

Exercise and Sports: Panacea to Security Challenges, for Peace and Unity in Nigeria

Unogwu, Ogbadanu Unogwu

Dept. of Physical & Health Education
College of Education, Oju, Benue State
uunogwu99@gmail.com, (08065592758)

&

Mbadi-Oli, Grace Adeshi

Dept of Human Kinetics & Health Education
UNICROSS, Calabar, Cross River State.
mbadioligrace@yahoo.com (07074844205)

Abstract

country since independence in 1960, has assumed an alarming proportion, affecting every part of the country with no solution in sight. Insecurity in the country has remained a conundrum for the government and people of Nigeria and appears intractable largely due to its predisposing factors such as ethno-religious conflicts, corruption, poverty/unemployment, porous borders, weak security/judicial systems, militancy/kidnapping, insurgency, herders/farmers conflicts, banditry, etc. Exercise and sports have been identified in this paper to play major role in new connections, build ties between individuals, groups, communities, societies and nations together, thus are peace-building toolkits worldwide, such that; football was used to reintegrate child soldiers into communities in Uganda after war, “ping pong” (table tennis) used to resolve two decades of unfriendly relationship between USA and China, rugby and football used in South Africa to reunite people of the country after Apartheid, football used in Liberia to bring peace in the country after a civil war, football used in Benue State to bring peace between Tiv communities in Bunta (Konshisha LGA) and Igede communities in Okpute (Oju LGA) of the state, after war. The paper recommended that the federal government (FG) should disarm all herdsmen militia groups, bandits, IPOB, among others, of their arms and ammunition and rehabilitate them by re-establishing the Amnesty Programme earlier used during Musa Ya’Ardua/Ebele Jonathan era. The FG should map out ways to effectively safe-guard the porous borders from illegal immigrants into the country. The federal government should, as a matter of urgency, re-establish the defunct National Sports Commission (NSC) which should be well funded and manned by competent sports professionals, administrators, specialists to take charge of all sporting activities in the country, to engage the teeming youths, and take them out of the streets.

Keywords: Exercise, sports, security challenges, insecurity, peace, unity.

Introduction:

Security challenges a.k.a. insecurity in Nigeria have in recent time assumed an alarming proportion, affecting every part of Nigeria and Nigerians’ life with no solution in sight. It is a truism that insecurity is not a problem that is unique to Nigeria alone, but that other nations have faced or are facing similar security challenges as well. However, the major difference is the modus–operandi of the Nigeria government in handling the situation. Unarguably, insecurity in Nigeria has heightened, leading to severe unimaginable social consequences

resulting in colossal number of deaths, with millions of people displaced from their homes, properties lost or destroyed (Ahmed, 2021).

Security challenges (insecurity) generally refer to the absence of resistance to or protection from harm, peaceful co-existence and development (Obarisiagbon, & Akintoye, 2019). They stated that insecurity is a state of being subject to fear, threat, danger, molestation, harassment, etc, in all aspect of life. This means that threat to human life does not only emanate from situations of violent conflicts such as those carried out by Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen, bandits, but also from other non-conflict sources such as corruption, abject poverty, election rigging, among others, that are seriously inching into our fabrics of existence as a nation. Nigeria is thus battling with security challenges that cuts across its six geopolitical zones of North-East, North-West, North-Central (Middle Belt), South-East, South-West and South-South. This simply means that every part of the country is literally engulfed by insecurity of life and property. One may then ask, what are the causes of insecurity in Nigeria?

The answers to the above question are not far-fetched. The causes include ethno-religious conflicts, poverty/unemployment, weak security and judicial systems, porous borders, lopsided appointment and development, ritual killings and armed robbery (Obarisiagbon & Akintoye, 2019). Others, according to them include insurgency, banditry, militancy, kidnapping/rapping, Biafra/Oduduwa agitations and bombing of oil installations. Also identified as part of the courses of insecurity in Nigeria are remote factors and immediate factors (Achumba, Ighomeroho & Akpor Robaro, 2013). On their part they identified two major factors for insecurity in Nigeria: remote factors and immediate (proximate) factors. The remote factors according to them are: lack of institutional capacity resulting in government failure, pervasive material inequalities/unfairness, conflict of perception between the public and government, loss of social-cultural and communal value system, etc.

