

Sports influence on psychology of people media essay



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For many years, sports have been valued by many societies in the world. Many people continue to indulge in various sports today either singularly or as a part of a team. Sports have always influenced the history of a nation as well as the psychology of the people in that nation, playing both constructive roles as well as damaging roles. Many people may think that sports are all about winning or losing, however sports is deeply engraved in people psyches and to some it dates back to when they were young and hence it is bound up in many people geographic and social identities. It is through sports that some people have been able to indulge themselves in vicarious achievements and euphoric collective experiences. Many studies have shown that there is a lot of emotion when people try to win for their team or for themselves which in return affect their psychology as well as that of their fans. This paper therefore, analyzes the psychological influence of sports to citizens of United Kingdom.

The formation of a nation's identity is dependent on the various social activities of its citizens including the social practice of sports. This is because many people like discussing about sports events as they go along with their daily activities both at the workplace and at their home. Studies have shown that there is so much influence on the workers performance based on the performance of their favorite team. It has been found out that there is a lot of impact of sporting failure and success on the UK workplace. Many people get psychologically affected when their team win or loses. It has also been found out that the conversation regarding sports that people have in their workplaces can have a positive impact in boosting their morale as well as improving their productivity and motivation. This means that sports in

general shapes the lives of many citizens in UK. Also, people usually construct various perspectives and meaning while watching sports event which greatly influence their social belief, self concept and most certainly their nation's identity. That is, key social practices including sports and the related events will be discussed and recounted in compelling ways by a large group of people through various mediums from media forms to everyday conversations, leading to the formation of certain ideas in their minds, which in turn leads to the formation of social beliefs and thereby nation's identity (Encyclopaedia Britannica). Studies have found that a nation's identity is governed by the memories and stories that people hold in common and certainly sports is one of them. This can also be proved by the fact that sport's impact goes beyond the day to day social environment. For example England's win in the 1996 World Cup affected both the economy and the politics of the region. It is during this time that Harold Wilson claimed his victory which was largely attributed to the team's performance and the wave of euphoria and goodwill that the citizens had due to the team victory.

Equating sports or sports teams to a nation as well as its identity, thereby people's psychology as well as social practices began in 1908, with the launch of the Olympics as a pan-national event, with the entry of many countries and their official patronage. " The twelve-year old Olympic Games had informally taken on the role of a multinational sporting event at which nations represented themselves with their best athletes" (Smith and Porter 2004). With many countries participating in that Olympics, media coverage and importantly political patronage certainly built the discourse, that nations will normally represent themselves through their sportspeople in various

events such as the Olympics. When nations are represented by sportspersons, the activities of the sportspersons on and off the field will in turn form or change or reinforce or even challenge the psychology of those nations, and ultimately their social practices and nation's identity since many people like to be associated with a particular team or a sports person. In the society today many young people like identifying themselves with some sports people which greatly influence their personality which is very vital in determining a nation's identity. This trend has sometimes led to violence in sports especially when people (fans) identifying themselves with a particular sport lose a match. In many sports fans are full of emotions as they try to win for their team. These high emotions are catalyst to sports violence. More often than not you will find angry fans screaming and yelling to the coaches when they feel that he is letting down their team. Many riots have also been experienced when a team loses an important match. These riots are characterized by fighting among players, dumpsters, mobs overturning cars and many other bad behaviors. The reason for this is due to the psychological attachments that exist between people of a nation and sports. Through identifying with a certain group individuals are able to improve and maintain their self esteem (Balisunset, 2009). As a result, sports acts as a powerful source of identification through which people identify themselves with a team or an individual in a team and hence become heavily invested in the results of a given competition. This means that people are affected psychologically when their team loses leading to frustrations. These frustrations lead to anger and the only outlet to his anger is through violence (Murphy, 2005).

Many people may think that sports violence is just a simple matter but in some cases it reflects the violence that happens in the society and that is why violence mainly occurs when a crowd is made of a heterogeneous mix. This means that the fans may be using spot violence as a scapegoat to their society dissatisfaction. This means that many occurrence of sports violence may be signifying that something is wrong and immediate actions need to be taken. Contrary to sports violence, sports sometimes have very good impacts to citizens of a nation especially when national team wins an important match. Many people are very happy after a national team wins and this is known to have a positive impact in boosting the morale of citizen. Consequently, this has an impact on people's approach to work and lifts up their mood hence making them productive in their work. This just shows how sports psychologically influence people lives (International Society of Sports Psychology, 2006). Research has also found that talking sport acts as one of the ways of breaking down barriers existing between employees and their customers. The influence of sports is so big to an extent that it can break or make a relationship between a manager and his team. A study conducted in 2006 in UK revealed that 71% of men and 68% of women said that both the employers and employees learn valuable lessons from sports. People get to learn the importance of working as a team, importance of being dedicated to ones team, importance of collective responsibility, what makes a good team player and how to develop ones talents and maximize performance. As a result, we can say that sports success or failure in a nation has influences both social and economic factors of that nation. This is because sport is woven into people day to day life and hence plays a very crucial role in

creating bonds between people and ultimately impact productivity of a nation (Social Issue Research Centre, 2006).

