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## **SPORT FOR SOCIAL COHESION AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA: STYLIZED FACTS ANALYSIS**

### **Abstract:**

Sport is identified as one of the mechanism for binding society together and directly achieving healthiness of the society. With these factors, sport serves as a development tools to achieve Social Development Goals (SDG) in "global south" countries which South Africa is no exception. Fostering the unity of the multi-ethno-racial society of South Africa is one of the attainment of sport activities in the country. This study employed the descriptive and stylized fact analysis to investigate the deployment of sport for social cohesion in South Africa. The data for this study were primarily sourced from South Africa's Department of Sport and Recreation. The empirical findings revealed that sport and recreation participation increased since 2015 which peaked in 2017 with 47386 people participation in South Africa and thereby reducing health challenges as noted in increasing life expectancy. But funding of sport and recreation have been on decline since 2013 to 2016 but marginally improved in 2017. The sustainability of sport and recreation promotion events to bring communities together to ensure social cohesion is dependent on various factors among which are financial support and infrastructure. The results of the current study suggest that sport financing is inadequate to achieve the objective of bringing communities together.

### **Keywords:**

Sport, Social cohesion, Development, Stylized fact analysis, South Africa

**JEL Classification:** A10, P48, L83

## 1.0 Introduction

South Africa is a multi-ethno-racial country where emergence of diversity of tribes and race were key to social development (Howarth, 2002: 266). This created frequent inter-groups conflicts before the first national democratic elections which took place in 1994. Though the remnants of such ideology are still traceable in the current South African society such conflicts exist at a reduced level. National Sport festivals is one tool used to promote inter-group contacts in order to increase the acquaintance to outer-group cultural norms. The essence of this is to develop and promote cultural mutual respect for all the ethnicities and races, thereby enhancing social inclusion in the country (Vermeulen & Verweel, 2009). Sport for development is termed as the "engine" of new development initiatives for achieving development targets (Levermore, 2008). It is the intentional 'bringing together' of individuals and communities to reduce cultural and ethnic differences.

United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace (2003: i) asserts that the world of sport presents a natural partnership for the United Nations system. By its very nature, sport is about participation. It is about inclusion and citizenship. Sport brings individuals and communities together by highlighting commonalities and bridging cultural or ethnic divides. It provides a forum to learn skills such as discipline, confidence, and leadership and teaches core principles such as tolerance, cooperation, and respect. Sport teaches the value of effort and how to manage victory as well as defeat. When these positive aspects of sport are emphasized, sport becomes a powerful vehicle through which the United Nations can work towards achieving its goals (United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace, 2003).

According to Sport and Recreation South Africa [SRSA] (2018) "sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development". SRSA recognizes "the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives" (SRSA, 2018). Motivation for these assertions were derived from the Nelson Mandela's philosophy on sport for development and the statement reads:

*"Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair"*

The enormous potential of sport, its global reach, its universal language, its contribution to ensuring healthier lives, its impact on communities in general, and young people in particular, is a fact and is increasingly recognized around the world. In this regard SRSA made significant progress updating the document "A Case for Sport" and it is envisaged that it will be built on six pillars, namely Social Change; Social Cohesion; Education; Health; Economy; and International Relations. These six important pillars of sport to the society are streamlined to four indices, namely learning, teamwork, peace and health in this study (SRSA, 2018).

Sport promotes learning/education most especially among kids since physical inputs are more involved than mental inputs and thereby promoting self-esteem. This boosts the psychological morale of the students in other areas of academic pursuit since self-esteem is at the "north". With high self-esteem as a result of energized and recharged body system, the tendency of high level of performance, individually and as a team is guaranteed. Furthermore it provides a forum to learn and develop skills such as discipline, confidence and leadership and they convey core principles that are important in a democracy, such as tolerance, cooperation and respect (Toolkit for sport development, 2019).