On the other hand, the immediate (proximate) factors include: rural-urban drift, social irresponsibility of companies, unemployment/poverty, and terrorism, among others. Exercise and sports have been recognized as a veritable tool for maintaining good health and well-being (Abass & Angba, 2020). They pointed out that recent perspectives on exercise participation have shifted from competitive, intensive and rigorous exercise to a broader range of health promoting and relationship building tool. Exercise is seen as any bodily movements from skeletal muscles that result in energy expenditure compare to resting level (Wamukoya, Muchiri & Oloo, 2019). Sport means all forms of physical activity which through casual or organized participation aims at expressing or improving physical fitness components, mental well-being, forming social relationships and obtaining results in competitions at all levels (Haruna, 2013). These definitions of exercise and sports show that the two terms are similar to each other, thus they will be used interchangeably to mean the same thing in this paper.

Exercise and sports participation produce multitudes of benefits for the participant. Such benefits includes: produces better sleep, necessitates new connections, improves heart and lungs functions, improves healthy development of children, prevent diseases, improves confidence, reduces stress and anxiety, improves mental/psychological health, among others

(Cameron, Nicholas, Hills & Patrick, 2017; Pinckard, Baskin & Stanford, 2019; Abass & Angba, 2020).

Normally, participation in sports programme could either be for competitions or recreational purposes. But sports the world over have become a good weapon for national and international diplomacy, and also an instrument for assessing the strength, weakness and cohesion of each nation. Sports today in all its ramifications have cut across all barriers, ethnicity, religion, racial and have served as a symbolic dialogue in resolving conflicts and developing the citizens of the world. This paper discusses security challenges in Nigeria, predisposing factors for insecurity in the country, benefits of sports to individuals, role of sports on security challenges, and how sports can be used to settle conflicts, for peace and unity in Nigeria.

Security Challenges (Insecurity) in Nigeria

Security challenge is a global phenomenon that needs to be tackled to create an enabling environment for socio-economic development. Insecurity does not only pose serious threats to lives and properties but also arrest the overall development of a nation (Obi, 2015). Although peace and stability seem to be the core objective of most nations of the world, but insecurity continue to post major problems to achieving meaningful socio-economic development in most African countries including Nigeria. Nigeria in recent times has experienced serious set-backs in her socio-economic development due to continuous attacks by insurgents from different security threats such as militancy/kidnapping, insurgency, herders/farmers conflicts, banditry, among others, there by posing serious threats to the country's national existence (Okonkwo, Ndubisi & Anagbogu, 2015). States such as Yobe, Borno, Adamawa, Taraba, Kaduna, Plateau, Benue, Katsina, Zamfara, among others, have tasted the bitter pills of this emerging security threats. Ahmed (2021) asserts that Nigerian government have spent trillions of naira on national security in the past five years, yet her efforts to bring the menace to an end is not yielding any positive results.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

The causes of insecurity in Nigeria as earlier mentioned above will be discussed under the following subheadings:

Ethno-Religious Conflicts

Distrust among the various ethnic groups, and the two major religions (Christianity and Islam) have been the bane for insecurity in Nigeria (Okonkwo, et al, 2015). Ethno-religious conflict is a situation in which the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious group and another is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion, fear, and a tendency toward violent confrontation (Obarisiagbon & Akintoye, 2019). Okonkwo, et al (2015), pointed out that frequent and persistent ethnic and religious clashes between the groups in Nigeria present the country with a major security challenge. They stressed that claims over resources,

power, land, chieftaincy titles, sharia, among others, were issues that have resulted to large scale violence in places such as Shagamu, Lagos, Kaduna, Kano, Zamfara, Jos, among others.

Corruption

Corruption has been a major cause of insecurity in Nigeria since independence in 1960 (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013). They stated that it was one of the major reasons for the military seizing power in 1966, 1976, 1983, 1993, etc., stressing that corruption has been described as the “cancer” militating against Nigeria’s development as it has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigeria society. Although the government of Umaru Musa Ya’Ardua established two anti-graft agencies (Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), to fight against the menace, but they have done little or nothing to eliminate or even reduce it.

Poverty/Unemployment

Nigeria has been in this state of poor economic and high rate of unemployment since independence in 1960. Institutions of higher learning turn out graduates every year who are thrown into the labour markets seeking for job that is not there. Some of them become frustrated and go into crimes (kidnapping, armed robbery, terrorism, etc). Only the government of Umaru Musa Ya’Ardua/Ebele Jonathan put in place the Amnesty Programmme which reduced unemployment and put food on the tables of unemployed youths in the Niger Delta area in the past (Ahmed,2021).

