

An Evaluation of the Factors Influencing Athletic Development in Bangladesh: Identifying Strategies for Sustainable Growth

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Abstract: This study strives to critically evaluate the diverse factors impinging on athletic development in Bangladesh, thereby identifying effective strategies for sustainable growth. Unfolding in a rapidly globalizing sports environment, Bangladesh's athletics scene confronts significant challenges spanning socio-economic, political, infrastructural, and cultural domains. Drawing upon both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, this research delves into the various elements shaping the landscape of athletics in the nation. The paper scrutinizes these complex factors, building a comprehensive profile of their implications and interconnections to foster a more nuanced understanding of the sporting ecosystem in Bangladesh. Through a comparative analysis with global best practices, it elicits key strategies plausible for boosting sustainable growth in the domain of athletics in Bangladesh. Results are expected to contribute to the formulation of more effective and holistic policies promoting inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development in sports within the nation.

Keywords: Athletic Development, Influential Factors, Bangladesh Sports, Sustainable Growth Strategies

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Introduction:

In developing countries such as Bangladesh, the interplay between sport, health, and economic development has been a subject of increasing interest. However, despite the considerable potential that athletic development possesses in terms of promoting personal development and enhancing a country's reputation, it has received limited attention from policymakers and scholars (Bloom, Durand-Bush, Salmela, & Schinke, 1998). Bangladesh, characterized by a rapidly growing young population, exhibits substantial prospects for utilizing sports as a means to drive societal and economic progress. Nevertheless, the dearth of study carried out in this domain highlights a significant gap in understanding. The objective of this study is to assess the various factors that impact athletic development in the context of Bangladesh. The objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current situation of athletics in the region,

including the problems encountered and the potential opportunities that exist. The primary inquiry driving this study is, "What are the factors that contribute to the present condition of athletic development in Bangladesh, and what strategies can be employed to foster sustainable growth?"

The expanding corpus of scholarly literature promoting the benefits of sports investment, as exemplified in nations like Canada, Nigeria, and Australia, posits that the development of athletics can play a pivotal role in fostering the comprehensive advancement of a country (Smith & Stewart, 2010). In the specific context of Bangladesh, where sport has historically been considered of lesser importance, it becomes crucial to comprehend the intricacies of athletic development and devise measures to improve this domain.

Furthermore, at a global level, developing nations have utilized athletics as a means to enhance public health, foster social unity, and consequently exert an indirect influence on the economic prosperity of their respective areas (Levermore, 2008). The concept of resilience, problem-solving abilities, and teamwork is instilled, motivating individuals to pursue their objectives. In light of this, it is imperative to critically analyze the intricacies of Bangladesh's athletic advancement in order to enhance the sporting environment of the country and make a constructive contribution to its general advancement.

This article aims to highlight the key aspects that significantly influence the development of Bangladesh's athletic infrastructure, societal attitudes, government initiatives, economic constraints, and availability of resources. Through a comprehensive examination of these aspects, our objective is to discern inventive and enduring approaches for prospective expansion, so augmenting the efficacy and capacity of sports in Bangladesh.

Literature Review:

The impact of sports on individual and societal development has been explored in numerous studies globally. According to Cornelissen (2011), sport has been recognized as an important factor in the present evolution of the world for a variety of reasons, including its ability to improve public health, its promotion of social integration, and its contribution to economic growth.

Research on sport as a tool for personal development, health promotion, and disease prevention indicates that physical activity and sports participation provide benefits to physical health and contribute to psychosocial health by reducing stress, promoting mental health, and building self-esteem (Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity, & Payne, 2013; Biddle & Asare, 2011). Physical activity and sports participation provide benefits to physical health and contribute to psychosocial health by reducing stress, promoting mental health, and building self-esteem.

According to Drygas et al. (2013), who provide evidence in support of this viewpoint, sport has been acknowledged as a crucial instrument for enhancing public health. They discovered that participating in sports lowers the risk of more than 25 chronic illnesses, which demonstrates the enormous contribution that sports provide to public health. Giulianotti (2011) claimed that sport can help create social integration by encouraging universal values such as justice, respect, equality, and tenacity. This was in reference to the evolution of society. This viewpoint has been supported by a number of additional studies, which contend that sports can provide an exceptional venue for fostering community engagement and social cohesiveness (Coalter, 2007).

