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Scrutinizing the role of sports in community development and crime prevention in Katima Mulilo, Zambezi Region of Namibia

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Abstract

Sport has long been credited as a beneficial tool for encouraging progressive social change and tackling continuing community obstacles, highly notably crime and anti-social activities. This paper scrutinize the role of sports in community development and crime prevention in Katima Mulilo, Zambezi Region of Namibia. A mixed design approach was employed for this study as this strategy was found to be ideal and suitable to collect and analyse data. Participants comprised of n = 103 relevant stakeholders from crime and law fraternity, at-risk youth partaking in sports programs, their instructors/coaches and mentors, community leaders. A purposively sampling approach was employed to choose participants and communities enthusiastically engaged in related programs. A stratified random sampling strategy was also utilized for choosing common community members for scrutiny to guarantee fair representation. Data was collected using interviews and questionnaires to get in-depth required data. Interview and questionnaire gathered qualitative data was transcribed and analysed thematically, whilst quantitative data was analysed using statistical software SPSS. The results of this mixed study shows that sports in drive young people from doing negative activities by 93%, whilst sports promote the youth's health and well-being by 85%, sports also provide a sense of belonging to local youth community by 57% and lastly sports strengthen social cohesion within local communities by 57%. Sports improved young people's psychological outcomes by 96%, whereas again sports offered a safe space for the youth by 82%, it also provided the participants with role models and mentors by 78%, it reduced the risk factors by 70% and it taught them life skills by 52%. Numerous studies have shown tangible of evidence that sports play a transformative function in adopting strong community development and substantially helping crime prevention efforts. By offering organized activities and a positive setting, sports performances

efficiently involve youth, directing them away from reckless conduct and participation in the fairness system.
Keywords: Roles, Sports, Community Development, Crime Prevention, Katima Mulilo.

Introduction

The quest of secure, unified, and successful communities is a universal joint societal target (Karaburum and Balcioglu, 2021). In current years, legislators, public leaders, and scholars have progressively turned their devotion to modern, non-traditional approaches of reaching these plans, with a significant emphasis on the prospective of sports and physical leisure interest (Meir and Fletcher, 2019). The foundation is modest yet philosophical: organised sports plans can serve as influential vehicles for individual growth and social incorporation, thereby nurturing stronger community ties and stand-in as a practical measure against anti-social conduct and crime (Höglund and Bruhn, 2024). This potential is established in the innate values boosted by sports, such as cooperation, respect, discipline, and self-self-worth, which are fundamental construction blocks for helpful youth improvement (Richardson and Fletcher, 2020).

The advantages of sport for personal health and well-being are broadly recognised, involving enhanced physical fitness, decreased stress, and improved mental health. On a comprehensive community ratio, active involvement in recreation and sport related activities is linked with the improvement of robust social systems and the formation of safer, delighted neighbourhoods (Jugl et al, 2023). Nations such as Jamaica have long applied sports as an instrument for dispute resolution and advocating for harmony, granting a neutral stance for discourse and mutual experiences beyond distinct community clusters (Ekholm and Holmlid, 2020). These actual-world instances imply that, when thoroughly planned and incorporated into the local collective structure, sport and physical activity ideas have substantial crime prevention capability (Czupich, 2020).

Notwithstanding this hopeful viewpoint and the extraordinary level of political backing and popularity appreciated by sports-constructed involvements, the experimental indication thoroughly assessing their exact influence remains slightly inadequate (Ramashray Yadav and Bhanushali, 2025).

Several active programs run with very determined aims and ambiguous reasonings, frequently missing the severe assessment required to absolutely connect sports involvement to gaugeable decreases in youth crime (Yadav and Bhanushali, 2025). The idea of "sport-grounded crime prevention" itself can be blurred, requiring a completely reasonable academic foundation and convincing experimental proof through all perspectives. There is a dire necessity for advance research to find the aspect procedures and incidents in which sports most successfully influence to positive results and prevent criminal conduct (Cunning, 2021).