Porous Borders

It has been observed that due to the porous borders of the country, there is an unchecked movement of people and arms/ammunition into the country which aids militancy and other criminalities in the country. Hammeed (2019) pointed out that as a result of the porous borders, there is massive influx of immigrants from neighboring countries (Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Cameroun) who are in most cases responsible for the criminal acts in Nigeria today.

Weak Security/Judicial Systems

The statutory role of maintaining law and order in any society rests on law enforcement agents (Obarisiagbon & Akintoye, 2019). According to them, law enforcement agents in Nigeria appear to be unaware of security challenges in the country, and often, they act after the occurrence of security breaches. They noted that other times, when they are informed of violence or security breaches; they ignore or are slow to act for reasons best known to them. The police population ratio in Nigeria is 1:450, which falls below the United Nations recommendations; this could explain police’s inability to effectively tackle crimes in the country (Obarisiagbon & Akintoye, 2019).

The judicial system is weak and ineffective by the 1999 constitution (Tella, 2015). accordingly Tella also stated that the judiciary is charged with interpretation of the law and adjudication in civil and criminal cases, adding that they should ensure that rules are not broken and social orders are maintained. But the increasing impunity and dare devilry looting and

embezzlement of funds by public officers are enhanced by the weakness of the judiciary (Tella, 2015; Obarisigbon & Akintoye, 2019).

Militancy/Kidnapping

Militancy/Kidnapping in Nigeria started in the oil-rich Niger-Delta area where they were being used as tools to address the wanton neglect of their communities by successive Nigeria governments, and have since grown to become the new ‘multi-million naira business’, thriving in the region. Kidnapping in the region (South-East) has become a tool for settling personal and political scores (Okonkwo & Anagbogu, 2015). They stressed that as a result of the huge ransom paid by families of kidnapped victims, many politicians in the area now use kidnapping as a tool of vendetta on perceived political enemies. Kidnapping has made Nigerians to live in perpetual fear.

Insurgency (Boko Haram)

Nigeria, in recent times has witnessed unprecedented levels of insecurity since the advent of the present democratic dispensation (Obi, 2015). He stated that the pattern of insecurity has been regionalized; militant groups in the South, insurgency in the North- East, kidnapping in the South–East and South-South, ritual killing in the East and West, political and non-political assassinations across the country. Book Haram emerged as a radical fundamentalist Islamic sect formed by Utaz Mohammed Yousuf in 2002 in Maiduguri, Borno State (Obi, 2015). He stated that the sect moved to Kanamma, Yobe state in 2004, where it set up a base called Afghanistan.

The sect officially called its name “Jamaatul Alhul Sunnah Liddo Watil Wal Jihad” meaning people committed to the propagation of the prophets teaching and Jihad” (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013). Their violent attacks which started in 2009 include destruction of vehicles, burning of churches, police stations, schools, hospitals, army barracks, and killing of innocent people, kidnapping of students (Chibok girls- 270), raping of women, among others. States of operations were initially Yobe, Borno, Adamawa, and later extended to Bauchi, Kano, Kaduna, Abuja, Sokoto, Katsina, Plateau, etc. Activities of the sect has left about 2.5 million people fled their homes and about 7.7 million people in need of humanitarian aid, and not less than 720,000 deaths as at 2018 (Njoku, 2019).

Fulani Herdsmen/Farmers Conflicts

Fulani herdsmen/farmers conflicts also called herders/farmers’ conflicts, or Fulani herdsmen terrorism in Nigeria mainly have disputes over land resources between Muslim Fulani herders and Christian farmers across Nigeria, but was more devastating in the middle belt (Benue, Plateau, Taraba, Nassarawa and Kaduna States). Recently, it has deteriorated to terror attacks on farmers by Fulani herdsmen, rated the fourth most deadly terrorist group in the world by the Global Terrorism Index (Wikipedia, 2021). Attack on farmers has underlying economic and environmental undertones and have also acquired religious and ethnic dimensions. Causes of these clashes includes destruction of crops, contamination of streams by

cattle, zero grazing land, disregard for local traditional authorities, female harassment, etc. The effects includes lost of lives, reduction of farm produce, displacement of farmers, among others.