The influence of sports on psychology of people can also be seen by the way people bask in reflected glory. This is rooted to one element of social identity theory which is psychological distinctiveness. According to this theory, individuals desire their identity to be both distinct from and positively compared with people of other groups. This theory is concerned with identifying when and why an individual identify with a particular group and behave as a part of that group. According to this theory an individual social behavior can exist on a spectrum from purely intergroup to purely interpersonal. By identifying oneself with successful people a person self esteem get boosted. This is the reason why people like identifying themselves with successful teams and sports personality. It is for this reason that you will find people pulling out their old tee shirts and old sweatshirts after a big win, and proudly display their team logos. Also after a team wins a championship the sale of their products also goes up until another team wins the following year. This is what is called basking in reflected glory which is labeled by social psychologists as BIRGing. A study conducted in 1976 by supported this phenomena by showing how university students wear their university affiliated clothing the Monday morning after winning a football match during weekend. In doing so the student sought to have success of their team linked to them by wearing school identifying attire. The students are also like using the pronoun we after a victorious athletic weekend than when their team lost. By basking in reflected glory an individual self esteem gets enhanced by identifying with another person's success. They try to

receive this glory by doing nothing tangible to help a person or a team get this success. Individuals are more likely to bask in reflected glory when their public image is threatened so as to counter any threats to their self esteem. Also the extent to which a person is committed to a team dictates the degree in which he can distance himself from the team loss. According to social identity theory those individuals who are strongly allied to a team are not likely to distance themselves, and to ensure that their self esteem is not threatened they will try to attribute the failure to other things and not the team itself. For those who are not closely allied to the team, the loss makes them to engage in phenomena known as CORFing. This refers to cutting off reflected glory which is characterized by distancing oneself from a losing team as much as possible. This can be done by either using different language to describe the game after defeat. For example the fans begin using the words " they lost" instead of " we lost". Fans can also CORF by blasting, which is a form of indirect self enhancement used when one feels that his or her self esteem is threatened. This clearly shows how sports influence an individual psychology.

Many of the international sports, which are being played all over the world, originated or were first played in their modern form in Britain. " Team games such as soccer, rugby, and cricket, and sports such as rowing, athletics and boxing, were formalized, codified and modernized in the elite schooling institutions of Britain (its public schools) and the ancient universities."

(Tomlinson). These sports diffused into the social gamut of UK as well as the minds of the British people both in the urban as well as rural communities, with the factor of Britishness exhibited by these sports. In those times, sports

played in Britain influenced the British socio- psychological ideologies like fair play, an ideal of British manhood. Likewise, sports for women were developed to fit with the ideals of Victorian femininity.

Different sports have different combination of representation which influences the social psychological beliefs of single British identity or separate national identities. In football (American soccer), the four nations of the UK are separately represented. In cricket, England and Wales play as one team. In rugby union, the countries are split into England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, with Northern Ireland and Eire providing a joint team (Polley 1998). This being the case, the social psychological beliefs of British identity gets changed or modified according to the occasions and circumstances.

This means that an individual will identify with a particular team based on the situation at hand i. e. people from one nation will support the group identity of being British in some occasions, but their cognitive dissonance reverts back to them, and thus alleviating their dissonance by changing their stance to support their own national identity. For example, English sports followers could support a Scottish athlete who represent Great Britain in the Olympics, but could revert to their anti-Scottish stance, when the national football teams of England and Scotland meet in a friendly or in a World Cup.

The reason for this is that individuals have a tendency to identify to the team the truly belong to when faced with a situation like that one. This is because one will have grown up being attached to a particular team and thus there is no way he/she will support another team when the national team is playing.

Another perspective about changing their support or their affiliations in sport can be witnessed when one British team fails at a major event, while another

British team succeeds, providing the people someone to back. " The London-based media is also experienced in this kind of support. When an England team fails to qualify for a major tournament, the media quickly appropriates other British or Irish teams as 'ours'" (Smith and Porter 2004). Cognitive dissonance is displayed at times when there are differences between an individual's actions and his or her beliefs. This contradictory display occurs often among sports fans in England, as they may believe to have a British national identity, yet their actions prove otherwise. These actions, which oppose their beliefs, are a form of relieving the cognitive dissonance that they have.