This research paper seeks to tackle this substantial disruption in the literature by granting an inclusive evaluation of the part of sports in crime prevention and community development (Copus and Laqueur, 2019). Precisely, this study aims to: evaluate current hypothetical outlines that clarify the connection between sports involvement and reduced crime; disparagingly evaluate the current experimental indication and program appraisals to comprehend "what working" and under what circumstances; and suggest a distinguished theoretical model for the project and application of operative, evidence-grounded sports plans that sincerely contribute to safer societies (Nubani et al, 2023). By creating different perceptions and experimental outcomes, this paper will explain the ability and limits of sports as a collective involvement instrument, offering constructive perceptions for specialists, legislators, and scientists alike (Lim et al, 2020).

Problem statement

The prevalent challenge of urban crime and a drop in community cohesion needs successful, grassroots intrusions. Established law enforcement methods frequently address signs rather than core sources of anti-social conduct amongst youth (Van der Veken et al, 2020). Numerous societies experience an absence of organised, connecting activities for young locals, leaving them exposed to harmful effects and gang association (Mori et al, 2025). This void in explicit social infrastructure impacts substantially to cycles of crime and distrust within neighbourhoods (Morgan and Parker, 2023). There is a vital necessity to examine ecological, protective tactics that promote civic obligation and provide practical options to unlawful activity. Therefore, this study purposely explores existing local attempts to influence sports for social cohesion, scrutinising the challenges and recognizing best methods for incorporating such ideas into wider community development and policing framework.

Research question

- What are the role of sports in community development and crime prevention in Katima Mulilo, Zambezi Region of Namibia.

Materials and methods

A mixed design approach was employed for this study as this strategy was found to be ideal and suitable for to collect and analyse data. Participants comprised of n = 103 relevant stakeholders from crime and law fraternity, at-risk youth partaking in sports programs, their instructors/coaches and mentors, community leaders. A purposively sampling approach was employed to choose participants and communities enthusiastically engaged in related programs. A stratified random sampling strategy was also utilized for choosing common community members for scrutiny to guarantee fair representation. Data was collected using interviews and questionnaires to get in-depth required data. Interview and questionnaire gathered qualitative data was transcribed and analysed thematically, whilst quantitative data was analysed using statistical software SPSS.

Results

This research investigates the meaningful prospective of sports ideas in promoting community development and acting as a positive crime prevention approach in Katima Mulilo, sited in the Zambezi Region of Namibia. By offering coordinated activities and mentorship prospects, sports performances provide helpful outlets for exposed to risk youth, thereby constructing resilience, teamwork and discipline skills while deterring them from disruptive behaviours. This study purposely explores existing local attempts to influence sports for social cohesion, scrutinising the challenges and recognizing best methods for incorporating such ideas into wider community development and policing framework. Below are the results:

Figure 1 below shows the results of sports roles in community development, to which participants indicated that sports in drive young people from doing negative activities by 93%, whilst sports promote the youth's health and well-being by 85%, sports also provide a sense of belonging to local youth community by 57% and lastly sports strengthen social cohesion within local communities by

57%. Moreover, participants substantiated more to quantitative results with these qualitative responses;

Sports form a combined experience that develops social connections, community and trust, and spirit, that enables the young people to socialise appropriately (strengthening of social cohesion)

Frequent physical activity is connected to a healthier and happier communities, the more young people consistently engage in physical activities on daily basis, the more beneficial and happy they live in communities they reside (promoting and enhancing health and wellbeing).

When young people or the youth get involved in sports and leisure activities it gives them a sense of individuality, sense of identity, sense of belonging and deeper connection to their community (Offering a sense of belonging)

Sports participation offer and providing a constructive positive focus, additionally sports can deter or divert individuals away from possibly anti-social deeds or criminal conducts. The more young people focus and concentrate on sports activities, the more they are pushed away from committing crime and engaging ill deeds (deter or diverts from negative activities).

