Establishing social cohesiveness through participatory Community Sports

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The purpose of this paper is to strengthen understanding of the potentiality that participation in community sports has in bringing about peace in communities. Studies have shown that where levels of peace and stability are low, multiple social, cultural, moral, political and religious problems are rampant. A structured closed-ended questionnaire was used in collecting data from a sample of 40 respondents for this study. The data collected was analyzed using Pearson correlation co-efficient statistical analysis. The findings showed that there is a positive relationship between participating in sporting activities and social cohesiveness ($r=0.53$, $N =40$, $P= 0.02$). The findings established insignificant p-values (0.25, 0.18, 0.50, 0.08) at 0.05 level of significant for social mixing, culturally disconnected from sports , organizational beliefs, values and set standards) as barriers to participation in community sports. Based on the findings of strong link between participating in sporting activities and social cohesiveness, participation in community sports should be intensified. Participation in community sports as a potential tool should be used in bringing about peace in those countries facing internal conflicts and fights both in Africa, and worldwide.

Keywords: Community sports, social cohesion, social integration, sport and recreation.

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Introduction

Sports represent the biggest category of voluntary organizations in many developing countries and worldwide, besides its relevance to the central concerns of a stable global village. Theeboom et al. (2010) claim that, "the concept of community sports originally arose out of the realization that traditional participation patterns were dominated by advantaged sections of the population and that an alternative approach was needed" (p.1396). Thus community sports are organized physical activities that are based in community, school and local sport organizations. Social cohesion refers to the "glue" of the bonds that keeps society together (Kalolo et al., 2019). According to (Nemeroff et al., as cited in Baird, 2014) Social Cohesion is difficult to quantify and is defined differently by various scholars though it can be measured by the strength of social networks and the degree to which people trust one another, their trust in the functioning and fairness of national institutions, and the presence of the common good as an expression of solidarity, helpfulness, and peoples' willingness to abide by just social rules and participate equally in society. While Social integration is a terminology that is "widely used in contemporary policy development to describe concepts whose aim is to foster societies that are stable, safe, just and tolerant, and respect diversity, equality of opportunities and participation of all people" (Jeannotte , 2008, p.1).

Sports are popularly believed to have positive integrative functions and are thought, therefore, to be able to bring together different and sometimes divided communities through common sporting interest. Meir and Fletcher (2017) argues that, "Sports are consistently thought to have positive integrative functions that enable them to play a role in contributing to the resolution of complex social issues inherent to and existing within, different communities" (p. 1). This paper is concerned with the potential of community sports to act as a tool for facilitating social cohesion and integration. In order to do so the paper starts by introducing the key concepts "social cohesion" and integration". The second section provides the discussion on the general contribution of sports to social cohesion. The third section examines the association between sports and social integration. The forth section explores Botswana national and recreation policy implications on sports. The fifth section

Introduces dimensions of social cohesion and how it can be measured. The six sections establish barriers of participation in community sports. The last section presents the theoretical perspective and discusses the relationship between identified concepts of access and participation and their impact in bringing about community transformation. Based on a review of research in this field, the report suggests that the presence of participatory community sports can bring maximal improvement in national unity and harmony between citizens within countries, in a fruitful way

Review of Literature

Sport and Social cohesion

Sports is rapidly gaining recognition as simple, low cost, and effective means of achieving community developmental goals in various areas. Sports are understood as one of the dynamic forces in developing national integrity among the masses creating national unity in the country (Memo et al., 2011). In line with the above, scholars have argued that sport could be an important component of civil society. According to Allison (1998) organized sports may make significant contributions to civil society on account of its being organized. Further, states that sports is no different from the arts or from women's organizations and its distinctive features are its large scale and its capacity to activate people who could not be activated in any other way.

