



Tolerance in Sports: An Overview

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Abstract

The paper highlights the role of sports in promoting tolerance by strengthening interethnic relationships. Sporting events bring people from different social and cultural backgrounds, making them understand the norms, beliefs, practices, and values of each other. In doing so, these activities promote understanding among the people, consequently enhancing international peace and relations. Notably, athletes use sporting events to highlight the practices and values of their ethnic groups to other nations. Sports allow people to understand, respect, and accept different cultures; thus, promoting human individuality and self-expression. Thus, tolerance in games helps foster a culture of peace by embracing the equal existence of other people. It is a virtue that enables a person to respect others' rights and freedom, regardless of their backgrounds. The modern sport also promotes human education by creating awareness of various humanitarian issues such as racism. It plays an essential role in advocating for comradeship as part of the strategies to eliminate racial prejudice. Thus, this paper reviews the role of sports and related activities in strengthening tolerance and mutual understanding among people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds.

Key words: Tolerance, sport, sporting events, international sporting relations



Introduction

Undeniably, sports remain one of the activities that play an essential role in society by bringing people from different social, economic, cultural, and political backgrounds together. In other words, sports attract people from all walks of life. As such, it has a high impact on creating awareness on various humanitarian concerns. Besides, sports help in promoting multiple peace-building efforts and initiatives by encouraging equal participation in games and other social programs. Moreover, competition is a positive tool that helps support education, access to health care, gender equality, and nation-building. In doing so, it helps facilitate economic, social, and cultural fabric in society, leading to peaceful coexistence. In particular, football, basketball, boxing, and tennis, among other sporting activities, have been utilized as a medium for creating awareness on various social problems such as racism, gender equality, equal access to education, and social inclusion. Sports also help promote rehabilitation and reintegration of conflict survivors into society. Therefore, a game is a medium that facilitates understanding of different beliefs, values, and other cultural norms and practices.

Tolerance refers to acceptance, respect, and accommodation of other cultural practices, values, and beliefs that may conflict with the ideologies and opinions of the majority ethnic group. The concept of tolerance focuses on differences in demographic characteristics such as race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, age, and color (Atherley and Tonts, 2010). Therefore, sports promote a culture of self-expression and inclusion of people from different cultural and social backgrounds. Tolerance in sports promote a culture of peace by recognizing the notion of equal existence. In 1995, UNESCO adopted liberalism as the only way to combat ethnic, political, religious, and confessional disagreements. The organization recognized tolerance as a virtue that would promote peaceful living in a society of people with divergent views and ideas. As such, it encourages the freedoms and rights of everyone in that it recognizes different values and beliefs from other ethnic groups.

With the ever-increasing globalization, tolerance remains one of the buzzwords in organizational, national, and international settings. Understanding promotes peaceful coexistence by establishing multicultural justice. Sports officials across various countries and ethnic groups continue to create awareness of cultural diversity by encouraging their followers to promote



tolerance. According to Atherley and Tonts (2010), many states have enacted and implemented laws that suppress intolerance with civic and religious associations promulgating tolerance. With diverse meanings and interpretations attached to understanding, sports events advocate for a different ideological approach to intergroup tolerance by developing a sense of the world, where people express their talents and views freely without prejudice.

Building and Sustaining Tolerance

Sports is the foundation of the ethnic unity of contemporary society. It performs almost similar functions as music, painting, cinematography, architecture, and fine arts in promoting diversity and inclusivity. Further, it helps promote human education through various awareness campaigns on comradeship, morality, honesty, kindness, and the construction of personality (Fusco, 2005). In most cases, players in various sporting activities use this medium to create awareness of racial prejudice. These athletes contribute to the understanding and recognition of various ethnic beliefs and values by other nations. Tolerance in sports creates a sense of belonging regardless of nationality. Games bring athletes from different nationalities and religious backgrounds together and blend them to form a unified team. The fans also support their teams of choice without prejudice. In doing so, sports enable people to recognize and respect others with divergent views on life, traditions, and norms, consequently reducing the likelihood of conflicts.

Sport is one of the largest industries in the world that employs people from different cultural backgrounds. It promotes workplace inclusivity and diversity, combating challenges such as xenophobia, racial discrimination, and gender biases. For example, in football, the World Cup is one of the events that bring entertainment to people regardless of their geographic location. Sponsors of these events use sports not as an international competition, but as a medium to promote understanding and tolerance. Sporting events allow athletes to use their natural talent and skills to combat racism.

Moreover, sports offer social opportunities for role models, athletes, coaches, and other celebrities to use their brands to spur social changes such as tolerance and equality. Games inspire beyond their ethnic, political, national, and cultural differences. It instills universal values such as tolerance and respect into people, especially children and youths. Today, sports remain one of the



most debated topics worldwide, attracting people in all roles regardless of their social and economic status. Thus, the game is a universal language that plays promote understanding among people with different beliefs and values, enhancing international relations.