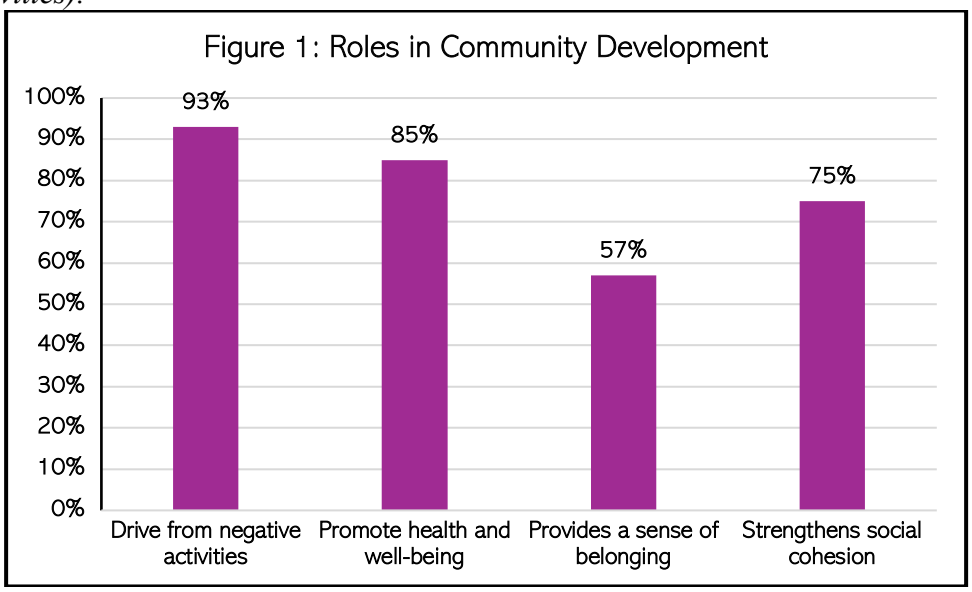
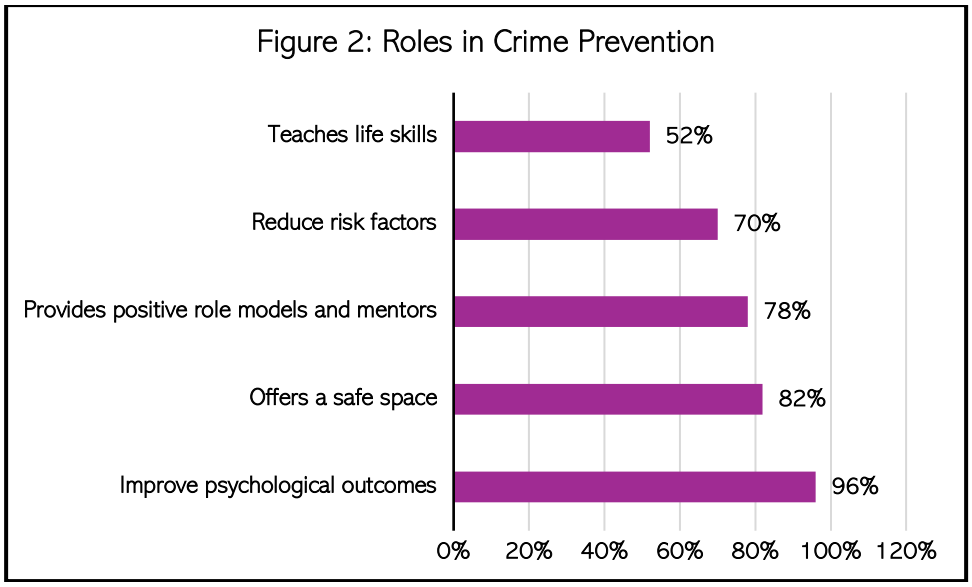


Figure 2 below shows the results of sports roles in crime prevention, to which participants indicated that sports improved young people's psychological outcomes by 96%, whereas again sports offered a safe space for the youth by 82%, it also provided the participants with role models and mentors by 78%, it reduced the risk factors by 70% and it taught them life skills by 52%. Furthermore, participants alluded more to quantitative results above with these qualitative replies;

Sports grants and provide a setting to learn and absorb fundamental life skills, such as honesty, trustworthiness, fair-play, discipline, sportsmanship, respect, and teamwork, through activities like fair-minded play and collaboration (teaches young people life skills).

