakistani sport culture and factors that affect the typical settings of the culture. The result of the study identified socio-cultural factors (age, gender, location), economic factors (facilities, social status, unemployment), and personal factors (enjoyment, physical fitness, social interaction, hobby) as essential characteristics of Pakistani sport culture. In addition, national culture, celebrity culture, and family culture are identified as the factors that interrupt the typical situation of sporting culture. The results of the study are in line with past studies. For instance, most countries' sports participation varies with age (Bába et al., 2018). It is also confirmed that age positively influences sport consumption and participation (Lera-López & Rapún-Gárate, 2007). Therefore, the study's finding that people of certain ages are more attracted to sports participation replicates past studies. The results of the current study align with previous research, indicating that males are more engaged in sports than females, both as athletes and fans (Hasaan et al., 2018). This finding is consistent with studies that have generally reported higher levels of physical activity among males compared to females (Thomas et al., 2019). Furthermore, it has been observed that males maintain higher participation rates in sports throughout their lives (Somerset & Hoare, 2018). The residency location of a participant is also a critical socio-economic and cultural factor study identified as it is noted that location can also influence participation in sports and is a significant factor of sports culture (Armentrout & Kamphoff, 2011). In this vein, Bába et al. (2018) mentioned that the relationship with sports depends on the residence location. Past studies have also identified the rural-urban divide between sport participation and discussed it as a sports culture dimension (Hoekman et al., 2017). However, limited research has explored the impact of rural and urban residency on sports participation and the significance of the geographical factor for the physical and social environment (Shove et al., 2012). In this perspective, the current study contributes to the existing sports culture literature by highlighting the role of locality and residence in shaping sports participation.

The current study highlighted that economic factors also play a role in setting Pakistan's sports culture. The sports facilities are among one of them. Participants of the current study claimed that better facilities lead to a stronger sports culture, as more people are attracted to participate. This result has been supported by various studies on sports culture in different countries. For instance, the

sport participation rate was positively associated with providing facilities available to participants worldwide (Eime et al., 2017). Therefore, having a not-far facility positively affected sports consumption and attracted more people. The social status of a person or family is also an essential factor in the sports culture of Pakistan. Past studies have mentioned that economic resources are significant as social class plays a major role in organized sports participation (Andersen & Bakken, 2019). In this vein, Grima et al. (2017) demonstrated that the higher and lower social classes showed significant differences in sports participation.

The current study also found that unemployment in Pakistan positively affects sports participation. This finding contradicts past studies, as several studies claimed that the unemployment rate significantly and negatively affected athletes' sports participation (Khanmoradi et al., 2021) and sports participation during unemployment (Gough, 2017). However, it is noteworthy that unlike many countries that offer professional career paths in sports, Pakistan primarily provides part-time opportunities, resulting in fewer full-time professional athletes.

The study also identified personal factors that contribute to sporting participation while discussing the sports culture of Pakistan. Enjoyment emerged as the most significant factor. Findings of past studies supported the use of enjoyment as an indicator of sport participation/dropout behavior (Gardner et al., 2017). Few studies even claimed that a sporting experience that fails to maximize enjoyment influences the decision to stay involved in, or withdraw, from sport (Litchfield & Elliott, 2021). In this context, enjoyment is one of the primary factors that appreciate a person to participate in sports. The second aspect of the personal factor identified is the physical fitness of participants. This factor is also in line with past studies, as past studies have mentioned that better physical fitness is one of the factors across several dimensions in childhood that enhanced the likelihood of sport participation (Battista et al., 2021). Likewise, Henriques-Neto et al. (2020) mentioned that people participate in sports to increase physical fitness. The third personal factor identified by the study participants is social interaction. Andersen et al. (2019) noted that social networks and social interactions are the most frequently reported aspects of sport participation. As well as, participation in physical activity fosters social development and integration (Coalter, 2007). The final personal factor identified sports as a hobby of a person. Sport is considered leisure activity pursued for pleasure. Thus, sport is also a hobby and not only a mutual quest for excellence (Kretchmar, 2019). Given the limited professional opportunities in Pakistan, sports as a hobby has become increasingly prominent in the culture.

The second aspect of the study was to identify the factors that affect the traditional sporting culture in Pakistan. The study's results identified national, celebrity, and family cultures as key influences. Birchwood et al. (2008) suggested that ethnic/national cultures significantly contribute to inter-country differences in sports participation rates. Moreover, Rowe (2016) mentioned that sport is an integral part of any culture, however remains an underappreciated domain within national cultures. Therefore, national culture has a profound impact the sports culture of any nation. These findings underscore the need for policymakers and sports organizations in Pakistan to recognize the cultural dimensions of sports participation and integrate them into national sports development strategies.

