

PEACE-BUILDING AND POST-CONFLICT CO-EXISTENCE THROUGH SPORTS: A CATALYST FOR NATION BUILDING

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Abstract

This study investigated the role of sport in peace-building and post-conflict co-existence. Three hypotheses were stated for the study as the sample was delimited to the six South-West states in Nigeria. 18 Local governments were selected, as 3,600 respondents were randomly selected from Lagos senatorial districts (850) while Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Ekiti states senatorial Districts were allotted (630) respondents respectively. A simple random sampling technique (SRST) was used for the selection of respondents from each of the Local Government Areas. A self-structured questionnaire comprising thirty items was used for data generation. The questionnaire was validated and confirmed to meet content validity as a reliability index of 0.87 was obtained using the split-half method of reliability. The biodata of respondents was collated and presented on frequency distribution tables, while items in section B were analyzed using a "t-test" statistical analysis tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that the three hypotheses were rejected as it concluded that sport remains one universal and legitimate tool that can be used to advance conflict transformation and peacebuilding. It is recommended among others that sports development and peace-building process should take into consideration the specific cultural dynamics of the places where the programme is to take place and apply the most suitable sport (e.g. Football as opposed to Rugby in Nigeria) gender awareness and region in areas where this is a major issue).

Keywords: Peace-building, Sport, Post co-existence, Dynamics, Conflicts, Nation Building

Introduction

One basic fact of human existence is the inevitability of conflict in its social relations; human social relations are inherently conflict-generating. Even at the less complex level of interpersonal relations between two individuals, for instance, relations have not been free from occasional frayed nerves, conflicts, and oftentimes violent expressions of discontent. Indeed, the world over, it is also a notorious fact that social relations between and among groups even in more homogenous societies divergence of interests make the process of nation-building a difficult enterprise. Somalia, in the Horn of Africa, for instance, presents a classical example of a homogenous society in terms of its ethnic make-up. Yet the country 's history is a tale of strife that for long rendered it a failed state, which she has barely managed to heave out from. In more complex heterogeneous societies, therefore, the national integration project and efforts at achieving national stability and cohesion have proved more problematic. Thus, for statesmen and political leaders in heterogeneous societies, the process of nation-building has become even more herculean following the explosion of identities and intense demand for greater stakes by sub-national groups witnessed across the globe since the end of the Cold War. Religious and sub-group identities-based agitations are on the ascendant and have become a major threat to national integration and cohesion (Alozieuwa & Demiroglu, 2015).

The period we are in Nigeria is a unique time in its history as a nation. The country has in recent times, witnessed an imprecated magnitude of violence that indeed, has shaken the unity of Nigeria. In recent years, especially since the enthronement of the democratic system of governance, in 1999, the spate of violent conflict and proliferation of ethno-religious crises have threatened the security situation in Nigeria. In the wake of Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999, joy, hope, and an optimistic future were what every Nigerian looked forward to. This optimism was predicated on the fact that democracy would heal the injury inflicted on Nigerians by the long military administration. In other words, it was the belief that democracy would guarantee freedom, liberty, and equality, and above all enhance the security of lives and property. Regrettably, this hope and optimism seem to be a mirage as the nation with its democratic rule is threatened by security challenges. The violent attacks by the various ethnic violent groups have been responsible for the death of many individuals and the destruction of property in the country. The major flashpoints of the violent conflict in Nigeria involve the ethnic militias groups in the Niger Delta, an ethnic-religious crisis in the plateau state, sectional conflicts (Biafran agitation, oduduwa

people's congress), and the recent phenomenon of Boko Haram and the herdsmen-farmers clash in some Northern states. The unrestrained attacks on individuals and institutions of the Government suggest that there is virtually a lack of peace in the country. Through, considerable effort to end the violent conflicts has been made, but the achievement of the desired peace seems far from realization, hence the basis of this study (Okoro & Bariledum, 2019)

In contemporary Nigeria's security challenges, peace has been identified as the only ingredient that could promote unity, non-violence, economic growth, and human development. Peace is not a static concept, and therefore, does not mean the total absence of conflict but an absence of all forms of violence. Therefore Kahn (2017) averred that peace is the presence of justice, and love and not merely the absence of tension. Peace means structural integration. It is stable, true, sustainable, optimistic, and preventive. It involves the fair distribution of power and resources, it is devoid of all forms of discrimination, inequality, and violence. It is built on cooperation, harmony, tolerance, and mutual respect. It also involved improved human understanding through communication, peace education, international cooperation, and dispute resolution (Okoro & Bariledum, 2019).