With transparent rules and regulations of the game, sports explicitly promote non-violent behaviors. Such higher integrity and ethics help instill a culture of tolerance and understanding among people. Sports promote fairness and equal administration of justice regardless of color, gender, and sex. Therefore, it can address societal problems such as racism, with deeper historical roots. Due to its power and influence, sports are a symbolic social activity that promotes tolerance between nations. For instance, the World Cup of 2002 remains a historic event co-hosted by Japan and Korea (Ndlovu, 2010). These two countries had a troubled history, but the tournament signified a triumph for mutual respect and tolerance.

FIFA, UNICEF, and WHO, among many other organizations, have been using sporting events to campaign for peace and unity. In doing so, these bodies demonstrate that sports are essential for promoting tolerance, non-violence, and peace. It is a medium of relaying messages of inclusivity and diversity amid the rapid growth of globalization and international cooperation. The hosts and sponsors of these events utilize their global coverage to spur conversations about the need for peaceful coexistence by embracing tolerance and understanding.

Sports also occupy an essential place in the spiritual and physical culture of the community. It is a social phenomenon that strengthens peace, unity, tolerance, and mutual understanding among states and nationalities. For example, the Olympic Games acted as a holiday of peace in ancient Greece. It means that all the war and strife would cease on the eve of this great holiday, and offenders of the truce could receive strict punishment such as ex-communication for two Olympic Games. In this regard, sports play a significant role in establishing friendly relations between ethnic groups, promoting unity and tolerance. It emphasizes multicultural and multilingual attitudes and values in promoting respect for others. Organizers, sponsors, and hosts of sporting activities use banners with messages that inspire hope, friendship, and peaceful coexistence. Thus, sport is a powerful tool that uses a universal language to advocate for tolerance and reconciliation by uniting people irrespective of religious and cultural frontiers.

As a universal language, sports reduces the likelihood of miscommunication and conflict associated with cultural differences (Rajan & Premkumar, 2013). Therefore, it builds an effective



multicultural collaboration to address misunderstandings that may occur due to differences in values and beliefs. Sporting activities allow stakeholders to promote a unified effort aimed to overcome differences.

Sports accommodates people from various religious and cultural groups. As such, it accepts group differences in dealing with out-group practices and beliefs in society. It reduces the likelihood of conflicts due to alternative worldviews that contradict the norms and practices of the majority ethnic group. Sports encourage people to tolerate beliefs and behaviors contrary to their culture and traditions despite their disapproval of such practices.

The concept of cultural diversity due to globalization has resulted in the standardization of cultures to reinforce existing imbalances. Today, sports are a medium to promote cultural tolerance in reducing the potential clash of civilizations. It draws parallel lines between the disappearance of traditional norms and the erosion of diversity that could emerge due to modern lifestyles. Therefore, sports enhance peaceful coexistence by denouncing social and economic disparities or inequalities that could infringe human rights.

Relevant organizations continue to adopt various programs to create awareness of the adverse effects of racism in sports. For example, the installation of advanced listening devices in stadiums, arena, and fields aimed to identify perpetrators of racial vilification, insults, and abuses. These measures can help strengthened various disciplinary codes designed to combat this menace.

Some players are also wearing white and black wristbands to create awareness of the realities of intolerance in the game. In particular, high profile players have stepped up on this issue by speaking their voices to discourage discrimination and hate in sports. Organizers of events also play a critical role in championing for inclusion and equal participation in sports to achieve social integration.

Sport remains one of the social activities and events that attract millions of people from diverse backgrounds. As a result, it can create an inclusive society through competitive gaming regardless of gender, age, religion, nationality, sex, and skin color. Besides, sports also play an essential role in embracing values and practices that promote mutual respect for human rights. In this regard, it helps integrate society by encouraging equal participation to emphasize a sense of belonging (Thompson et al., 2016). Engaging in sports events advocate for mutual respect and acceptance of diversity by combating exclusion, racism, and any other form of discrimination that



may undermine certain cultural groups or beliefs. Various authorities and organizations advocate for equal participation in sport by encouraging stakeholders to condemn intolerance and racist practices.

There is a need to enact anti-discrimination laws to combat racist acts and abuses that may discourage equal participation for all. Relevant agencies should consider implementing appropriate legal policies to prevent discriminative measures that could impede access to sports (Habermas, 2004). Besides, these laws would ensure integration in society by encouraging players from minority backgrounds to participate in sporting events. Through hefty fines and imprisonment, the authorities would discourage stakeholders from engaging in racist and discriminative actions.