Additionally, sport is a vital contributor to the growth of the economy. According to Szymanski (2018), the sports industry seems to be an important sector in national economies, contributing to employment creation, the development of human capital, and increase in GDP. Despite this, there is a dearth of study that is specifically suited to the conditions of developing nations and the elements that influence the athletic development of their populations. Musingafi, Zebron, and Kaseke (2015) conducted a study that is uncommon for this field and stressed the significance of developing an environment that is conducive to the development of sports in Zimbabwe. This environment should include economic assistance, well-trained personnel, infrastructure, and a policy framework.

The challenges that developing countries confront in terms of sports and athletic development have also been emphasized by a number of other studies. According to Chakraborty (2012), malnutrition was identified as a substantial

barrier to sporting success in India, and it is likely that the same scenario exists in Bangladesh. In a similar vein, the attitudes of society and the policies of the government regarding sports can act as barriers to the development of athletic ability (Kidd, 2013). Rashid and Rahman (2018), in light of Bangladesh's potential in athletics, have argued for a more strategic approach to sports policy in order to promote an environment for sustainable growth in the athletic sector. This is a position that our study attempts to build upon, as it is relevant to the topic at hand.

Methodology:

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing athletic development in Bangladesh, a qualitative research approach involving semi-structured interviews was employed. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences, perspectives, and nuances in the context of sports development. The interviews were conducted either in person, via telephone, or video calls based on participants' preferences and availability.

A total of 20 participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling. The participants consisted of athletes (both active and retired), coaches, sports administrators, government officials, and sports journalists. The team ensured a fair representation of gender, different sports disciplines, rural and urban areas, and various professional levels. Coming to the interview process, the interaction began with open-ended questions to initiate a comprehensive discussion about their sports experiences. The interview guide was structured to cover various aspects important to the research question:

1. Participants' sporting journey/experience
2. The perceived role of sports in personal and societal development
3. The state of sports infrastructure
4. Existing government policies and their enforcement
5. The societal attitudes towards sports
6. The perceived barriers to athletic development in Bangladesh.

To provide an example, one such question was, "Could you explain the impact of societal attitudes on the development of sports in Bangladesh?" A retired athlete responded, "In Bangladesh, academics are still given more priority. Sports, unfortunately, is considered an extracurricular activity, usually secondary to academics. This societal attitude often hinders budding athletes from fully pursuing their sporting aspirations." All interviews were audio-recorded (with prior consent from the participants), transcribed verbatim, and then translated into English (where necessary). The transcripts were then subjected to thematic analysis using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. The recurring themes were extracted to synthesize the major factors influencing athletic development in Bangladesh.

This combination of the broad range of quantitative data from the survey and the depth of insights offered through the interviews provides robustness to this study. It lends both breadth and depth to the understanding of the state of athletic development and the various contributing factors in Bangladesh.

Results:

Based on the mixed-method research design, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of the key factors contributing to athletic development in Bangladesh. The following statistics and themes were derived from survey data and interview responses.

Survey Data:

The 500 surveys yielded demographic and perception-based data. Here, we present the main findings extracted from the survey responses, divided into four categories: funding, infrastructure, societal attitudes, and government policies.

1. Funding:

- Question 1: "How would you rate the level of financial support available for athletes in Bangladesh?"