War and armed conflicts greatly affect children, adolescents, and particularly girls and women who are vulnerable through displacement, interrupted loss of family and community connections, and combat recruitment. Sustainable peace is an inevitable connection to achieving development objectives. Peace is more than the absence of war or the maintenance of order through force. Peacebuilding requires the dedication to non-violence means for the resolution of conflict and strengthening of the capacity at the national and international levels to develop programs and policies to foster peace-building and non-violent conflict resolution. Furthermore, the change in behavior in a community will occur only when children, youth, and adults in the community undertake positive action to create and maintain their commitment to peaceful means of conflict resolution.

It is obvious that grassroots programmes are needed in areas of conflict and post-war situations. Strong grass-root programmes can have a large impact on creating stability and peace in these areas. There is no better grass-root activity than sport and play that can reach a large group within the targeted population and which is strongly motivating and stimulating for children and youth. It is therefore strange that this tool is not optimally used as an intervention in the conflict and post

conflict situations (Eleso, Lajide, Adesanya and Asikhia, 2014). Some governments of nations are still down prioritizing activity for youth and children and many have never even funded sport and play programmes. Governments are today scaling up the cost of military intervention and anti-terror activities, while it is obvious that conflicts or post conflict locations with lack of activities for children and youth become a recruitment ground for anti-social behavior or to terrorist organizations, such as Boko Haram and Islamic State for West Africa Province (ISWAP).

Sport and play activities facilitate positive social environments for individuals, communities, and nations to pursue their individual, community and national level peace and reconciliation goals. This is achieved through community education and local capacity building, by working with national policymakers and international agencies to use sport and policy modules as tools for peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Sport, according to Eleso, Lajide and Adegbamigbe (2012) cuts across barriers that divide societies, making it a powerful tool to support conflict prevention and peace-building efforts, both symbolically, on the global level and very practically within communities. Sport brings individuals and communities together highlighting commonalities and bridging cultural and ethnic divides.

Also, Eleso, Lajide, Adesanya and Asikhia, (2014) opined that sport is an effective element in community base initiatives that aim to create sustainable peace. Sport is an international language, its ability to cross cultures enables sport relative activities to bridge social and ethnic divides (Rao, 2010). The idea of using sport to advance peace endeavors is nevertheless not a new concept. According to Cordenas (2012) the first documented use of sport to conciliate in times of conflict dates to the 9th century B.C in ancient Greece with an Olympian Truce (Ekecheiria) intended to stop war between the Peloponnesian City States during the celebration of Olympic Games.

Today, more than a hundred years after the introduction of the modern Olympic Games, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) is part of a worldwide movement composed of governments, United Nation Agencies, the private sector, and International and National non-governmental organizations NGOs which has become increasingly supportive to the idea that sport is indeed a valuable means to address issues such as social justice and equality. Sport and policy have proven to be extremely therapeutic in helping children overcome trauma (Eleso, Adesanya, Sunmonu and Joyi, 2017). Although, given that many children have had interrupted schooling or no formal education due to conflict and war, sport and play are also important tools for children

cognitive, social and emotional development. It has also been seen that the inclusion of these activities has stimulated more stability leading to economic growth.

The practice of sport is fundamental and holistic to the development of children, youth, and the adult. It is basic to fostering reconciliation, peaceful co-existence, and national development. As it is the case, promoting justice, equity and peace through sport is expedient to underscore sport-based contributions to peacebuilding and post conflict co-existence. Sport and other participatory strategies can be used to entrench peace and reduction of all forms of violence and instability as contained in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The potential links between sport, peacebuilding and co-existence cannot be underestimated. Sport brings people together at all levels in a way that cut across boundaries and breaks down barriers thereby making the playing arena a free, simple and apolitical venue for initiating and promoting contact between opposing groups.

Consequently, sport is an ideal tool for engaging and initiating social dialogue and closing gaps thereby bringing to the fore similarities between people and erasing feelings of dislike. According to Rao, (2010) sport programmes serve as a positive and productive activity for refugees and internally displaced persons, easing many of the problems they face including violence, limited access to education and broken family structures. Sport is used as a bridge between refugees and host communities, providing an opportunity for the communities to engage in positive activities. According to Eleso, Adesanya, Sunmonu and Joyi, (2017) truce can be established among communities and nations which find themselves on the path of war through sport. Sport teaches the value of peace and how to manage defeat and victory, hence the need to review the role of sport as catalyst for nation building through peacebuilding and post conflict co-existence.

