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Abstract: *This research study has examined the importance of sport participation in increasing national cohesiveness among BS college students athletes in the Southern area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan. Data were gathered at one time, on a cross-sectional research design, and with a quantitative research method, on a sample of 301 student athletes chosen of the total population of 1220 using simple random sampling with the sample size calculated using the Yamane formula. The result output is a statistically significant, but weak positive correlation between sports participation and national unity, showing that students who engage in sports more are slightly more likely to exhibit higher levels of national unity. Nevertheless, the small R² value indicated that the level of sports participation only contributes a minor part of the difference in national cohesiveness, which implies that other kinds of social and environmental variables are also relevant. The conclusion is that though sports participation has a positive impact on enhancing national unity via teamwork, interaction, and common experiences, it must be considered as one of many factors that have an influence as opposed to being a determinant in defining national unity among college students.*

Introduction

The involvement in sports has been generally accepted as a significant means of facilitating social growth, integration, and cohesion among people, in this case, youth. Sporting activities promote the interaction of culturally, ethnically and socially diverse people and respect, thus helping to minimize social distance and reinforce social cohesion. Sports in educational institutions, especially colleges, give students a chance to learn to work as a team, cooperate, and lead and respect each other. Such attributes are necessary to create a good national identity and cohesion among the young people in different societies such as Pakistan. It has been shown that sports also have a positive impact on social values and can be used to create a more cohesive community (Eime et al., 2013; Bailey et al., 2010).

Sports are an effective means of socialization and personality building in the student life setting. The athletes in the college not only enhance the physical fitness but also acquire vital psychological and

social aspects like discipline, responsibility, and cooperation. These attributes are directly linked with positive civic behavior and national integration. Research has indicated that sports involvement is largely linked with enhanced social interaction and group unity among students, which eventually aids in greater harmony in the society (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, and Deakin, 2010; Eime et al., 2015). Sports can thus be viewed as a positive influence towards fostering cohesion among young people in schools.

Sports hold a special significance in Pakistan because of the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of this country. Sport is a binding factor because it is a source that can unite the people behind one common name and national pride. Sports at the college level, in particular, offer a valuable opportunity to youth to experience interaction across regional and cultural boundaries. Nevertheless, lack of infrastructure, funding and institutional support are still the challenges of sport development in Pakistan, despite its significance. Such problems tend to limit the overall capabilities of sports to foster national cohesion and youth empowerment (Khan et al., 2016; Laar et al., 2019).

Past literature in Pakistan has noted that different social, cultural, and environmental factors affect sports participation among students. Facilities, institutional encouragement and parental support are important factors that dictate the engagement of students in sports activities. Simultaneously, sports engagement has been established to have a beneficial effect on the social behavior, teamwork, and psychological well-being of young people (Ahmed and Khan, 2018; Rehman et al., 2020). Such results indicate that sports are not only helpful in physical development, but also in strengthening social ties and integration of nations.

Objective

To examine the association between sport participation and national unity among bs college student athletes

To determine the effects of sport participation on national unity among bs college student athletes

Hypothesis

H_A 1: There is significant association between sport participation and national unity among bs college student athletes

H_A 2: There is statistically significant effects of sport participation on national unity among bs college student athletes

Literature Review

The use of sports in the literature has been greatly accepted as one of the effective methods of supporting social growth, integration, and cohesion among people, especially the youth. Scientists have highlighted that sports activities offer a platform through which people of different cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds interact, hence understanding one another and cooperating. Bailey et al. (2010) argue that school and college athletics play an important role in cultivation of social skills like teamwork, leadership, and respect towards others. On the same note, Eime et al. (2013) emphasized that psychological well-being and social connectedness which are the most essential elements of social harmony and unity have a positive relationship with sports participation.

Fraser-Thomas, Cote and Deakin (2010) also stressed that youth sports programs are an effective medium of positive youth development. Their research discovered that formal sporting activities improve inter-personal skills, responsibility and discipline in the youths. The qualities play a crucial role in establishing and strengthening social relations and developing a feeling of belonging to a group or nation. Moreover, Eime et al. (2015) also confirmed that the organized sports result in greater socialization and community participation that eventually results in the formation of social capital.