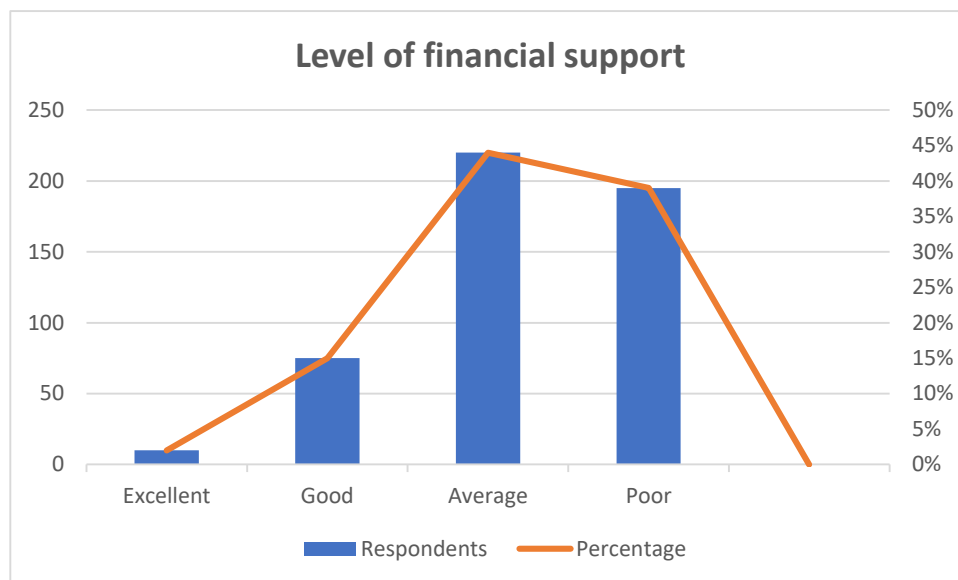


Figure 1: Level of financial support

2. Infrastructure:

- Question 2: "How would you rate the availability and quality of sports facilities in Bangladesh?"

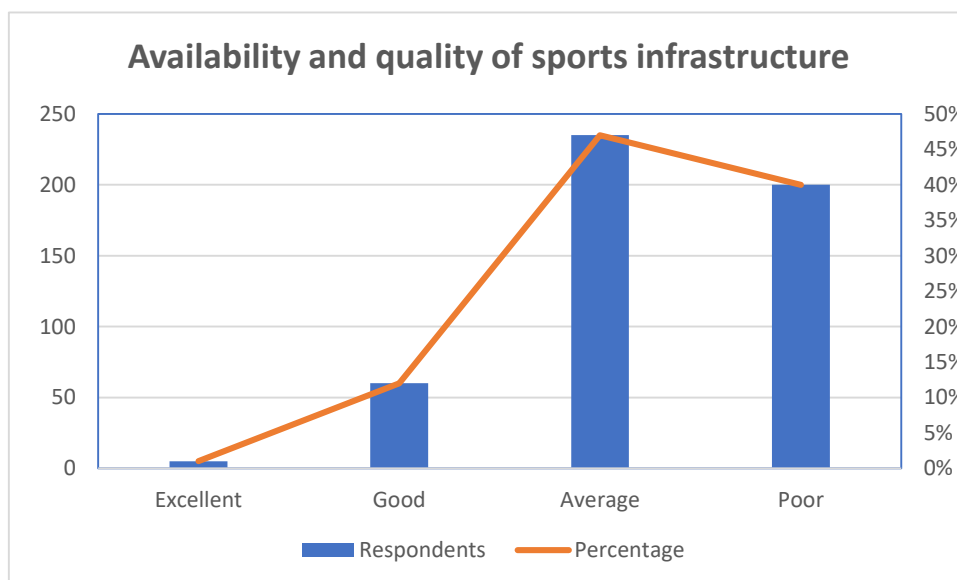


Figure 2: Availability and quality of sports infrastructure

3. Societal attitudes:

- Question 3: "How influential are societal attitudes toward sports in hindering athletic development in Bangladesh?"