The second artifact study identified is celebrity culture. Celebrity culture in Pakistan is different, as sports figures are among the most influential celebrities in Pakistan (Alam, 2020). Therefore, celebrity culture in Pakistan favors sport participation. This contrasts with other countries where celebrity culture differs. For instance, In the Australian context, celebrity culture persuades young girls to social acceptance; they must look attractive, have a boyfriend, and be a party player (Bailey et al., 2013). This suggests that leveraging sports figures as role models could be an effective strategy to promote sports engagement, particularly among younger demographics.

Family culture is the last factor that plays a critical role in shaping sports consumption patterns in Pakistan. Past studies have discussed the critical role of family culture in the context of a person's social life. Family culture can either encourage or discourage sports participation. Therefore, growing up in a family that appreciates sports increases the likelihood of involvement (Strandbu et al., 2020). Conversely, family cultures where sports participation is not valued are also evident. This pattern is observed not only in Pakistan (Manzoor et al., 2020) but also internationally (Wong et al., 2019). Given the strong influence of family culture on sports participation, targeted initiatives—such as community-based sports programs and parental engagement strategies—could help foster a more supportive sporting environment.

## **5. LIMITATIONS**

While this study provides valuable insights into the sports culture of Pakistan, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the study employed a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews, which, although effective in capturing in-depth perspectives, may limit the generalizability of the findings. The results are context-specific and may not represent the broader population's views. Future research could incorporate quantitative methods to validate these findings and enhance generalizability. Secondly, the use of purposeful, convenient sampling may introduce

selection bias. Although criterion sampling ensured participants met specific requirements, the chosen sample of 26 participants from certain professional backgrounds (journalists, athletes, managers, and academicians) may not fully represent other key stakeholders, such as grassroots athletes, coaches at community levels, or fans from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the study provides a snapshot in time, capturing participant perspectives during interviews conducted between December 2022 and March 2023. Sports culture is dynamic and may evolve due to political, economic, or social changes. A longitudinal approach could provide deeper insights into how these factors shift over time.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

The focus of the study was to understand the elements of Pakistani sport culture and factors that affect the typical settings of the culture. For that purpose, two research questions were inquired through 26 participants. The result of the study identified three categories of socio-cultural factors, economic factors, and personal factors as essential characteristics of Pakistani sport culture. In addition, national culture, celebrity culture, and family culture are identified as the factors that interrupt the typical situation of sporting culture. According to the results, age, gender, and location of a person cast a positive or negative effect on the sport consumption of any person. As well as sports facilities, social status, and unemployment are also significant factors in the sports culture of Pakistan. Furthermore, enjoyment, physical fitness, social interaction, and hobbies are personal factors that grow sports interest among the people of Pakistan. Overall, the study identified several unique aspects. For example, unemployment is considered a positive factor for sports participation in Pakistan, primarily due to the lack of professional sports career paths in the country. Additionally, celebrity culture in Pakistan differs from that in other countries, as sports stars are among the most admired celebrities. This automatically boosts sports consumption among their followers.

The study is a springboard for future sociology and branding studies that could start to dig further for the in-depth understanding of Pakistani sports culture so it can improve and researchers and managers could understand the dimensions for their usage. Future studies should consider addressing the limitations identified in this research by incorporating mixed-method designs, which would allow for both in-depth qualitative insights and broader quantitative generalizations. Expanding the sample size and diversity, including participants from different socioeconomic backgrounds, grassroots athletes, fans, and regional variations across Pakistan, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the country's sports culture. Beyond methodological considerations, future research should also delve into broader sociocultural dynamics, such as the intersection of

sports with gender roles, religious influences, and regional identities within Pakistan. Investigating athlete branding, commercialization opportunities, and the media's role in shaping sports narratives could provide valuable insights for sports marketing and brand management. Moreover, exploring the impact of governmental policies, infrastructure development, and public investment in sports could inform policy recommendations aimed at fostering a more robust sports culture. The influence of globalization on local sports preferences and participation patterns also warrants examination, especially in understanding how international sports trends affect Pakistani sports culture. Additionally, studying fan engagement, including armchair fandom, digital consumption, and community-building around sports, would offer a nuanced perspective on how sports are consumed and celebrated. By addressing these broader prospects alongside methodological improvements, future research could provide actionable insights for sports managers, policymakers, and brand strategists to harness the potential of sports in Pakistan effectively. Moreover, future quantitative and qualitative investigations are essential to generalize the findings and develop a more nuanced understanding of the sociocultural and branding aspects of sports within the country.

## 7. REFERENCES

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