Banditry

Banditry means occurrence or prevalence of armed robbery or violent crimes (Ahmed, 2021). He pointed out that banditry involves the use of force or threat to intimidate a person with the intent to rob, rape or kill. He stressed that killing, maiming, burning of houses, kidnapping of people especially women and children (students) and taken them hostage for ransom have become very rampant in North- West region of the country (Zamfara, Kebbi, Sokoto, Niger, Katsina and Kaduna states, thus have felt the bitter consequential effects of the menace. It was reported that the federal government had spent over 426 trillion naira on national security (Ahmed, 2021).

Concept of Exercise

The term exercise means the physical and mental activity that you do to stay healthy or become stronger (Hornby, 2015). It can also be described as any bodily activity that enhanced or improves one's appetite, mood, reduces stress, maintains physical fitness components (strength, endurance, flexibility, co-ordination, etc), and improves overall health and well-being of the individual (Haruna, 2013). Exercise is also a sub-category of physical activity that is planned, structured and repetitive for the purpose of conditioning any part of the body or body as a whole (Wamukoya et al, 2019).

Concept of Sports

Sports are organized physical activities through which fun, play and relaxations are enjoyed. They mean all forms of physical activities which through casual or organized participation aim at expressing or improving physical fitness components, mental well-being and forming social relationships as well as obtaining results at all levels (Haruna, 2013). This means that physical fitness components are developed when one is engaged in exercise and sports, thus justifying why the two terms will be used interchangeably in this paper.

Benefits of Exercise and Sports

Regular exercise or sport participation produces tremendous beneficial effects on most tissues, organs and systems of participants in several ways (Cameron et al, 2017). They stated that sports participation make the body gain good health, acquire skills, prevent diseases, relieves stress, tension and depression., adding that mortality of the heart can be reduced when individual performs brisk-walking daily within 30 min and above in duration. They stressed that even moderate level of low-intensity exercise such as walking, gardening, climbing stairs, playing games such as golf, table tennis, etc, are beneficial to one's health.

Pinckard et al (2019), asserts that exercise or sports that are regularly participated improves oxygen uptake, lowers myocardial oxygen demand, decreases blood pressure at a given workload, and increases the activity threshold for the onset of cardiac perfusion, adding that regular sports performance helps to increase serum high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, decreases triglyceride levels and reduces total fat that can cause overweight, obesity and diabetes. They reiterated that involvement in exercise or sports makes the blood vessels become bigger thus supply greater quantity of blood (oxygen) to the tissues, organs and systems of the body.

Physical fitness components such as strength, flexibility, endurance, coordination, cardiorespiratory endurance, muscular endurance, agility, power, among others, are gained when one performs sports or exercise (Nystoriak & Bhatnagar, 2018). They pointed out that a sedentary lifestyle is a slow-poison to the human body, stressing that the human body when not used in exercise or sports becomes atrophic (diminish in size and functions), thus becomes vulnerable to diseases. They maintained that a body that is not active deteriorates in function, such that the lungs becomes inefficient, the heart grows weak, blood vessels becomes pliable and constricted, the muscle loses tone and the body generally becomes debilitated.

Cameron et al (2017) revealed that just a small increase in your daily activity level yields big results especially if you earlier led a sedentary lifestyle. They maintained that it is recommended that individual should engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise every day, and that you may not perform the exercise for the whole 30 minutes all at once, but that you could accumulate shorter sessions of the exercise throughout the day, as long as it add up to 30 minutes. They stated that you could, for example, walk briskly to the bus for 10 minutes in the morning, walk back home for another 10 minutes and later in the day perform some gardening or jogging for another 10 minutes, totaling 30 minutes for the day. It is further stated that any other type of physical exercise such as washing the car, sweeping the rooms, jogging, playing games like tennis, volleyball, badminton, etc. helps reduce risks for cardiovascular and metabolic diseases. Sports participation helps build leader, develop stronger relationships and provide opportunities to settle conflicts, misunderstandings and even wars (Sofi, 2019).