Well energized and recharged individuals will perform well as a member of a group as a result of engagement in sporting activities and thereby promoting cohesion among the members of the team. Groups' cohesion lead to societal cohesion and further yield peaceful co-existence in the society. Within teams excellent achievement is likely since individuals work collectively towards the attainment of common goals and resources are efficiently and effectively used and maximized (Carron, Martin, & Loughhead, 2012). While anecdotal evidence exists in sport that individuals in teams need to work effectively together to achieve the goals of the team or club, very little empirical evidence exists to prove this assertion. For teams to develop into cohesive units, certain behaviours are required of the members and these behaviours need to be monitored and maintained (McEwan & Beauchamp, 2014).

While sport is frequently regarded as a physical activity associated with competition among teams or individuals for the purpose of winning (Cardenas, 2013), sport can also be used as a social intervention strategy that can cut across barriers which divide societies to bring about peace among individuals, communities and nations. The understanding of each other's' differences is birthed by constant social contact and sporting competition further contributes to reduced conflicts among intragroup/out-group members thereby promoting peaceful co-existence in the society (Lyras, 2008). By creating an environment for peace it makes it possible to bring people together towards a common purpose and allows for the sharing of resources.

The health-related advantages of sport participation cannot be overstated. Among others, participation in sport contributes to reduced morbidity and mortality rates and causes a decline in diseases associated with a sedentary lifestyle (Struthers, Surujlal, Harrington et al., 2009). Sport participation improves self-regulation and decision making and fosters responsible behaviour because rules have to be followed and the consequences of breaking the rules have to be accepted. The rewards associated with achieving goals may increase individuals' desire to participate with each other to achieve the common goals (Special Education and Sport, 2006). Participation in sport also boosts the immune system which ensures less negative health consequences since immune systems are active to combat any anti-body that may want to deteriorate the health system of an individual (Nieman & Wentz, 2019).

Sport and recreation are some of the identified mechanisms for achieving leisure and social development simultaneously since engaging in sporting and recreation activities are multi-beneficial to individual person and the state. There is a scarcity of studies and documents on sport for social cohesion and development in South Africa which has created lacuna in the sport literature as a mechanism for maximally achieving Social Development Goals (SDGs) in South

Africa. Thus, this purpose of this study was to monitor sport development from the post-apartheid era (since 1994), with particular attention to participation and finance of sport and recreation activities in South Africa.

The other sections layout of the study are: section two presents the tripartite of sport, social cohesion and development that reviewed the the nexus between sport, social cohesion and development. Whilst section three analysed the methodology and data sources of data explored in the study. The empirical results and analysis are captured in section four and the further discussion of the results are highlighted in section five. Finally, section six drawn conclusion and recommendations from the empirical findings of the study

## **2.0 Tripartite of sport, social cohesion and development**

One of the first and most basic challenges of the whole sport, social cohesion and development field is concerned with the concept of development itself. Development is one of those generally appealing but deeply complicated and poly-vocal terms that resonates in scholarly circles and popular audiences. There is no widely acceptable conceptualization of the term 'development' as it is relative in meaning based on period, place and person (Black, 2010; Holt & Sehn, 2008; Sachs, 2005).

In different contexts, development can refer to something as philosophical as the progress of humankind or as practical as the social engineering of emerging nations (Esteva, 1992; McMichael, 2004). It can be conceptualized and applied at a very personal, individual level where it is often tied with fairly rigid, normative conceptions of socialization and growth through different life stages or milestones toward a more complete (and desirable) form. This individualist orientation is often re-appropriated within a discourse of human capabilities and freedoms as well as within the politics of citizenship and identity (Foster, 2006; Sen, 1999; Sharma, 2008). Development also has a broader, more systematic set of meanings and applications that emerged out of the economic growth models of earlier generations of international policy makers. In this context, development can be both a universal (economic) blueprint of social change and a neoliberal (some would argue neocolonial) "method of rule" (McMichael, 2004). A series of paradigmatic shifts since the 1960s and 1970s has broadened system-level development discourse even further to include terms such as poverty alleviation, local empowerment, and human rights. In the process, development has become synonymous in many contexts with helping the world's poor, transforming conditions of inequality, and engendering social, political, economic, and material change through education (Finnemore, 1997; Peet, 1999; Sachs, 1992). With sport mechanism adaptation, development challenges can be minimized, more especially at the grassroots level.