The claim that there is a distinctively sporting contribution to civil society is premised on sporting values. Such values would include amongst others; the importance of competing while retaining respect of opponents, the ability to express and suppress individual talents and ambitions within a team, the willingness to accept authority and acknowledgement of the game (Allison, 1998). These sporting values if well administered render positive discipline and orderliness in the society. Furthermore, research papers often speak about fighting discrimination, racism or homophobia through sport this testifies to the wide recognition of the positive contribution sport can make to social cohesion. People participating in sport are more likely to meet individuals of other ethnic origins than people who live sedentary life, it is an easy way to bring people together. Hence, sport may foster social cohesion by minimizing disparities and avoiding marginalization (Dorokhina et al., 2011).

Sports have demonstrated its capability in contributing to community mobilization and collective effort. Sports are often used as a vehicle to close ties between persons, groups, nations, and reduce the prejudices that various people hold towards each other (Dorokhina et al., 2011). Mario (2009) at the first international forum of sport, peace and development pointed out that United Nations agencies, governments, and non-governmental organizations exchanged experiences and opinions on how sport can contribute to peace, national cohesion and development. This is a clear indication of concerted efforts towards world development centralized around the sporting phenomenon. It is against this background, that this work seeks to examine how community sports can bring social cohesiveness and integration. An important issue that has not been significantly theorized and investigated to inform destroyed communities in the African Region.

On the basis that sports is one language, inexpensive and powerful tool that enhances community mobilization and collective effort in various ways including development and peace building to create a more prosperous community, therefore to this effect its efficaciousness is worth examining and monitoring, especially in African societies where there is continuing internal conflicts and wars. Feisal (2009) in his presentation at First International Forum on Sporty, Peace and development stressed that Sports organizations and NGOs had a responsibility to understand the power of sport to promote peace and harmony and to use that power to the best of its abilities. Furthermore, he emphasized that to ensure effective and productive delivery of these initiatives, it is similarly important that sports and non-sports bodies increase their cooperation, in partnership with governments and other interested parties. Sports teach respect and tolerance, values which are indispensable to our world today (Mario 2009). Nowadays, the impact of sports, for example in football individual are taught life-skills, respect for rules and opponents, and to consider child protection and gender equality as well (Champagne, 2009).

Sport and Social integration

The world of sports is widely believed to be a tool of the interrelated "feel-good" processes of social integration and social cohesion. The

Regular face-to-face interaction amongst individuals of various origins that is characteristically ascribed to sports, specially team sport, are assumed to bring about an increase in numerous social aspects including social cohesion ((Dorokhina,*et al*., 2011). Indeed studies have shown that the concept of sports worked productively as a mediating tool to strengthen unity in communities that have been shattered by conflict and war over years. In addition sports can be imagined as one instrument in an orchestra of multi-level peace building efforts to produce harmonious peace. As one instrument, it can make a positive, valuable and significant contribution to civil society (Sport for Development & Peace International Working Group, 2007). According to Burt (cited in Seippel, 2006) for organizations such as sports to be influential in civil society, it is a pre requisite that both social bonding and bridging are developed and that they work fruitfully in a balanced way.

In sub-Saharan African sport is treated as a tool for social development. For instance, poverty eradication, or a form of leisure and recreation (Maruyana, 2010; Meyer & Monyeki, 2004). That is, there are no emphasis on its strengths in promoting peace and unity. Nevertheless, its significant contribution has been recognized during the apartheid regime in South Africa, when the non-white South African sportsmen boycotted participation in official South African sport. This lead to majority if not all of South African Sports Associations been suspended at international competitions, which resulted in multi-racial associations been formed across sports codes (Keim, 2005). Since studies reflect sports as an institution which provides orientation of distinct community values, this study intends amongst others to establish means by which participation in community sports can bring about social cohesion and integration in the society and the world at large.

Social cohesion and dimensions

Baird (2014) posits that social cohesion suggest the following three main end results: Strong social relations and community network, positive relationships and trust between citizens and institutions which promote the full enjoyment of rights and a coordinated framework and links between civil society and authority.