Such laws also hold clubs and teams responsible for the actions of their fans. Strict rules will make federations implement various devices to monitor and capture fans' behavior in the stadiums, fields, and arena. In doing so, anti-discrimination laws compel stakeholders to collaborate to combat the device by adopting legal frameworks that outline each actor's duties and responsibilities. Besides, these policies also encourage authorities to conduct outreach activities that promote cultural diversity awareness. For example, sports federations should organize events that bring together people from diverse backgrounds and teach them about the need to embrace diversity. They can also remind players, coaches, and fans to avoid racial discrimination in all circumstances.

Moreover, anti-racism clauses discourage supporters from directing verbal slurs, racial gestures, and boos against players from minority ethnic groups. Such laws also encourage organizers of events to adopt charters aimed at ensuring their fans' discipline or supporters. Alternatively, the regulations compel sponsors of sporting activities to avoid using stereotyped advertisements that may undermine minority groups' cultural beliefs and values. Through collaborative efforts, sports organizers should create suitable practice awards to promote the exchange of ideas and practices within the sporting fraternity.

Tolerance Approaches and initiatives in Sports



Verbal abuse and racial slurs in sports remain a significant challenge that fans and supporters use to evoke the opposing teams' emotions and attitudes. Racial prejudices aimed to demonstrate racial superiority over the minority ethnic groups. In doing so, racism in sports highlights the ideological expression of discriminatory behaviors and disparaging attitudes to discredit the victim (Drandrov & Fayzullin, 2015). Therefore, the manifestations of racial prejudice in games stress the racist structure or institutional racisms in society. It manifests itself unequivocally since social norms cannot prevent spectators from racial discrimination against minority groups.

Although games were viewed as a cultural practice and a means to promote social life, racism's emergence continues to affect this social event. Racism remains one of the prevalent issues in contemporary society. Today, racial slurs and vilification are rampant in sports. Fans continue to target players of color worldwide. The blacks continue to experience racial abuses and defamation due to discrimination based on their skin color.

Notably, there is evidence that racial discrimination is a significant problem that affects the sports sector's social interactions. Racism in sports goes beyond the behavior of spectators or fans. Institutional racism affects games with racial remarks and comments by managers, coaches, athletes, and fans. In most cases, various authorities have adopted initiatives to combat the menace in sports by focusing on hooliganism among radical groups of fans. As a result, such programs have not yielded intended results as racism continues to jeopardize sports.

It is essential to note that sports are a social event that promotes various social values and cohesion in society. Besides, it helps fosters tolerance, mutual respect, and fair play. However, the widespread racism has adversely affected this field; hence, the need for the relevant agencies to design policy recommendations to combat the phenomenon in all forms of sports, including basketball, football, rugby, baseball, among other amateur and professional sports.

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acceptance of diversity by combating exclusion, racism, and any other form of discrimination that may undermine certain cultural groups or beliefs. Various authorities and organizations advocate for equal participation in sport by encouraging stakeholders to condemn intolerance and racist practices.

Over the decade years, the world has experienced unprecedented rates of racial abuses and acts. With increased acts of racism in sports, players have threatened to walk out of the fields with Africans, foreign-born players, and Muslims among the most targeted. Throughout history, various sporting activities and competitions have embraced fair play where collective and individual efforts contribute towards achieving desired goals. However, factors such as religion, the color of the skin, and ethnicity have become the basis of judgment and performance. As such, racial supremacy continues to ravage sports, making it difficult for players and participants to achieve their full potential.

The black players continue to experience high incidents of racial abuse, such as banana gestures and monkey calls. These ultra-nationalistic and far-right symbols and slogans impede the competitiveness in the industry. Besides, reports indicate that a section of fans also uses boos and catcalls to insult players from certain ethnic groups. Such racial abuses affect the player's concentration throughout the game, reducing their performance and motivation. Xenophobic, ethnic, and racial prejudice are incompatible with the laws that condemn discrimination (Wilson, 2002). These practices and utterances violate victims' rights and freedom of association.

For example, the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin promoted racial superiority despite attracting athletes from various multiracial backgrounds. The organizers of this event supported the ideologies of the Nazi regime. In doing so, racisms make it challenging to promote affirmative social acceptance for multi-ethnic teams. Incidents of racial insults, violence, and intolerance have afflicted modern sports. Europe is the leading continent with patterns of racial discrimination in sports. Display of racial gestures, flags, and banners directed at certain social groups of players and supporters has affected the game's social interaction.

Over the last decades, various stakeholders have created awareness of tolerance as the ideal solution to the increased religious and cultural diversity. As a result, multiple communities are embracing the concept, with national and international organizations adopting policies that respect and appreciate norms and practices of divergent cultural groups. However, with increased cases of



prejudice and intolerance across various sectors, many policymakers have proposed several strategies to help build and sustain tolerance across the community.