The sport-for-development (SFD) field has grown in recent years, with thousands of programmes working at effecting personal and societal change across the globe. One can broadly define SFD as the use of sport to exert a positive influence on public health, the socialization of children, youth and adults, the social inclusion of the disadvantaged, the economic development of regions and states, and on fostering intercultural exchange and conflict resolution (Lyras, 2007; Sugden, 1991, 2008).

Jones, Edwards, Bocarro, Bunds and Smith (2018) emphasize the importance of community sporting activities in capacity building more especially youth manpower development. The results of their study is based on a qualitative data framework in which youth engaging in sport activities were interviewed and the outcome showed the progression of human capital development and community sport organizations (CSOs) as tools to promote social development in communities. Rural communities in South Africa can also adopt these techniques in engaging, empowering and employing (3Es) the youth since idle individuals may be lured towards activities which contribute to social unrest.

Lyras and Welty-Peachey (2011) view sport as a vehicle for social change in communities where participation in traditional sporting activities has failed to contribute to development. The development of a scientific theoretical background for the implementation of sport-for-development (SFD) is the core philosophy behind the study. Continuous intergroup contact is suggested to reduce the divisions that usually arouse a result of diversity such as racism, sexism, tribalism and "ageism" (Allport, 1979). Intergroup contact theory breaks the barriers that may exist between in-group and out-group members as frequent contact create familiarities and more knowledge about each groups background (Sternberg, 2003). By this, learning and education on individual differences, norms and cultural values are transferred, leading to peaceful co-existence (Lyras, 2014).

Sport tourism attracts people from diverse cultural backgrounds to grace sport events and spectators support their teams towards victory. Mega sport events increases sport tourism which in turn contributes to the creation of economic opportunities since different economic activities such as aviation, hospitality, employment and the development of infrastructure are activated as a result of the sport fiesta. Honari, Goudarzi, Heidari and Emami (2010) assert that sport tourism is an ever increasing industry recognized as a factor influencing the economic and social restructuring of urban and rural areas in Iran. The study found that sport creates employment and income directly in hosting communities and indirectly for other sectors that are interdependent in Iran.

Reis, Vieira and de Sousa-Mast (2016) contributed to the arguments on sport for development by considering the government program "Vilas Olímpicas do Rio de Janeiro" as it relates to social outcomes. The findings revealed that partnerships, conflicting aims and community involvement are achieved in the government-funded sport programs. In specific sporting games, soccer as one of the sports has been the cultural driving force in Korea to mitigate against division and conflicts among the dwellers (Park & Ok, 2018). In the same clime in Arab world - United Arab Emirate (UAE), sport has been a tool for integrating people with disability by way of providing technologies to prepare them for Paralympic sports (Perkin & Howe, 2017).

### **3.0 Methodology and data sources**

In order to achieve the purpose of the study a stylized facts approach was utilized. Following Hirschman's (2016:606) definition of stylized facts being "simple empirical regularities in need of

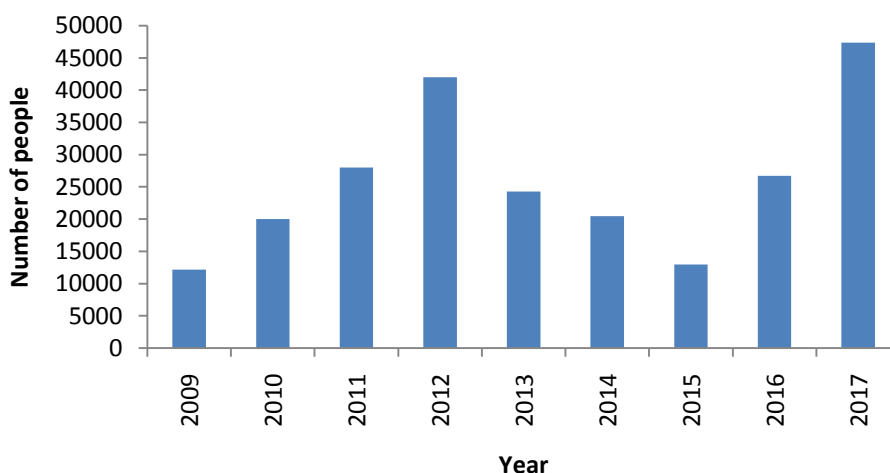
explanation” this study attempts to examine the associations between the indices mentioned earlier in the study by monitoring sport development in South Africa from the post-apartheid era. Hirshman (2016) argues that stylized facts receive little attention from scholars of social science who have the tendency to focus on popular research topics of such as theory choice, theory testing, and model building. Helfat (2007:185) emphasizes that “stylized facts matter enormously in management inquiry because such inquiry ultimately deals with the real world”. The author argues that one should first understand at least what a phenomenon or occurrence consists of before trying to explain the reasons for its occurrence. Hence, research directed toward uncovering empirical regularities, otherwise known as ‘stylized facts’ is required.