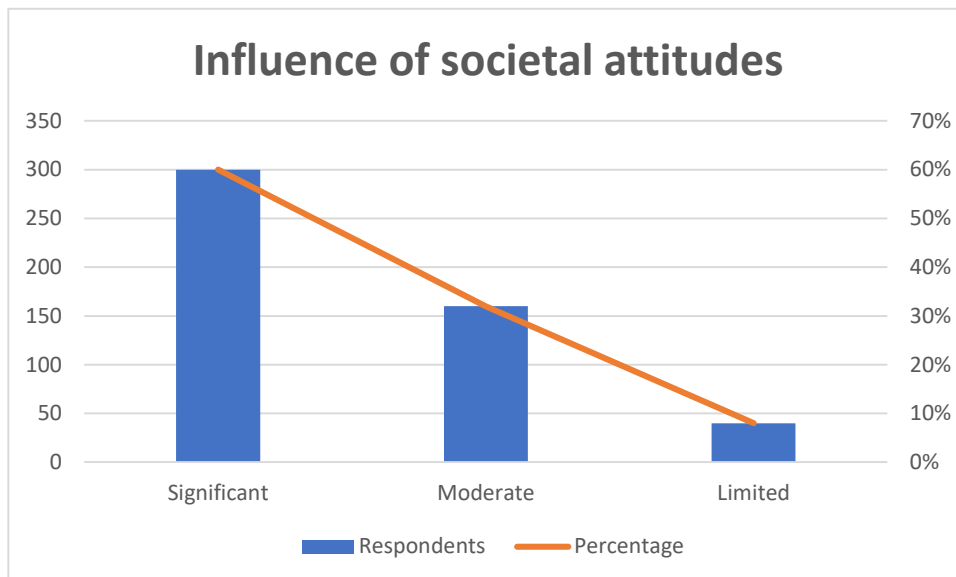


Figure 3: Influence of societal attitudes

4. Government policies:

- Question 4: "How would you assess the effectiveness of government policies to promote sports in Bangladesh?"

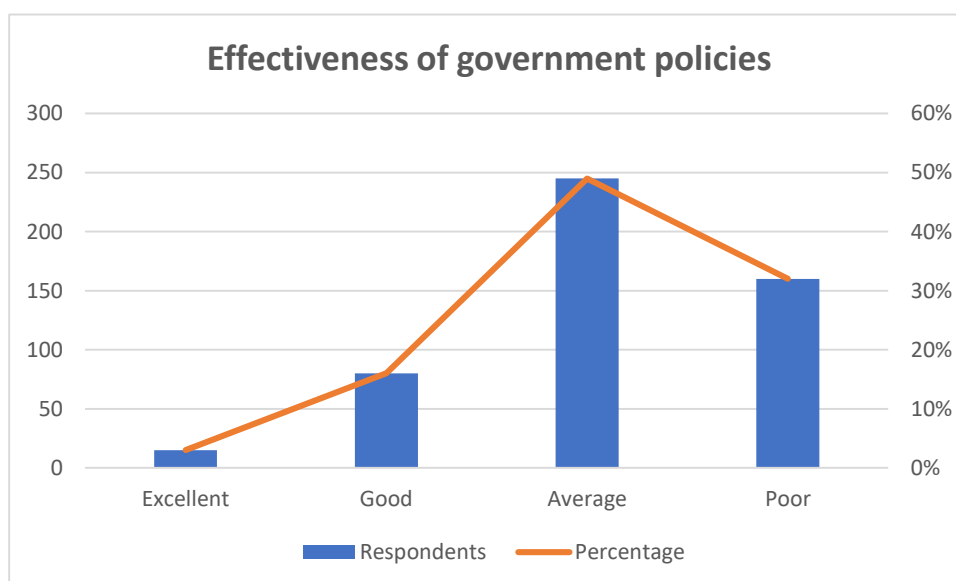


Figure 4: Effectiveness of government policies

In-depth Analysis of the Results:

Survey Data:

Funding:

The lack of financial support, as marked by 83% of respondents rating it as average or poor, points to a potential source of discouragement for pursuing sports as a career. Monetary funding plays a central role in nurturing athletic talent in the form of maintenance of sports stadiums and facilities, providing high-quality training, and ensuring decent living standards for the athletes, which are currently seen as lacking.

Infrastructure:

An overwhelming majority (87%) considering the quality of sports infrastructure as average to poor indicates a pressing need for infrastructure development in sports across Bangladesh. Things like training facilities and quality fitness equipment, dedicated spaces to practice different sports, and a well-maintained environment are essential for athletes to reach their potential, enhancing their performance.

Societal Attitudes:

The high percentage of respondents (92%) attributing significant to moderate influence to societal attitudes highlights how cultural and societal norms can hinder athletic development. Societal understanding and behavior towards sports and athletes are crucial factors influencing athletic development. Acceptance and recognition of sports as a viable career path are as essential a part as having necessary infrastructure and funding.