Statement of the problem

Globally, underdeveloped, developing and developed nations are often confronted with one degree of conflict or the other depending on the circumstances surrounding the nature or causes of such conflicts between or among nations. These concerned warring nations are most times subjected to breakdown of co-operation, fall out in strict adherence to rules and regulations, lack of respect and regard for others, slow pace of growth and under-development among others. Peace is often a borderline they never considered as a viable tool even in times of emergencies except for rare

occasions. One unifying activity that all nations engage in is sporting activities. It has been reviewed that involvement in sport is fundamental and holistic to the development of children, youth, adult, and nations in general. With the interplay of sport as a catalyst for nation building, warring nations have come to terms as it is often perceived as a "generic tool" for promoting peacebuilding and post conflict co-existence because of the intrigues surrounding sporting activities. Upon this backdrop, this paper seeks to review the importance of sport as catalyst for nation building through peacebuilding and post conflict co-existence.

Purpose of the study

The study is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify the role of sport in promoting co-operation and peacebuilding
- To justify how sport promote compliance and adherence to rules and regulations especially during peacebuilding and post conflict situations
- To assess how sport engender fair play and respect among others especially during peacebuilding and post conflict co-existence.
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Research Hypotheses

- Sport will not have significant difference on promotion of cooperation among warring people during peacebuilding and post conflict co-existence.
- Sport will not have significant difference on the promotion of adherence to rule and regulations in peace-building and post-conflict situations.
- Sport will not have significant difference on promotion of fair play and respect for others during peacebuilding and post conflict co-existence.

Methodology

The study was delimited to the six South-West States in Nigeria. Each of the South-West states is composed of three Senatorial Districts. Respondents were drawn from each of the three senatorial districts in the South-West States represented by one Local Government each. In all, a total of eighteen (18) Local government Areas were selected for the study. Four thousand respondents were randomly selected from the Local government Areas as follows; Lagos senatorial districts

(850) respondents representing 21.25%, while Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Ekiti States senatorial Districts were allotted (630) respondents each representing (15.75%) respectively. Lagos state was allotted higher number of respondents due to its status as the Economic hub of Nigeria and densely populated when compared to other states in the region. The respondents comprised of male and female residents of the eighteen local government Areas. Simple Random Sampling Technique (SRST) was used for the selection of the respondents from each of the local government Area. The age range of the respondents were between 20 – 60 years while the academic status ranged from undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate students. The respondents were teachers, office workers, medical personnel, and business managers.

A self-structured questionnaire comprising of two sections A and B was used for the collection of data. Section “A” of the questionnaire focused on personal data of the respondents while section “B” elicited responses from the subjects based on statements drawn from the variables contained in the hypotheses on which the respondents were required to state their opinion. The questionnaire was validated and confirmed to meet content validity and a reliability index of 0.87 was obtained using split-half method of reliability. The questionnaire was administered by the researchers with five research assistants each. The research assistants were trained on the processes and procedures for the study. The study areas were mapped out and allocated to each of the researchers with five assistants. Data was collected within ten working days from the respondents. All administered questionnaires were retrieved accordingly. The biodata of respondents were collated and presented on frequency distribution tables, while items in section B were analyzed using "student t-test" (t-test) statistical analysis tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation and interpretation of results

Table 1:

Ho 1: t-test showing difference between relevance of sport and promotion of co-operation

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	P	t-cal.	Sig.	Remark
Relevance of sport	3600	6.45	0.58	3598	0.05	6.43	0.31	Not significant
Promotion of cooperation	3600	6.20	0.67					

Results on table 1 shows that 3598 respondents were captured in the study while the relevance of sport and promotion of co-operation during peace- building and post conflict recorded variations in mean and standard deviation values respectively. At 0.05, the t- calculated value of 6.43 was obtained at 0.31 sig. value; it shows no significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis which states that use of sport has significant difference on promotion of cooperation among warring people especially during peacebuilding and post conflict co-existence is retained.

This result implies that sport is indeed an important factor to be considered while promoting co-operation during peace-building process and post conflict dispensation. This finding conforms with the findings of Eleso, (1990) who postulated that sport promotes co-operation among athletes especially in team activities such as football where players of the same team passed the ball from one person to another before goal(s) can be scored. This value can be integrated among warring people in a bid to promote peace because co-operation precedes peace initiatives. Also, in relation to similar studies, Eleso, Lajide, Sunmonu and Joyi, (2017) alluded that full embracement of sport serves as a compelling force for the building of a peaceful and better world where mankind can live peacefully.