Social capital is the concept that is especially applicable in the context of the role of sports in making the

country united. According to Putnam (as presented in subsequent studies including Eime et al., 2015), social capital is built using the networks of relationships, trust, and values. Sports give a well-organized setting in which people pull together in achieving a shared objective and thus enhancing trust and social connections. Sports activities in learning institutions particularly colleges enable students with different backgrounds to interact and work together, minimizing social barriers and fostering cohesion.

Sports, in case of developing countries such as Pakistan, are valuable in terms of cultural and ethnic differences bridging. Khan et al. (2016) argue that sports in Pakistan can work towards national integration by uniting the youth of various regions together through a shared identity. Nevertheless, the research also revealed that there are also obstacles to full development of sports culture in the country, including poor sports facilities, institutional support and insufficient funding. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, sports can be a strong instrument to achieve unity and social harmony among students.

Laar et al. (2019) analyzed both physical activity and sports participation in Pakistan and discovered that both social and environmental factors have a significant impact on the level of participation. Their research highlighted that institutional support and peer encouragement are very important in enhancing student participation in sports. In addition, the involvement of sports in sports was also observed to have a positive impact on the confidence of students, teamwork, and social conduct, which are all significant in promoting national cohesion.

Rehman, Ali, and Ahmed (2020) have conducted another study, in which they explored the effect of sports participation on youth behavior and reported that students who participated in sports showed a better social adjustment and cooperative behavior as compared to those who were not involved in sports. The researchers reached the conclusion that sports are a useful tool to build positive social attitudes and minimize social conflicts among young people. These results affirm the notion that sport involvement can help create a more cohesive and socially integrated society.

In the Pakistani educational system, college level sports offer a big chance to the students to communicate outside academic levels. According to Bailey et al. (2010), physical education and sport programs in schools aid in the development of attitude towards cooperation and inclusion among students. Likewise, Eime et al. (2013) highlighted that sports involvement is associated with better social networks and lesser sense of isolation which are significant in fostering cohesion in heterogeneous student body.

Methodology

Research Approach and Design

A quantitative research approach was used in this study to examine the relationship between sports participation and national unity. It is concerned with gathering of numerical data and using statistical analysis to provide objective results. This method is useful in the measurement of the strength and importance of relationships among variables.

This research used a cross-sectional design to gather data at one time. It enables the researcher to study and examine the existing state of affairs without interfering with variables. The design will be appropriate in establishing the relationship between national unity and sports participation among BS college students.

Participants

The respondents of this study were BS college student athletes of the Southern part of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan, who were actively engaged in sports activity in various colleges. Out of a total population of about 1220 student athletes, a sample of 301 students were chosen with the

aim of providing sufficient sample to study the correlation between sports participation and national unity.

Sampling size was calculated using Yamane formula of sample size calculation commonly used in research in social sciences. The respondents were then selected using a simple random sampling technique to give the respondents equal chances of participation and minimize selection bias in the study.

Table: Data Normality

Tests of Normality			
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Sport Participation	.034	301	.200*
National Unity	.043	301	.200*

The outputs of the KolmogorovSmirnov test indicate that the two variables, sports participation (D = .034, p = .200) and national unity (D = .043, p = .200) are not statistically significant. The fact that the significance values are higher than 0.05 implies that the data of both variables is distributed normally. Thus, the data satisfies the assumption of normality, and it can be used in other parametric statistical procedures like correlation and regression.