It is essential to note that majority of existing policies and initiatives focusing on tolerance aim to combat prejudice, racism, and xenophobia. These strategies emphasize reconciliation and tolerance as the most effective approaches to fight racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia that have crippled the modern world (Ross, Jamieson, & Mitchell, 2008). Others emphasize the need to combat racial biases, homophobia, feminism, hate crimes, and ethnic discrimination. In doing so, these strategies aim to increase the level of acceptance, accommodation, and appreciation of diverse beliefs and practices.

Several awareness programs help educate people on the dangers of racism and prejudice. They teach people to appreciate traditions and cultural practices worldwide. As such, these policies equate tolerance with openness, nonjudgmental, and valuing diversity, even if the beliefs and practices of out-groups conflict with the majority's traditions. Therefore, these programs help discourage prejudicial attitudes or disapproval of expectations. As such, they promote intergroup toleration, allowing people to maintain their intrinsic values and beliefs even when they conflict with those from other ethnic or cultural groups.

Besides, awareness programs discourage people from stereotyping out-groups by encouraging them to develop positive attitudes toward them. In doing so, these initiatives help broaden people's horizons to recognize other cultural values (Bairner, 2003). Nevertheless, awareness programs do not focus on improving out-group attitudes but also convincing people to change their perceptions and ways of doing things. They allow people to understand the perspective of others and rationale for dissenting practices and beliefs. They create higher tolerance through dialogue and social interactions, which are the foundation for reciprocity of perspective-taking.

Various sporting activities such as football, rugby, NBA, and cricket have implanted tolerance initiatives to promote peace and understanding among the stakeholders. These policies aimed to empower citizens by strengthening the political, social, and economic factors that determine resilience in solving disputes (Ramalingam, 2011). These policies include innovative collaboration with different actors to reduce violence at the local, state, and federal, and international levels. In this regard, sports promote responsive and inclusive policies in addressing



the ever-changing needs of society. The participatory approach helps sustain tolerance and peace at the same time championing for human rights. The representative participation of actors from various ethnic groups in sports strengthens tolerance and inter-ethnic solidarity in society.

Conclusion

It is evident that sports are one of the most effective ways of communicating tolerance, peace, and respect for opponents, irrespective of cultural, ethnic, and religious differences. As a universal language, sports help create awareness on inclusivity and diversity by fostering peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding. The fair play in sports is a typical example of the initiatives to strengthen tolerance. Various sporting activities attract the attention of many viewers or audiences worldwide, promoting international relations. In particular, sports can encourage cooperation among people from different cultural origins. It strengthens interethnic and cultural ties by acquainting people with beliefs and values.

In doing so, sports enhance the formation of a positive image of people from out-groups. Sports also fosters international diplomatic relations by creating awareness on humanitarian issues such as environmental pollution, child trafficking, poverty, and racism (Ndlovu, 2010). It unites people beyond national, religious, and cultural borders aimed to promote tolerance and reconciliation. As such, it accelerates the reintegration of people to ensure mutual respect and understanding in society. Sports also facilitates social interaction between people from various ethnic and cultural groups, leading to internationalization. Players and athletes also use these sporting events to raise awareness of their national status on the world stage, resulting in recognition of their ethnic and cultural identity by other people. Representative participation in sports also strengthens tolerance due to interethnic solidarity across the globe.

With the ever-increasing racial slurs and abuses targeting minority groups in various sporting events, organizers should adopt new approaches to address this challenge. Over the last years, fans have become violent against opponents by evoking emotions and attitudes toward skin color. In this aspect, racial superiority poses a threat to various initiatives designed to encourage



tolerance, inclusivity, and diversity in the sports arena. The minority ethnic groups have become victims of discriminatory behaviors due to ideological expression. Such disparaging attitudes and actions threaten unity within society. Therefore, law enforcement agencies should partner with actors such as event organizers, sponsors, and teams to identify these violent groups of supporters. There is a need for strategic policies and actions to curb rampant racial prejudice in games against minority groups.

Organizers of sporting events should also help the police identify perpetrators of these racists' chants for prosecution. With suitable training, these actors can effectively collaborate to reduce the incidents of racism within and outside the sporting arena. With adequate funding, these actors can ensure effective implementation of tolerance programs such as awareness initiatives, arrests, and prosecution to combat racism in the sports sectors as well as other domains. Besides, they should encourage equal participation in various implementation stages in dealing with racist incidents. More scientific research efforts that apply quantitative methods and decision analysis techniques to assess and evaluate tolerance strategies and initiatives should be given more attention (Sun, 2018). For instance, Multi-Criteria Decision Making (MCDM) has a verity of tools and techniques that can be used to evaluate strategic options, and weight criteria that can local, regional, and international bodies benefit from.

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