01. The three domains of social cohesion and their respective dimension

Enclosed as Annexure 01-Figure 01

Social cohesion is a continual process that is based on solidarity, shared values and enjoyment of fundamental rights. Social cohesion is associated with reduction in disparities, inequalities, discrimination and social exclusion. It requires strengthening social relations, interactions and ties - that is reducing forms of social exclusion and encouraging participation and inclusion, in particular of those who are vulnerable and were not able to develop capacity and trust towards their integration at an equal basis with others social decision making. The concept is understood to indicate belongingness, inclusion, participation, recognition legitimacy.

Enclosed as Annexure 01-Table 01

Sport and Recreation Policy for Botswana

The country's policy on sports and recreational activities form an integral part of its vision, with clear goals, values and strategies. Implementation of the policy is expected to enable the Government of Botswana including other stakeholders to achieve national development, unity and continued economic growth and prosperity. Nevertheless, the policy does not indicate who and how to implement the set strategies, hence the whole process becomes a failure. For example, the policy does not state the role of the local government in providing community sport and recreation facilities and programs. The department of sport and recreation should have sections with clear mandate for effective functioning. Further, it should introduce various sports and recreation programs, construction of additional sports and recreation facilities which should be accessible to all members of the community and facilitation of health and wellness programs through sport and recreation, and training of personnel in sports and recreation.

Barriers of participation in community sports

Reviewed literature indicated that Long distances may reduce the motivation to do physical activity. Thus inability to access appropriate facilities is reported to likely act as perceived motivational barrier (Lee, S.A., Ju, Y.J., Lee, J.E. *et al.*, 2016). Similarly, Jones and Nies (1996) pointed out accessibility to and availability of facilities as barriers to exercise. A study examining the benefits and barriers of participation in sport

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and African-Australian groups revealed that racist behaviours discourage young people and families from minority groups from committing to and engaging actively in sport (Abur & Charles, 2020). Another study by Amusa, Toriola, Onyewadume and Dhaliwal (2008) on perceived barriers to participation in sport and recreation in Botswana identified aptitude, socio-cultural and socio-economic factors as impediments. Further, they observed that influences of community awareness and environmental factors as barriers were not supported by the respondents. Moreover, lack of time and money, motivation and facilities were reported to be constraints to participation in sport and recreational activities (Sayed, 2003: Myers &Roth, 1997: & Barrows, 2003).

Study theory and conceptual framework

This study is motivated by the theory of change. Theory of change is stated as, "We believe that by doing X (action) it will achieve Y (progress towards peace)"… it clearly articulates the intended activity the 'if' part, and the expected change it will bring about the 'then' part or parts. (Care international and international alert, 2012). According to Organizational Research Services, "theory of change (TOC) outlines how to create that change. Developing a theory of change framework is an essential part of a successful community transformation effort" (Pg. 1.). Concisely, a theory of change is a description of why a particular way of working will be effective, showing how change happens in the short and long term to achieve the intended impact. In this case how participatory community sports can bring about social harmony and unification amongst community members. See figure 2. below on cohesion and integration through community sport model.

According to this model developing an effective solution requires a robust understanding of the problems and consequences, provides guidance on what to be done as means of cohesion and integration and what is currently preventing, explains how sport can contribute to addressing the problem by providing opportunities for social mixing and possible desired outcomes (engagement, enjoyment & community representation), and ultimately the impact it will make. For instance, positive experiences of those from different backgrounds, increased participation

From underrepresented groups, increased social unity and enhanced sense of civic pride and local belonging. Promising approaches that are applicable in other societies as means of resolving certain societal problems are synthesized in Figure 02.

Enclosed as Annexure 01-Figure 02

As depicted in figure 2. Above where social cohesion levels are low, that results in increased social tension, racism, structural inequality, resentment, plague of robbery and theft, homicide, violence conflict, and ultimately human rights Violations. Hence social cohesion should be understood as both an essential component of and a compliment to the overall goal of community wellbeing.