Structured sports platforms provide a safe protected and organised background for young people, specifically those at danger, where they can spend their time positively. This imply that those young people who intend to commit crime, are kept busy in sports activities if they engage frequently (sports offer a safe space).

When young people get involved or get engaged in sports can lead to important enhancements in self-confidence, emotional control, and psychological well-being (improve young people's psychological outcomes).
Participating in sports programs link youth with trainers, coaches and mentors who can offer support and guidance, which can be fundamental for their growth, (provides encouraging role models and mentors).
By tackling risk factors linked with crime and strengthening protective aspects, sport-founded involvements can help prevent both criminal and abuse (reduction risk factors).



Discussions

The usage of sports for constructive social results has acquired international acknowledgement, with organizations such the United Nations advocating its prospective as an instrument for progress and peace developing. Research specifies that sport physical activities can provide shielding factors against criminal conduct by utilizing life skills, cooperation, and self-confidence, remarkably among youth (Jugl et al, 2021). Conversely, there is a noted research gap in region-explicit literature, specifically regarding the practical realization and efficacy of such programs in local perspectives like the Zambezi Region of Namibia. This study tackles this gap by exploring the detailed role of sports within community growth and crime prevention within Katima Mulilo, giving framework-specific perceptions into how these platforms can be enhanced. The discussion thus associates local study outcomes to the wider international discourse on sport-constructed intrusions. Figure 1 above shows the results of sports roles in community development, to which participants indicated that sports in drive young people from doing negative activities by 93%, whilst sports promote the youth's health and well-being by 85%, sports also provide a sense of belonging to local youth community by 57% and lastly sports strengthen social cohesion within local communities by 75%. These results are supported by United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime, (2021) which discovered that sports have positive effects in community development as it motivate communities to refrain doing negative things, it enhances wellbeing and health, promote sense of belonging to specific community, and it boost social relationships among athletes. Sports form a combined

experience that develops social connections, community and trust, and spirit, that enables the young people to socialise appropriately (strengthening of social cohesion).Sport related activities strengthens social cohesion or unity in community growth by offering a collective space for miscellaneous persons to interact or socialise, construction of a collective uniqueness through joint objectives and involvements, and encouraging incorporation and understanding crossways diverse social groups (Nicholson and Hoye, 2018). It nurtures this cohesion through comprehensive involvement, volunteerism, and watching, which bonds collective, cultural, and monetary divides (Sherlock, 2024).

Frequent physical activity is connected to a healthier and happier communities, the more young people consistently engage in physical activities on daily basis, the more beneficial and happy they live in communities they reside (promoting and enhancing health and wellbeing). Sport encourages community health by construction of social associates, contributing constructive options to dangerous actions, enhance physiological and psychological well-being via activity, and teaching important life skills such as cooperation and guidance, eventually nurturing tougher, more comprehensive, and robust communities with common character and purpose (Okechukwu, 2021). It bonds social divisions, gives role models, and increases self-self-confidence, establishing surroundings where people feel together, maintained, and encouraged to make better preferences (World Health Organisation, 2024).