Role of Exercise and Sports on Security Challenges

The role of exercise and sports to human health, fitness and social relationship cannot be over emphasized. Krafchek (2012) stated that exercise and sport activities are increasingly becoming a part of the peace builder's toolkits worldwide. He pointed out that sports can bring people from different races, tribes, religions, etc. together towards a common goal, while promoting respects and uniting communities with one another. Banki-Moon, one time Secretary-General of United Nations (UN), once said; "sports has become a world language, a common denominator that breaks down all walls, all the barriers. It is a world-wide industry whose practices can have a wide-spread impact. Most of all, it is a powerful tool for progress and development" (Krafchek, 2012). He stressed that building relationships between different

groups, conflicts can be transformed into peace and unity, adding that sports can be used as a deterrent by teaching the value of good sportsmanship, teamwork, respect and communication skills needed to reduce tensions and prevent conflicts.

Schworer (2020) pointed out that sports promoted peace and unity by making reference to the use of football to reintegrate former child soldiers back into the community following war in Uganda by an NGO called Coaches across Continents. He explained that former child soldiers were taught life skills, health and wellness, education, empowerment and conflict resolution, and that coaches in teaching conflict resolution intentionally created games that cause frustration and argument for the players which allows for a safe place for them to practice good communication skills and find a solution together as a team, without the use of violence.

Baron de Coubertin, the founder of Olympic Games, envisioned sport to be a harbinger of peace; his Olympic games should bring nations together to compete peacefully with each other. In his word, “wars break out because nations misunderstand each other. We shall not have peace until the prejudices which now separate the different races shall have been outlived. To attain this end, what better means than to bring the youth of all countries periodically together for amicable trials of muscular strength and agility? The Olympic Games, with the ancients, controlled athletics and promoted peace. It is not visionary to look to them for similar benefactions in the future” (Krafchek, 2012).

Perhaps the best illustration to this connection between football, conflicts and peace are the much talked about several football matches played along the West Front on Christmas day in 1914 between German and British troops that agreed to a truce for the day in the middle of one of the most dehumanizing wars in history (Wikipedia, 2021). Sports have long been idealized to heal wounds, mend fences and rise above differences among cultures and nations. For example, Nelson Mandela, after being elected South African first post-Apartheid President in 1994, shrewdly turned to the Rugby World Cup team of his country to help foster the country’s healing process and prevent war that many feared was inevitable. He empowered the team morally and financially to the extent that the team, which was formerly made up of ‘all white players’, but now comprised ‘white and black players’, rose to the occasion and won the Rugby World Cup in 1995, a feat they repeated in 2007 and 2019. Mandela gave the same encouragement to the country’s football team (Bafana Bafana) who also won the African Nations Cup in 1996.

Other world leaders have used sports as means to promote peace, such as the 1971 Chinese-America reconciliation through “ping-pong” (table tennis) that ended two decades of unfriendly relations between the two super powers, while in 2008, the Presidents of Armenia and Turkey used a World Cup qualifying football match involving their national teams to open diplomatic dialogue between the two countries. Furthermore, a study on the case of football in Liberia shows that football in Liberia is considered a “neutral” pursuit; a common cultural property unspoiled by war. During the civil conflict in the country, football tournaments were

considered the only occasion (instruments) that produced a sense of national unity. No wonder the current president of the country, George Weah, was a world-class football player (1995 Ballon d'Or winner (Wikipedia, 2021).

National sports act as a common thread woven through society to connect citizens to one another. Such sports vary from one country to another, for instance in Canada “hockey” is king, New Zealand relishes “rugby”, while Indians mostly follow “cricket”. In China, table tennis ‘ping pong’ is their national game while in the USA, “basketball” is supreme, in England and most European countries, “football” is their Queen and Kings, not forgetting Africa particularly Nigeria where “football” is the favourite sport (Wikipedia, 2021).

Using Sports to settle conflicts for peace and unity in Nigeria

At the country level, sports present a veritable foundation upon which to settle conflicts and build national unity. They are especially important in deeply divided or crisis ridden society as it is in Nigeria today, where they can offer the much-needed respite from conflicts and common grounds from which to begin reconciliation (Neil, 2019).

In sports, Nigerians speak one language with one voice, one hope, one aim and objective. According to Oyedepo (2017), Nigeria became the first country in Africa to qualify for the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, as the Super Eagles defeated the Chipolopolo of Zambia by one goal to nil. The Godwin Akpabio International Stadium, Uyo, filled to capacity as Nigeria of diverse tribes, religions, political affiliations and regions gathered in their tens of thousands to cheer and lift the Eagle's spirit. That day was a memorable one for Nigeria and Nigerians as we all pull off our differences and reveled across Nigeria; from Uyo-Abuja-Lagos-Maiduguri-Sokoto-Port-Calabar-Kano, etc, the feeling was the same one love for our dear country Nigeria.