Football as a sport has been known to unite people across UK rather than divide. Most of the football fans have a strong commonality. The role played by football either socially or culturally is dependent on historical factors. These historical factors include whether the national team or a major side has won an important tournament at a particular time in the past or whether the sport was played traditionally by lower or upper class. The rivalry between teams also plays a major role in defining the sports characteristics. This influences how individuals at different with each other and how they relate a sport in their country and the support they give to teams at the international, national, regional and local level. This means that people in a given country with strong regional and local identities relate differently with those people in countries where regional identity is not important. A good example of this is demonstrated in countries like Sweden where allegiance to local teams is stronger than that associated with the national side.

As in any society, British women, till the late 20th , were prevented from actively participating in many societal activities, thereby psychologically subdued. This social belief was further reinforced through sports with early women's traditions, as they were effectively suppressed by male establishments, such as football and both rugby codes. (Smith and Porter 2004). Although, women tried to have pre-eminent positions in society and even fulfill roles of leadership, with Britain being ruled by numerous successful Queens, it was not the case in all spheres of the society. Women were suppressed and deprived of the process of leadership in many facets of social life, sports being one of those facets. Likewise, the social psychological aspect of class factor was also influenced by sports with certain team games, particularly Rugby and cricket which were viewed as games of the upper class. This meant that one grew up believing that certain types of sports belonged to a certain group of people. With this belief people of certain region did not psychologically give attention to some sports that they did to those sports where they felt to be part of the team like in football. With the initiation of the Industrial Revolution, many people started getting employment and became part of the revenue earning group. Even then, their incomes were not optimal and thus there lopsided class factor. This class factor was further imbued in the people's mind as well as part of their social setup through sports. With certain sports played only by a certain class of people, sports indirectly promoted class differences. England rugby team remains remarkably homogenous: white, educated, middle-class, while Cricket has a rather upper class flavor as in the habits of male upper class Englishness, cricket embodies gentlemanly qualities (Malcolm, 2001). This shows how sports can be effectively be used to divide citizens of a nation by <https://assignbuster.com/sports-influence-on-psychology-of-people-media-essay/>

promoting class difference and notion that some types of sports are suited to a given group of people. Fortunately this notion is slowly fading away with and people are beginning to accept sports like rugby which initially belonged to a chosen few.

Beliefs about having distinct and separate national symbols or identities particularly separate National Anthems have been in existent for some time among the countries of the United Kingdom. For example there have been many debates of whether English should have their own national anthem for many years. English have retained British national anthem for sporting events while Scots and Welsh have claimed their own national anthem. Problems however arise when England plays against either Scotland or Wales, during this time the opponent's national anthem has to be played twice. Unfortunately, those debating about this issue in the past only considered the political ramifications of England having their own national anthem thereby neglecting the psychological implication of playing God Save the Queen. Researchers have found out that there are a number of factors that affects the psychology of those involved in sports during any competition. Some of the psychological factors include confidence, belief, being prepared, sense of identity and ability to perform under pressure.

One of the major factors that affect the performance of an individual in sports is a sense of identity. This is because it's through having a sense of identity that our values are impacted on us, consequently affecting the individual motivational levels. In addition to that it also impact on an individual sense of purpose and a will to go an extra mile for ones nation.

Singing national anthems by the respective teams at sporting events are <https://assignbuster.com/sports-influence-on-psychology-of-people-media-essay/>

always viewed as a psychological strategy by the coaches and other people to promote a sense of identity within the team, and also to motivate and fire up them. It also falls under the psychological process of self-esteem in that an individual's self esteem is raised when he or she knows that he/ she belongs somewhere. With self-esteem being a key process that works as a catalyst for many human actions, the national anthems can also work on the self-esteem of any country's citizens (Kimiecik & Harris, 2005). Behavioral psychologists believe that self esteem acts as a positive reinforcement to an individual thereby motivating a person to perform well in his or her actions. The national anthems are known to psychologically fire up sports teams and this will psychologically impact the people who are watching the event in the stadium as well as in their Televisions. This psychological association to their national anthems in turn defines their social beliefs and will lead to various impacts. For that to happen, the view among the English people is that they should have an appropriate national anthem, different from God Save the Queen. The Scots and the Welsh don't get fired up by God Save the Queen so why should the English? With this social belief, sections of the population are even coming up with options for a separate and distinct National Anthem for the English. This reason for all this fuss about national anthem is that both players and fans want to have a sense of belonging before any match which greatly influences their mind into having a conviction that the victory is theirs. Studies have found out that the perception of one's mind regarding something influences greatly the outcomes of an event. For example there is no way a team will win a match if they do not have a conviction that the victory is theirs. This conviction is achieved by raising the self esteem of the players and their supporters which in turn motivate them in claiming the

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victory. To do this coaches have had to apply some psychological techniques like anxiety management in sporting activities so as to improve the performance of the players (Pozzi, 2004).