In addition, barriers of access to community sports need to be addressed i.e. socio-cultural, socio economic, and lack of facilities, Therefore, if sport participation is improved through various means like helping to run local sport clubs by different stakeholders and engaging with local, regional or national sporting event, this will lead to enjoyment and number of sustained participants, collaboration across differences and diversity of participation, mutual respect and activity taking place in mixed group, and ultimately community representation and engagement in activity. All these will have a significant impact on positive experiences of those from different backgrounds and greater appreciation of cultural difference, improved attitudes towards each other and increased social unity, intensified participation from underrepresented groups, reduced inequality, increased bridging social capital and connections between groups and enhanced sense of civic pride and local belongingness.

The specific objectives include: to assess the contribution of community participatory sport in social cohesiveness; determine the extent to which lack of resources for community sport, resistant to social mixing, cultural disconnection from sport, exclusive organizational beliefs, values, and standards are barriers for members of the community to participate in community sports for social cohesiveness.

Research Question
01. To what extent does community participatory sport contribute to social cohesiveness?

02. To what extent is lack of resources for community sport, resistant to social

01. mixing, cultural disconnection from sport, and exclusive organizational beliefs, values, and set standards barriers for members of the community to participate in community sports for social cohesiveness?

Methodology

Research Design

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study to elicit information on community participatory sports as a potential tool for social cohesiveness in Botswana.

Population and Sample

Convenient sampling procedure was used to select the respondents for this study. In doing this, 40 students in pursuit of bachelor of port science-physical education and coaching were simply recruited into the study since they are in the workplace, and have participated in community sports known as constituency sport tournaments. In Botswana constituency Sport tournaments is a mass participation sport leisure program introduced to curb social ills amongst the unemployed out of school youth to promote social engagement, fitness and their well-being, hence found fit for this particular study.

Instrument of the study

The instrument used for data collection was a structured closed-ended questionnaire. The instrument was developed to measure participant's' perceptions towards participation in community sports and building social cohesiveness. In order to address this domain some of the questionnaire items were self-developed, modified, and adopted from published questionnaires used to evaluate beliefs and attitude. For instance, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Measuring Violence-Related Attitudes, Behaviors, and Influences Among Youths: A Compendium of Assessment Tools- section 1 Attitude and Belief Assessments, 2005). The instrument is divided into three sections: **A.** Demographic information, **B.** Beliefs towards sports and peace building and **C.** Community sports participation barriers**.** The participants were asked to respond to a five point rating Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5); with high scores indicating a favorable tool for social cohesiveness or a positive barrier for participating in community

Sports. Cronbach Alpha was used to test for reliability of the instrument. The co-efficient of the instrument for the social cohesiveness and community sports participation barrier indicators were 0.729 and 0.730 respectively which is greater than 0.7 and therefore acceptable. This was the result of a pilot study carried out in the University of Botswana using 25 participants who were not included in final study. The results show that the measure for social cohesiveness in this study is strongly consistent.

Analysis of Data

Research Question 1: To what extent does community participatory sport contribute to social cohesiveness? Pearson coefficient correlation analysis was used to analyze the data to measure the relationship, using 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Pearson Correlations Analysis Showing Participatory In Community Sport And Social Cohesiveness

Enclosed as Annexure 01-Table 02

The table shows that there is a positive relationship between participating in sporting activities and social cohesiveness. This is shown by a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.53 with a total number of N=40 participants. The results are statistically significant with a p-value of 0.02 (P<0.05) which leads to conclude that participation in attending sporting activities leads to better social cohesiveness

Research question 2: To what extent is lack of resources for community sport, resistant to social mixing, cultural disconnection from sport, exclusive organizational beliefs, values, and set standards barriers for members of the community to participate in community sports for peace and harmony?