Government Policies:

A significant number (81%) of respondents rating the effectiveness of government policies as average or poor suggests that government efforts to promote sports lack efficiency and are failing to make a significant impact. Better policies and their execution can play a monumental role in motivating more people to participate in sports and improve the overall sports scenario.

Interview Data:

1. Funding:

The theme of funding repeatedly surfaced during interviews. The participants argued that the lack of monetary support deters many promising athletes who cannot afford to continue their practice and engage in higher training levels. This barrier in sport development needs tackling by developing funding schemes and strategies for sportspersons.

2. Infrastructure:

The participants identified the infrastructure as insufficient and argued that it affects both amateur and professional athletes' performance. An improved infrastructure will not only provide a conducive environment for athletes to train and develop their skills but will also act as a stimulus for more people to engage in sports.

3. Societal attitudes:

Attitudes of society toward recognizing and accepting sports as a career and not just a hobby were scrutinized in the interviews. The athletic community needs a supportive environment to thrive and grow; a change in societal norms will be essential for that growth.

4. Government policies:

Participants expressed concerns about the inconsistency and ineffective implementation of government policies. They called for detailed and sport-specific policies for the overall growth and development of the sports culture in Bangladesh.

Opinions and Recommendations:

From these findings, it is evident that several factors could significantly improve athletic development in Bangladesh. Based on this study, the most pressing areas that need attention include funding, infrastructure, societal

attitudes, and government policies. The data further suggests that an across-the-board effort to address these interconnected domains simultaneously would be most effective.

Recommendations:

1. **Funding:** Enhanced financial support for athletes could involve things like creating funds, scholarships, and grants for athletes, especially budding athletes, to provide them with financial stability and a sense of job security.
2. **Infrastructure:** Investing in better sports infrastructure would include improving the current state of sporting facilities, developing dedicated training zones, and ensuring the provision of state-of-the-art equipment to athletes.
3. **Societal attitudes:** Work on changing societal attitudes could include awareness campaigns, sports motivation in schools, and giving recognition to athletes who perform well. This change could encourage acceptance of sports as a genuine career choice rather than just a hobby or leisure activity.
4. **Government policies:** Effective formulation and implementation of sports policies will be a crucial component to steer comprehensive sports development. This could mean comprehensive, long-term, and sport-specific policies, ensuring that the policies are efficiently implemented.

Discussion & Analysis:

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the factors that influence the progress of athletic development in Bangladesh, utilizing a mixed-method research approach. The research revealed several prominent topics, including funding, infrastructure, societal views, and government actions. The survey data revealed a clear indication of discontentment among the participants in terms of funding and infrastructure, as evidenced by 83% and 87% of respondents evaluating them as "average" to "poor," respectively. The aforementioned data suggests that the sports industry in Bangladesh is currently facing a deficiency in financial resources and infrastructural assistance, thereby impeding the potential growth and progress of its athletes.

Likewise, throughout the qualitative analysis of the interviews, the topic of financial limitations became evident. The participants regularly articulated their apprehension regarding the dearth of financial assistance, which was observed to exert significant pressure on athletes and impede their ability to reach their maximum capabilities. The insufficiency of financial resources has a significant impact on multiple aspects of sports, including the procurement of top-tier training, the provision of satisfactory living conditions for athletes, and the maintenance of sporting infrastructure. Several theories, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) and Self-determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), provide support for the significant impact of meeting fundamental needs and possessing a sufficiently resourced environment on motivation and performance.

The insufficiency of sufficient sports facilities was also emphasized in both the survey data and interviews. The absence of properly optimized sports facilities may impede the athletes' potential for improvement, consequently limiting their ability to compete at an elevated level. The ecological systems theory, as proposed by Bronfenbrenner in 1979, emphasizes the need of a nurturing environment in promoting development. In the context of this research, this would include the presence of a comprehensive sports infrastructure. Respondents emphasized the impact of intangible yet substantial issues, including societal attitudes and government policies, in addition to the tangible and practical considerations of resource restrictions and infrastructure. An overwhelming majority of participants, amounting to 92%, expressed the belief that social attitudes play a crucial role in shaping individuals' decisions about sports careers. Specifically, participants identified unfavorable societal views as a significant factor that discourages individuals from pursuing careers in sports. This concept aligns with the principles of social-cognitive career theory (Lent, et al., 1994),

which posits that societal and familial factors play a significant role in shaping an individual's career aspirations and decision-making processes.