This study captures the outcome of sport and recreation in South Africa with secondary data on sport indicators. The data were gathered from the South African Ministry of Sport and Recreation's annual budget documents for various issues. The study employed descriptive, trend and stylized facts analyses to depict the level of sport engagement in South Africa. The scope of the study was determined by availability of the yearly data and the data for the indicators measured are unbalanced time series sourced from the annual performance document of South African Department of Sport and Recreation South Africa for various issues.

#### 4.0 Empirical results and analysis

In Figure 1, sport and recreation promotion campaigns and events participation trends in in South Africa from 2009 to 2017 are illustrated. The results revealed that number of people actively participating in sport and recreation events increased steadily from a record low of 12165 participants to close to 45000 participants in 2012 before peaking at 47386 participants in 2017. The increase in the sport and recreation promotion events' participation is approximately 290 percent since 2009. This increase in sport and recreation promotion is a result of continual drastic decline in sport championships participation in most of the schools in South Africa.

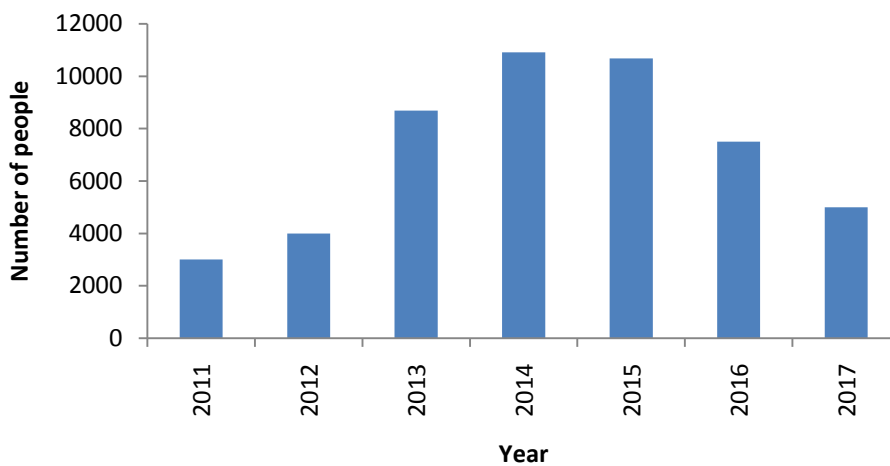
**Figure 1: Sport and recreation promotion campaigns participation in South Africa**



Source: Authors' computation and design, 2019

The national school sport festival is a form of promoting social cohesion among the youth while they are still actively involved in formal academic learning. In Figure 2, the participation of people in school sport activities in South Africa is illustrated. The number of participants takes the form of normal distribution from inception (2011) of measuring this indicator till 2017. In 2011, 3000 participants in school sport championships and increased to 10915 participants, the highest in 2014. Since 2014, the participation in school sport championships dwindled to 5000 in 2017. A plausible reason for the nosedive in school sport championships participation maybe as a result of alternative and innovative medium of recreation such as video games, social media chatting and other forms of recreation as a result of advanced technology. These form of recreations require less active physical involvement and reduces face-to-face interaction as physical sport activities does thereby reducing the likelihood of social cohesion.