When young people or the youth get involved in sports and leisure activities it gives them a sense of individuality, sense of identity, sense of belonging and deeper connection to their community (Offering a sense of belonging). Sport shapes community belonging by generating shared distinctiveness and drive, unification of varied people through joint objectives, encouraging social acquaintances and bonds, and offering comprehensive spaces for marginalised or side-lined groups, all whilst increasing individual self-confidence and community pride through collective knowledge, solidarity, and support systems(Karstensen et al, 2024). It acts as a collective bond, splitting down obstacles and giving people a sense of worth and association, from neighbouring clubs to national squads (Bocarro et al, 2018). Sports participation offer and providing a constructive positive focus, additionally sports can deter or divert individuals away from possibly anti-social deeds or criminal conducts. The more young people focus and concentrate on sports activities, the more they are pushed away from committing crime and engaging ill deeds (deter or diverts from negative activities). Sport deter or drives youth away from undesirable activities by offering an organised, non-violent setting for establishing life skills, nurturing constructive social connections, building flexibility, and offering a helpful substitute to boredom and harmful influences (Merkel, 2013).

On the other hand, figure 2 above shows the results of sports roles in crime prevention, to which participants indicated that sports improved young people's psychological outcomes by 96%, whereas again sports offered a safe space for the youth by 82%, it also provided the participants with role models and mentors by 78%, it reduced the risk factors by 70% and it taught them life skills by 52%. These results aligns with Lawrie (2022) whose findings revealed that sports roles in crime prevention include; teaching young people life skills, it reduces the risk of commiting criminal activities, it gives particpants; managers, leaders, mentors and role madels. Sports grants and provide a setting to learn and absorb fundamental life skills, such as honesty, trustworthiness, fair-play, discipline, sportsmanship, respect, and teamwork, through activities like fair-minded play and collaboration (teaches young people life skills). Sport imparts life skills for crime prevention by granting a formal, conducted atmosphere that promotes individual development, offering constructive role models, and directing energy into helpful activities (Dandurand, 2022).

Structured sports platforms provide a safe protected and organised background for young people, specifically those at danger, where they can spend their time positively. This imply that those young people who intend to commit crime, are kept busy in sports activities if they engage frequently (sports offer a safe space). Sport acts as a protected space for crime prevention by offering controlled surroundings that decrease exposure to damaging influences, impart appreciated life skills like self-control and respect, and attach at-danger youth with constructive helpful counsellors, mentors and support systems (European Forum for Urban Security, 2024). These programs propose an established, helpful option to risky conducts, boost social unity through cooperation, and can even serve as a doorway to further positive involvements like teaching and guiding (Ekholm, 2013). When young people get involved or get engaged in sports can lead to important enhancements in self-confidence, emotional control, and psychological well-being (improve young people's psychological outcomes). Sports expand mental results for crime deterrence by pushing a sense of belonging, encouraging positive principles such as discipline and respect, and developing self-self-confidence and socialising skills (Woods et al, 2017). These emotional upgrading assist to decrease violence, give a healthy passage for energy, and offer a encouraging option to unlawful activity (Piggott et al, 2025). Participating in sports programs link youth with trainers, coaches and mentors who can offer support and guidance, which can be fundamental for their growth, (provides encouraging role models and mentors). Participation in sports provides inspiring role models and mentors in crime stoppage by offering organized, constructive adult relations that teach indispensable life skills, provide sensitive care, and link youth to pro-societal systems and prospects (Gough, 2023). The ordinary act of playing sport is a "tie" to involve young people, but the mentoring factor is fundamental to attaining developmental and crime prevention results (Dandurand and Heidt, 2023). By tackling risk factors linked with crime and strengthening protective aspects, sport-founded involvements can help prevent both criminal and abuse (reduction risk factors). Sports participation decreases the danger issues linked with crime by serving as a physical deviation and a instrument for social progress, which involves constructing or building life skills, enhance emotional well-being, and offering confident role models (Naghibzadeh et al, 2025).

Conclusion

Numerous studies have shown tangible of evidence that sports play a transformative function in adopting strong community development and substantially helping crime prevention efforts. By offering organized activities and a positive setting, sports performances efficiently involve youth, directing them away from reckless conduct and participation in the fairness system. They act as commanding stimuli for individual growth, instilling significant life skills like discipline, cooperation, and accept for instructions and authority. Beyond personal benefits, sports ideas bolster the social basics of neighbourhoods by getting people from different backgrounds jointly, splitting down social walls, and structure combined trust.

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