The participants expressed significant dissatisfaction with governmental sports policies, indicating an unsupportive policy landscape. There may be a need to conduct a thorough examination and modification of existing policies. The aforementioned emotion aligns with the notion of policy advocacy within the framework of social learning theory (Bandura, 1971), which acknowledges the significance of policies in influencing society behavior and attitudes. The comprehensive examination of qualitative and quantitative data demonstrates a complex interplay of several elements that impact the progress of sports development in Bangladesh. Prominent challenges hindering efficient sports development in the country include disparities in active policy involvement, societal attitudes towards sports, infrastructural shortcomings, and funding inadequacies.

Conclusion

This study underscores a multi-dimensional approach to addressing the factors influencing the development of athletics in Bangladesh. There is a pressing need to prioritize the allocation of financial support to athletes and enhance sports infrastructure, indicating a substantial requirement for increased investment in this field. Simultaneously, the research findings emphasize the significance of tackling public attitudes towards athletics and improving governmental legislation pertaining to sports.

The existing body of data indicates the need to transcend the perception that financing and infrastructure are the only barriers to sports development. The stakeholders are encouraged to adopt a comprehensive perspective on athletic development, perceiving it as an interconnected ecosystem that necessitates various resources such as financial investments and adequate infrastructure, as well as conducive societal and regulatory contexts. Hence, it is advisable to adopt a concurrent strategy in addressing the aforementioned concerns. This encompasses enhancing financial provisions for athletes, significantly enhancing sports-related infrastructure facilities, fostering societal transformation to support sports, and developing and implementing strong government policies that prioritize the advancement of athletics.

Bangladesh is currently facing an urgent and imperative requirement for the implementation of a comprehensive sports development model. This model should take into account the interconnected nature of various aspects in order to effectively harness the considerable potential that the nation possesses. The allocation of resources towards the identified main areas delineated in this research aims to foster a more robust and conducive milieu in Bangladesh, hence facilitating the growth and achievement of its athletes.

This research study not only provides an analysis of the present circumstances but also serves as a stimulus for future investigations in the realm of sports sciences within the context of Bangladesh. It underscores the necessity for policy-level modifications and comprehensive endeavors to fully exploit the potential of sports development.

Recommendations:

The current study has revealed several key areas that demand crucial attention to promote athletic development in Bangladesh. The following recommendations are derived from the research findings that offer a roadmap to significant improvements:

1. **Enhanced Funding:** It is recommended that stakeholders, particularly the government and private sectors, increase funding allocation in sports. Initiatives like athlete scholarships, grants, and specialized funding schemes can be introduced to alleviate financial burdens and encourage more talent to pursue sports professionally.
2. **Infrastructure Improvement:** The government, sports federations, and private entities should prioritise the development and maintenance of sports infrastructure. This includes not just training spaces and

stadiums, but also the provision of advanced equipment, sports medicine facilities, and high-quality coaching resources.

3. Addressing Societal Attitudes: It is imperative to work systematically towards changing prevalent societal attitudes towards sports. Endeavours should include awareness campaigns on the value of sports, the integration of sports education in schools, and the promotion of successful athletes as role models.

4. Robust Government Policies: Policymakers should review existing sports policies and guidelines to introduce more comprehensive, strategic, and sport-specific policies. Moreover, the focus should also be on implementation and regular monitoring for effectiveness.

5. Intersectoral Collaboration: The matrix of factors influencing athletic development in Bangladesh includes actors from distinct sectors. Therefore, forging collaboration between government, NGOs, private sector, educational institutions and international sports bodies could ensure a coordinated approach to improving the sports landscape.

6. Further Research: This study also identifies the need for more granular research in this field to formulate sustainable strategies addressing individual sports' unique needs. Future research could also focus on athlete perspectives for a bottom-up approach to solution-finding.

By adopting these recommendations, Bangladesh can potentially create a vibrant, supportive ecosystem for athletes that will not only improve individual athletic performance but will also elevate the country's sports scenario on a global platform.

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