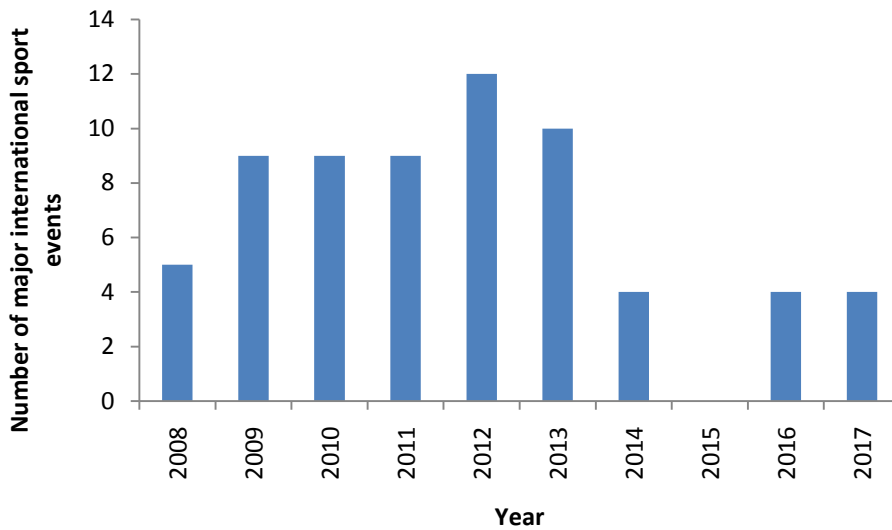
**Figure 2: National school sport championships participation in South Africa**



Source: Authors' computation and design, 2019

Success in international sports participation in South Africa depends on adequate preparation and support from the government. The number of major international events receiving intra-governmental support in South Africa is depicted in Figure 3. It is evident that in 2008 intra-governmental support for international sport events stood at 5 and increased to 12 in 2012 but it steadily declined to 4 in 2017.

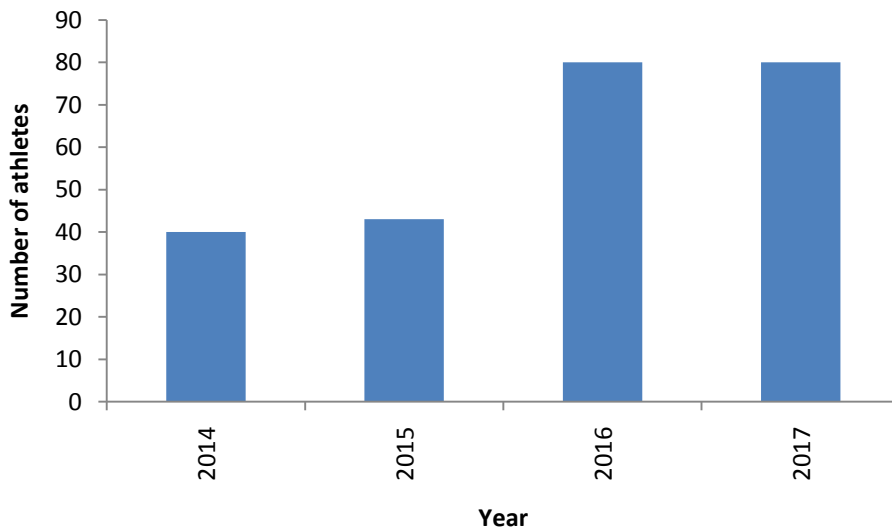
**Figure 3: Major international sport events receiving support in South Africa**



Source: Authors' computation and design, 2019

Government support for athletes representing South Africa is well documented since 2014. The number of athletes supported through scientific support programmes per year in South Africa is captured in Figure 4 in which 40 athletes were scientifically supported in 2014, the figure rose by 3 units in 2015 reaching 43 athletes. The support continuing rising to 80 athletes in 2016 but remains unchanged in 2017.