Table 2:

Ho 2: t-test analysis showing difference between relevance of sport and promotion of adherence to rules and regulations

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	P	t-cal.	Sig.	Remark
Relevance of sports	3600	6.45	0.58	3598	0.05	6.99	0.50	Not significant
Promotion of adherence to rules and regulations	3600	7.36	0.92					

From table 2 above, it revealed that 3598 respondents were captured in the study while the contribution of sport towards promotion of adherence to rules and regulations during peacebuilding and post conflict recorded variations in mean and standard deviation values respectively. At 0.05, the t-calculated value of 6.99 was obtained at 0.50 sig. value; it shows no significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis which states

that sport will have significant difference on the promotion of adherence to rule and regulations in peace-building and post-conflict situation is retained.

From the result on hypothesis two, it reveals that sport have significant difference on promotion of adherence to rules and regulations among warring people especially during peacebuilding and post conflict co-existence. This result implies that sport could promote adherence to rules and regulations among sportsmen and women. This finding is in consonance with that of Cardenas, (2012), Eleso, et al, (2017) and Rao, (2010) who stated that sport programmes promote social integration and foster tolerance among a heterogeneous group of people. In post conflict environments in particular, sport can reduce tension and generate productive dialogue especially in obeying rules and regulations, cease fire negotiation and reduction of crimes in the area among others. However, sport activities are governed by existing rules and regulation which all participants must obey or stand a chance of being sanctioned. In the same vein, rules and regulations are set during peace building process which all parties to the conflict must observe and adhere to for peaceful co-existence in post conflict situation.

Table 3:

Ho 3: t-test analysis showing significance between sport and promotion of fair play and respect for others during peacebuilding and post conflict co-existence

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	P	t-cal.	Sig.	Remark
Relevance of sports	3600	6.45	0.58	3598	0.05	5.34	0.74	Not significant
Promotion of fair play and respect for others	3600	7.90	0.85					

Findings on table 3 shows that 3598 respondents were captured in the study while the contribution of sport towards promotion of fair play and respect for others during peacebuilding and post conflict recorded variations in mean and standard deviation values respectively. At 0.05, the t-calculated value of 5.34 was obtained at 0.74 sig. value; it shows no significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis which states that sport have significant difference on promotion of fair play and respect for others especially during peacebuilding and post conflict co-existence is retained.

Results on hypothesis three reveals that sport have significant difference on promotion of fair play and respect for others during peacebuilding and post conflict co-existence. This result implies that sport could promote fair play and respect especially among warring communities. This finding is in congruence with the opinion of Eleso, Lajide, Adesanya, & Asikhia, (2014); Galtung, (1998) which stated that the holistic process of peacebuilding includes, reconstruction of peoples and places after violence, reconciliation of parties in conflict and resolution of animosities. One sensitive principle of sport organization/bodies is the display and reminder of fair play and respect for each other especially during sporting activities. For example, the slogan of Federation Internationale de Football (FIFA) “My game is fair play”, is always displayed at the venues of every football competition organized under the auspices of FIFA to promote fair play and respect for each other among player and from players to officials and vice-versa" (FIFA 2009). It follows therefore that for a lasting peace to be achieved these three key processes must be built on the foundation of fair play and respect for all the parties to the conflict.

Conclusion

From the outcome of this study, it can be affirmed that sport remains one universal and legitimate tool that can be used to advance conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Due to its cross-cultural potentials, sport have a unique element to break through barriers of all kinds, hence it is a major component for social intervention. Team sport such as Football, Volleyball, Handball etc, force participants to interact during play. This contributes in no small measure to building relationships on and outside the field of play.

Recommendations

- Sport development and peace-building process should take into consideration the specific cultural dynamics of the places where the program is to take place and apply the most suitable sport (e.g. Football as oppose to Rugby in Nigeria, gender awareness and region in areas where this is a major issue)
- Football’s main contribution to conflict resolution is its universality; it crosses frontier in spring and motivating children to be like their favorite footballers. Footballers must therefore be aware of their influential roles, when need be, to support peace initiatives and related humanitarian causes. For example, Didier Drogba played crucial role in promoting dialogue in the then divided Ivory Coast national team.

- Although, sport could address many of the factors included in conflict resolution processes, this should not be taken as a comprehensive and holistic peace-building strategy and should not be propagated as a panacea to cure the world's most pressing issues; sport alone cannot create any significant social change.
- Sport for development and peace intervention should be regarded as one more component of a complex multi-dimensional process to building sustainable peace.

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