Influx of Asian migrants and people from other regions of the world led to the ethnic diversification of the UK's population. However this diversification has also resulted in the development of a variety of national identities, with different social psychological beliefs. Even after living in Britain for many years and interacting with the British society, British people of Asian origin still exhibit psychological allegiance and support to their parent country. This is clearly demonstrated during sports events when teams from their parent countries are involved. This means that there is an element of conformity, but point is that when Asians first came to the U. K they had they had two options: one being they could integrate themselves into society which may have proven to be difficult or they could stay segregate themselves and chose not to identify with the Britain. Although, it is not illegal or criminal to do so and it is their personal choices, the social beliefs of the British people is that it is morally wrong and unpatriotic to ignore and avoid the British identity. For example, when Indian or Pakistani or even Bangladeshi cricket team tours England and plays the English cricket team, the people belonging to those countries are seen psychologically associating with those countries and maximally supporting them, ignoring England. In 1990, the Conservative politician Norman Tebbit famously posited the 'test match test'. "" Which side do the Asians cheer for? It's an interesting test. Are you still harking back to where you came from or where you are? (Korinman and Laughland 2007). This rather harsh remark clearly brought out the focus on how sports

reinforce the social psychological belief that British people of Asian origin are still attached to their homeland and thus avoid British identity. This was further reinforced by the comments of the former England cricket captain, Nasser Hussain. He said: " It was disappointing to see a sea of green shirts with the names of Pakistani players instead of ours. It reminded me of when we played India at Edgbaston [in Birmingham] in the World Cup in 1999. It was like an away game because so many people supported their side." (qtd. in Majumdar and Mangan 2004). However, these beliefs can also be challenged when one looks from another perspective. That is, the above comment was actually made by a British man of Indian origin, which clearly shows that some British Asians have indeed integrated into the British society, even rising to the status of national captain. Thus, the social psychological belief that Asians have not psychologically integrated into the British society could be challenged, as many British of Asian origins have taken the British identity and support their home team.

Sports have also been found to have a lot of influence in the well being of citizens. Current research suggests that sports enhance emotional or psychological well being of an individual and thus it is being used as an additional therapy in treating citizens with psychological disorders in UK. It has been found out that there is a positive relationship between sports and emotional well being of an individual. Sports participation in general alleviates some of the psychological problems people are facing in the modern world. In adults sports have been found to improve their moods hence alleviating many types of depression they have. This has also been found to be the case in children and adolescents who participate in sports

because they tend to have reduced behavioral and emotional problems (Martin, 2007). The reason for this is that sports provide an environment where individuals can socialize freely thereby forgetting some of the problems they face in their day to day activities. Studies also suggest that organized sports influence development of crucial behaviors like stress management, cooperation, positive attitude towards achievement, unselfishness, appropriate risk taking, and the ability to tolerate life frustrations and delayed gratification. It is through playing with others that children get to learn how to build cooperative relationships and the ability to meet their needs in order to belong. In addition to that they are able to learn important cooperation skills as they perform specific team role and work together when playing (NASPSPA, 2007).

It has also been found out that youths who participate in sports have less behavioral problems and this has been supported by empirical studies. An example of this study is the one conducted in 1994 in UK and it found out that many youths who participated in sports behaved well in classrooms, earned better grades, dropped out of school less frequently, had fewer behavior problems at home and attended school on regular basis. On the contrary those youths who did not participate in sports were likely to engage in violent behaviors like fights in schools, drug abuse, they were also more likely to become teen parents and consequently the school dropout rates for nonparticipants was high. This shows sports have a very big influence in molding a bright future for citizens in a particular nation since it trains them to be responsible, creative and cooperative.

In conclusion we have been able to learn how sports influence the psychology of people in a given nation. We have seen how sports help in improving and individual self esteem through identifying oneself with a successful team. Through this individuals are able to live vicariously through someone else, making them to bask in glory when that person or a team wins. This effect is also transferred in work places where good performance of a team influences the performance of the workers which means that sporting success and failure has a lot of impact on the UK workplace. We have also seen that sports play a very important role in developing a nation identity as well as helping children to grow up to be responsible citizens in future.