Pearson Correlation Analysis between the Frequencies of Attending Sporting Activities And Barriers to Participation in Community Sports

Enclosed as Annexure 01-Table 03

The results reveals that there is a weak positive relationship of 0.28 between participation in community sport and perceiving having

No resources for community sports as a barrier that hinder sports participation. In contrast, there shows to be a weak negative relationship between participation in community sports and perceiving resistant to social mixing, culturally disconnected from sports , organizational beliefs ,values and set standards as barriers to participating in community sports having a correlation coefficient of -0.32, -0.17and -0.41 respectively. This means that the less frequent in attending sporting activities the more they believe that the last three items discussed are barriers that hinder participation in sports, whereas the more frequent in attending sporting activities the more they believe that the last three items are not barriers to participation in community sports. However, this argument is nullified by insignificant p-values (0.25, 0.18, 0.50, 0.08) at 0.05 level of significant for all the four variables, hence all the four (social mixing, culturally disconnected from sports, organizational beliefs, values and set standards) are not barriers to participation in community sports.

Discussion

The results in research question one indicates that there is a significant relationship between participation in community sports and social cohesiveness (r=0.53, N =40, P= 0.02). This finding is supported by Dorokhina, *et al*. (2011) that regular face-to-face interaction amongst individuals of various origins that is characteristically ascribed to sports, specially team sport, are assumed to bring about an increase in numerous social aspects including social cohesion. In addition, Feisal (2009) in his presentation at First International Forum on Sporty, Peace and development stressed that Sports organizations and NGOs had a responsibility to understand the power of sport to promote peace and harmony and to use that power to the best of its abilities.

Research question two reveals that there is no significant relationship between lack of resources for community sport (P=0.251), resistant to social mixing (P=0.178), cultural disconnection from sport (P=0.498), exclusive organizational beliefs, values, and standards (P=083) as barriers for members of the community to participate in community sports for peace and harmony. The findings of this study somehow agrees with the findings of Amusa, Toriola, Onyewadume and Dhaliwal (2008) who found out that environmental factors

As barriers for participation in sports and recreation in Botswana were not supported by the respondents. Contrary to this study socio-cultural (implicating beliefs, attitudes, habits, religion, values and social classes) and socio economic, lack of facilities, and set standards were reported to be barriers to participation in sports and recreation both in Botswana and other countries by various studies (Sayed, 2003:Myers & Roth, 1997: & Barrows, 2003: Jones & Nies ,1996, Amusa, Toriola, Onyewadume & Dhaliwal , 2008)

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to demonstrate how participatory community sports can bring unity and harmony between citizens within countries and why it is crucial to pay attention to it with open mindedness. The study contributes to theory and research in two ways. First the association of participatory community sports and social cohesiveness has not been extensively explored, especially in vulnerable and shuttered communities. Further, it contends that reviewed literature has focused on sports specifically. The findings of this study indicate that participation in community sport is a potential tool for bringing about peace and harmony in the society. Nonetheless, the findings of this study showed that lack of resources for community sports, resistant to social mixing, culturally disconnectedness from sports, beliefs, values and set standards are not barriers to participation in community sports. Reviewed literature showed that sports worked efficaciously as a mediating tool to strengthen unity in communities that have been broken over years (Sport for Development & Peace International Working Group, 2007). The paper expands literature by indicating how participatory community sports can bring about social harmony and unification amongst disgruntled community members, which in turn reduces unwanted vices like; racial segregation, theft, violence, resentment, robbery, homicide and drug abuse. Therefore, the paper identifies and synthesizes a viable sequence of strategies on how inclusive community sport can lead to a cohesive and stable society. Finally, the findings of the study somehow eliminated lack of resources for community sport; resistant to social mixing; cultural disconnection from sport; exclusive organizational beliefs; values and standards as barriers for participation in community sport.

Recomendations

Based on the findings above:
- Governments should develop means to promote participation in community sports.

- Governments should use sports to facilitate peace and stability by suspending representations in international sports federations from countries involved in internal conflicts and wars both at regional and worldwide.

- The departments responsible for sport and recreation should have sections with clear mandate for effective functioning.