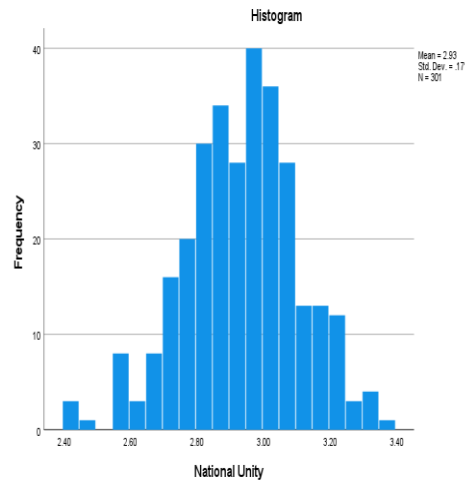
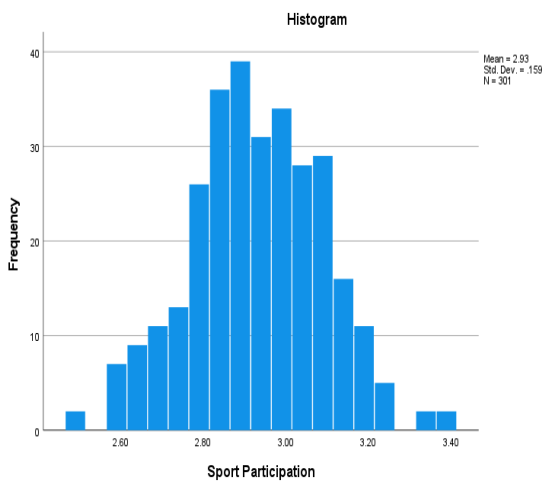


Table: H_A 1: There is significant association between Sport participation and National Unity

Descriptive & Correlation Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Pearson	
				Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Sport Participation	301	2.92	.15	.143*	.013
National Unity	301	2.93	.17		

The descriptive and correlation statistics reveal that the means of both variables, sport participation (M = 2.92, SD = 0.15) and national unity (M = 2.93, SD = 0.17) are very similar and show a moderate and stable level among the 301 respondents with low variability. The Pearson correlation (r = .143, p = .013) indicates that there is a weak but significant positive association between sport participation and national unity such that the higher the sport participation a little, the higher the national unity tends to be. Even though the relationship is not very strong, the level of significance (p < .05) proves that the

relationship is not as a result of chance but that sport participation has a positive yet insignificant impact in improving national unity.

Table: H_A 2: There is statistically significant effects of Sport Participation on National Unity

Model Summary and Coefficients^a

Model	R	R Square	F	B	Beta	T	Sig.
1	.143 ^a	.021	6.283	.155	.143	2.507	.013

The regression analysis indicates that the variables are weakly correlated, but significantly ($R = .143$, $R^2 = .021$) with the variables explaining 2.1 percent of the variability in the dependent variable. The significant ($F = 6.283$, $p = .013$) value of the model indicates that the predictor affects it significantly. The regression coefficient ($B = .155$, $Beta = .143$) shows the existence of a positive relationship, i.e., an increase in the independent variable causes an increase in the dependent variable. The t-value ($t = 2.507$, $p = .013$) also proves that the predictor plays an important role in the model.

Finding

Results indicate that the mean score of sport participation and national unity are almost equal, which means that the level of sport participation and national unity is similar. The correlation between a higher participation in sports and a small increase in national unity ($r = .143$) is weak but positive. The correlation is statistically significant ($p = .013$), which proves sport participation as a significant, but the limited contribution to enhancing national unity.

The findings suggest that the independent variable has a significant positive effect on the dependent variable that is statistically significant ($Beta = .143$, $p = .013$). Despite the weak relationship, the model is important as it demonstrates that the predictor makes a significant contribution to the outcome. Nevertheless, the $R^2 (.021)$ is low, which indicates that there is a little variance explained meaning that other factors that influence it are present.

Conclusion

The conclusion is that national unity is statistically significantly positively related with sport participation. Nonetheless, this relationship is weak, which means that there is a small direct impact. The results indicate that increased participation in sports is linked to a minor rise in national cohesion among the participants. Although this is meaningful, the low value of the R^2 indicates that sport participation can only account a small part of the fluctuation in national unity. It means that there are a lot of other reasons to develop national unity. Thus, sport participation is to be regarded as one of the factors among others as opposed to a determinant of national unity.

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