The coming to power of General Sani Abacha in a coup in 1993 that toppled Mr. Earnest Shonikan's administration, created some political rifts between the North and West of the country which was almost leading to conflict and even war. However, a respite came from the successes of Nigeria's Olympic football team and other athletes in the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. Nigerians' attention were shifted from the politics at home to far away USA where our football players were displaying their soccer artistry by out-classing Hungary 1-0 win in the round of 16, beat Mexico 2-0 in the quarter final, defeated Brazil 4-3 in the semi-final and out-scored Argentina 3-2 in the final to win the Olympic gold medal in football. In addition, an athlete, Chioma Ajunwa, leapt 7.12m to win the gold medal in woman Long Jump at the same Olympics (Wikipedia, 2021). Nigeria's performance at the games thus doused the political tension at home, and peace returned to the country.

With a conflict change relation of inter-state to intra-state conflicts, as it is in Nigeria today, the potentials of sport is more, if not most, needed for peace and tranquility to return to every part of the country. Sport is mainly employed as an instrument to support rebuilding of social

relationship, advance reconciliation, tackle prejudices and stereotypes and teach non-violent conflict resolutions. Where violence takes intra-communal stage, community sports programmes such as the one recently organized by the two Senators representing Benue North-East, Senator Gbariel Suswam and his Benue South counterpart, Senator Abba Moro, to quell the conflict between the Tiv community in Bunta (Konshisha LGA) and Igede community in Okpute(Oju LGA), all of Benue State. Football matches were organized between the two communities affected in the conflict and played on “home” and “away” basis, where the two teams had mixed players, that is, the Bunta (Tiv) team comprised Tiv and Igede players against the Okpute (Igede) team made up of Igede and Tiv players. The results of the two-legged games ended in draws (1-1) and (2-2) respectively. Peace has since returned to the two communities as observed by the writer.

However, it is important to point out that sporting initiative alone cannot stop or resolve conflict, but it can give an engaging and cost-effective medium for post-conflict relief work and peace building as well as future conflict prevention strategies. No other social activity brings people together in such great magnitude and with so much passion and enjoyment as sports does (Sofi, 2019). He stressed that regardless of age, gender or ethnicity, sports is enjoyed by all, its reach is unrivalled, and more importantly, sports promotes universal values that transcends language, culture and religion.

Perhaps, it will be important to end this paper with the words of the Nobel Laureate, Oscar Arias (former President of Costa Rica), in his write up published in Forbes.com that reads, “Football and sports in general, represent an opportunity to build a better version of a world too often threatened by irrationality, intolerance and violence. Like any opportunity, it only counts if we take advantage of it. As spectators and parents, educators and leaders, we must train our eyes to see not only spectacular goals, but also acts of sportsmanship—to point out to each other, and to our children, not only athletic prowess, but also solidarity and diversity. We must use this platform to unite rather than to divide. And we must carry these lessons of peace far beyond the final whistle, in the hope that someday the world’s game will no longer be a rare shooting star in a dark of conflict, but part of the dawn of a more rational age” (Oyedepo, 2017).

Conclusion

Security challenges have been a major issue facing the government and people of Nigeria in recent times. Security is a necessary ingredient for growth, progress, peace and unity of any society. Insecurity has remained a conundrum for the Nigeria government and appears intractable due largely to its predisposing factors such as ethno- religious conflicts, corruption, poverty/unemployment, porous borders, among others. It has been revealed in this paper that exercise and sports play major role in new connections, build ties between individuals, groups, communities, societies and nations together, thus are peace building toolkits worldwide that can solve Nigeria’s security problems. Sports (football) have been used to reintegrate former child soldiers in Uganda following war, “ping pong” (table tennis) was used to end two decades

of unfriendly relations between America and China, football and rugby used in South Africa to reunite black and white people in the country, football was used in Liberia to bring peace to the country after war, football was also used recently (2021) to bring peace and unity between Tiv and Igede communities in Benue State, after conflicts.