- The departments responsible for sport and recreation should introduce various sports and recreation programs, as well as facilitation of health and wellness programs through sport and recreation.

- Governments should commit to construction of additional sports and recreation facilities which should be accessible to all members of the community and training of personnel in sports and recreation.

Contributors

Anthony S Faros (Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Physical Education, University of Botswana). Specializes in Sport Pedagogy, and currently PHD candidate in Physical Education and Coaching. Obtained Diploma in Physical Education, English & Setswana in and taught in Several Secondary Schools. Rose to the rank of Senior Lecturer and Head of Physical Education Department at Tonota College of Education from 2002 to 2011.Joined the University of Botswana as Physical Education Lecturer in 2011. Research interests are in Physical Education curriculum and instruction and anti-doping pedagogies.

Israel Sayed (MA in leisure studies, University of Potchefstroom, South Africa). He is specializing in leisure and recreation. Israel has served as a teacher in various Secondary schools for ten years after obtaining a Diploma in Physical Education and Social Studies. Research interests are in leisure and recreation programming, health and education. Israel joined the University of Botswana in 2001 as a lecturer.

Michael Seikano (Med-Physical Education, University of Botswana). Research interests are in Sports Nutrition, and Sports Performance. Michael has six years' teaching experience in Secondary Schools after obtaining his Bachelor of Education in Physical Education. Joined the University of Botswana in 2012 as a lecturer.

Annexure 01

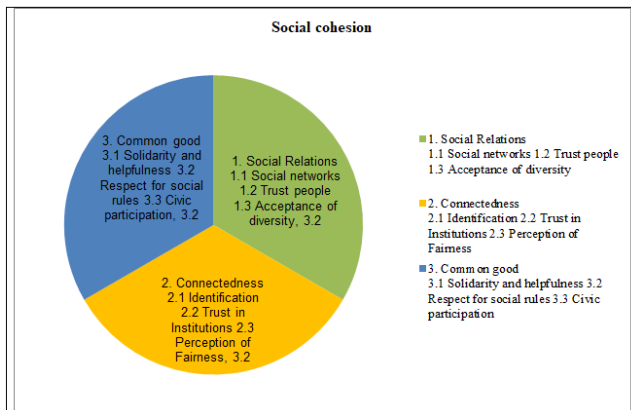Fig.01: The Three Domains of Social Cohesion and their Respective Dimension

Table. 01: Typical Measures of Social Cohesion Involve Concepts.

Table 1. Typical measures of social cohesion involve concepts in the table below.

Measures	Meaning
Belonging	Means shared values, identity, feelings of commitment
Inclusion	Concerns equal opportunities of access
Participation	Involvement
Recognition	Addresses the issue of respecting and tolerating
Legitimacy	Respect to institutions.

(Baird, 2014)

Fig. 02: Cohesion and Integration through Community Sport Model

Figure2. Cohesion and integration through community sport model

Table. 02: Pearson Correlations Analysis Showing Participatory In Community Sport And Social Cohesiveness

Pearson Correlations Analysis Showing Participatory In Community Sport And Social Cohesiveness

	N	Mean	SD DEV	Pearson correlation coefficient	P-value
Social cohesiveness	40	4.15	0.435	0.53	0.02
Participation in sporting activities	40	2.95	0.970		

Table. 03: Pearson Correlation Analysis between the Frequencies of Attending Sporting Activities And Barriers to Participation in Community Sports

Pearson Correlation Analysis between the Frequencies of Attending Sporting Activities And Barriers to Participation in Community Sports

Barrier	Mean	SD Dev.	Pearson correlation coefficient	P-value
There are no resources for community sports	3.42	1.12	0.28	0.25
Some people are resistant to social mixing	3.58	0.61	-0.32	0.18
Most people are culturally disconnected from sports	3.37	1.26	-0.17	0.50
Exclusive organizational beliefs, values, and set standards makes other people to remain out of community sports	3.58	0.90	-0.41	0.08

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