**Figure 4: Athletes supported through scientific support programmes in South Africa**



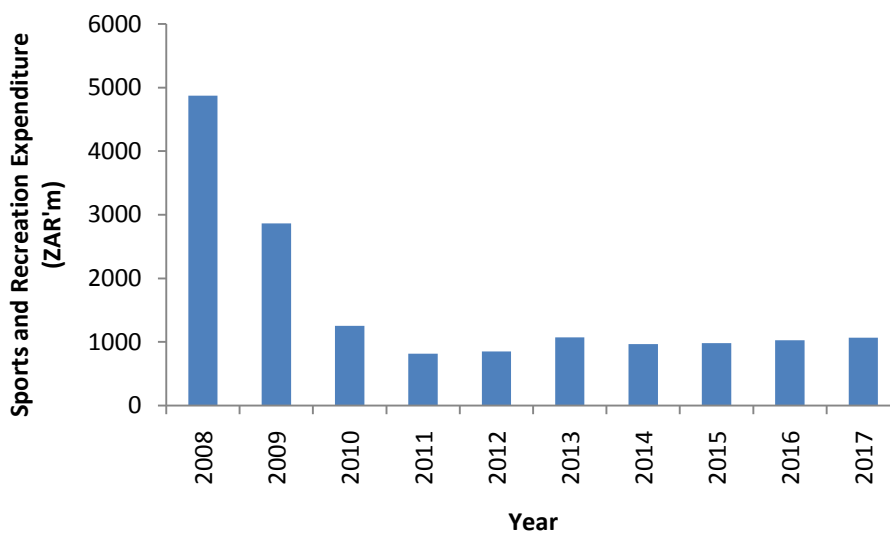
Source: Authors' computation and design, 2019



Figure 5 shows the trend of expenditure on sport and recreation from 2008 to 2017 in South Africa. The expenditure stood at ZAR4871.4m and the peak during the scope of this study but declined to ZAR2866.4m in 2009. Sports and recreation spending further dwindled to ZAR1026.6m in 2016 but marginally rose to ZAR1066.6m in 2017.

Government spending was higher before 2010 and the hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup may be a possible reason for the massive spending on sport and recreation. During this period new infrastructure development took place in preparation for the 2010 FIFA World cup. The record shows that sports and recreation spending in South Africa witnessed a decline immediately after the 2010 FIFA World Cup in 2011 which is ZAR816m and the lowest spending on sport and recreation.

**Figure 5: Sports and recreation expenditure**



Source: Authors' computation and design, 2019

## 5.0 Discussion of the results

The empirical results indicate that participation in national school sport is gradually declining. Although the empirical results suggest that this may be due to a decline in sport and recreation financing in South Africa one should not lose sight of the fact that other factors such as greater demands are placed on learners to perform better academically as well as other recreation activities associated with technology which can be engaged with at any time. Also, international sport events receiving support from South African's intra-government experienced setbacks which reduce the participation of emerging and established athletes in international sporting events. Sporting equipment and facilities like gymnasiums, parks and other infrastructure needed for sport participation are concentrated in the urban cities but are scarce in rural communities.

The results also reveal that sport participation is moving in geometric progression while sport financing is moving in arithmetic retrogression which clearly shows movement in opposite directions that may hinder the developmental pace of the country. Since sport is identified as one of the key tools to enhance social cohesion, financing and sport participation should move in the same direction in order to achieve balanced social development.

## **6.0 Conclusion and recommendations**

It is evident from the results of the study that the promotion of sport events by SRSAs with the objective of bringing communities together so that social cohesion has necessitated financial injection for its sustainability. However, with the youth being exposed to other forms of recreation besides physical activities, improved participation is not evident. The sustainability of sport and recreation promotion events to bring communities together to ensure social cohesion is dependent on various factors among which are financial support and infrastructure. The results of the current study suggest that sport financing is inadequate to achieve the objective of bringing communities together.

Thus, to mitigate against these limitations and conclusions from the study, a few recommendations are made. The youth are the engine of growth and development of any nation and any attempt to under-utilize them may result in a serious backlash on any nation. Sports participation should be mandatory for every learner at basic level of education and ensuring that physical health education (PHE) is compulsory at this level of education. There is need to train more physical health education (PHE) teachers so that every learner can be engaged at the schools. This will increase level of school sport participation and promote healthy youth society.

There is need for more coordination and cooperation between government agencies and corporate bodies in sport promotion (funding) in South Africa in order to increase international sport events participation.

The need to continually increase the government budget for sport is highly suggested since the social development has high impacts on every sphere of lives. It's important to invest in equipment and facilities that would promote sporting activities both at the rural and urban areas in South Africa.

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