Suggestions

1. The federal government of Nigeria should disarm all Fulani herdsmen of their arms and ammunition, declare Meati-Allah a Terrorist Group, arrest and prosecute its leaders in court for the mayhem they are committing as a result of the killings, kidnapping and destruction of properties in the country, to serve as deterrents to other groups who would want to cause such acts in future.
2. Law enforcement agents in the country should be heavily armed with modern and sophisticated gadgets (weapons) to check and prevent unauthorized entry or importation of arms and ammunition into the country.
3. The government of Nigeria should as a matter of urgency re-establish the defunct National Sports Commission (NSC) which should be well funded and manned by sports professionals, administrators and specialists to take charge of all sporting activities in the country, as is done in other countries, particularly developed countries of the world.
4. The federal government should map out ways to effectively safe guard the porous Nigerian borders, particularly in the North, from illegal immigrants that are in most cases responsible for criminal activities in the country.

References

- Abass, A. & Angba, T.O. (2020). *Physical education and sport: Panacea for educating the mind towards achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs)*. Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan Press; ISBN: 978-2860-53-0.
- Achumba, I.C., Ighomeroho & Akpor-Robaro (2013). Security challenges in Nigeria and the implication for business activities and sustainable development. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*. (4), 21, 39-99.
- Ahmed, T.M. (2021). Banditry dynamism and operating pattern of crime in North-West Nigeria: A threat to national security. *Research Gate*. 1-15.
- Cameron, N, Nicholas, J.F, Hills, L.F Patrick (2017). Association between BMI, body fatness and visceral adiposity in overweight or obese Latino and non-Latino Adult. *Int J. Obese*, 41, 873–877.

- Hammeed, O. (2019). Sport a tool for fighting insecurity, poverty in Nigeria. Retrieved 7th Sept. 2021, from: <https://highprofile.com>
- Haruna, F.R. (2013). Improving quality of life through sport and physical activity. *Journal of sports management and Educational Research (JOSMER)*, 3 (1) 1-12.
- Hornby, A.S (2015). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 9th edition*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, United Kingdom.
- Krafchek, A. (2012). *'Sports peacebuilding': The Basics*. Beyond Intractability. Eds. G. Burgess & H. Burgess, Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder.
- Neil, R. (2016). What is sports role in peace building process? *Sportsandev*. Retrieved 6th July 2021 from: <https://www.Sportsandev.org>
- Njoku, C. (2019). Security challenges a Nigeria leader must tackle. *IGWELS*.
- Nwanegbo, C. J., & Odigbo, N. (2013). Security and national development in Nigeria: The Threat of Boko Haram. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. 3(4), 285 – 291.
- Nystoriak, M. A., & Bhatnagar A. (2018). Cardiovascular effects and benefits of exercise. *Front Cardiovasc Med*. 5: 135.
- Obarisiagbon, F.I., & Akintoye, E.O (2019). Insecurity crisis in Nigeria: The Law Enforcement Agent a Panacea? *Journal of Sociology and Social Work*. 7(1), 44 – 51.
- Obi, C.K. (2015). Challenges of insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria: Implication for national development. Delta State University Press, Abraka. Nigeria. *Obi/OLDA International Journal of Sustainable Development* 08:02.
- Okonkwo, R.I, Ndubisi, O.P. & Anagbogu, T. (2015). Security challenges and the implications for business activities in Nigeria: A critical Review. *Journal of Policy and Development Studies*, 9 (2), 157 – 168.
- Oyedepo, A. (2017). Achieving national unity and development through sports. *Open Access Cost Finder*.
- Pinckard, K., Baskin, K.K. & Stanford, K. (2019). Effects of exercise to improve cardiovascular health. *Front Cardio-Vase ed*, 69: 1–25.

- Schwoerer, T. (2020). Settling conflicts through football in Eastern Highlands of Colonial New Guinea. *Research Gate* Retrieved 8th Sept 2021, from: <https://www.researchgate.net>
- Sofi, J. (2019). How sports can be used for peace, stability and development. *Opinion*. Retrieved 29th Sept. 2021, from: <https.com.cdn.ammpproject.org>
- Tella, C.M. (2015). Insecurity in Northern Nigeria causes, consequences and resolutions. *International Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*. 2(4), 23-36.
- Wamukoya, E .K. (2019). Role of physical activity in the development of national goals: Systematic Review. *International Journal of Research and Innovation (IJRIAS)*. (4), 56-70.
- Wikipedia (2021). Wikipedia. Retrieved 22 July , 2021.