

ROLE OF TRADITIONAL GAMES AND SPORTS IN SOCIAL AND ETHNICAL INCLUSION, INTEGRATION AND COHESION IN THE POST-CONFLICT AND TRANSITIONAL SOCIETIES AMONG CHILDREN OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

UDC: 793.31:[796:316.454.2-057.874

(Original Scientific Paper)

**Ivan Anastasovski¹, Lenche V. Aleksovska¹, Vujica Živković¹, Andriana Z. Misovski¹,
Lazar Nanev², Tatjana Stojanoska Ivanova³**

¹Faculty of Physical Education, Sports and Health, Ss.Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje

²State University Goce Delcev – Štip

³State University Ss. Cyril and Methodius - Faculty of Philosophy - Skopje

Abstract

One of the cultural practices that gives the most promising hope and gives confidence to improve inter-ethnic contacts and social cohesion in a society as a tool for peace and reconciliation initiative at all levels (ethnic, social, political, religious, etc.), certainly are traditional games and sports. Therefore, this paper explores the role of traditional games and sports as a model of social and ethnic inclusion, integration and cohesion among pupils of school age in societies like ours - in post-conflict and transitional ones. We have used a sample of 208 school age children from 9 to 13 years from six municipalities in the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. Traditional games and sports are often strongly identified by the European and national political leaders and policy makers as a field of actions that improves the spirit of unity and promotes intercultural understanding and mutual respect within a community and between communities in a society. The evident social power of sport is reflected in the fact that it has become a very important factor in intercultural relations and social stability within the European sports policy.

Key words: *traditional games, sports, inclusion, cohesion, integration, society, children*

Introduction

In this paper we explore the role of traditional games and sports for social and ethnic inclusion, cohesion and integration in societies that have post-conflict period and undergone transition process. Traditional games and sports are tested through practical activities and specially designed questionnaire for children aged between 9 and 13 years.

Sport cannot be viewed in isolation from the social situation and social context. Every society is composed of many groups and classes, social division of labor creates the conditions imposed by individual groups involved in specialized activities (economic and non-economic), and thus direct to each other. Issues of cultural conflict and inter-ethnic tolerance slowly but surely moved to the center of political and public debate in the multiethnic European countries. This is particularly an example for separate post-conflict societies that only until recently suffered from civil war or armed conflict (Anastasovski, I. Aleksovska, V.L 2011: 45).

The sport is certainly one of the cultural practices most promising hope and giving security to improve inter-ethnic contacts and social cohesion in a society as a tool for peace and reconciliation initiative at all levels (ethnic, social, political, religious, etc.). The sport is often strongly identified by European and national political leaders or policy makers as a field of action which improves community spirit and promotes intercultural understanding and mutual respect within a community and between communities in society. Socially evident power of sport can be seen in the fact that it has become a very important factor in intercultural relations and social stability within the European sports policy.

The concepts of social cohesion, social integration and social inclusion are linked to one another. As Van Bottenburg and Van Sterkenburg say (Van Bottenburg & Van Sterkenburg, 2005, these concepts overlap and relate to the saying "We feel good" as processes of states, which are some kind of opposition to the

"dark side" of segregation, isolation and fragmentation. The terms reflect the power of social interaction as a result of individual and mutual benefit therefrom. These conditions relate to another world, to the individual and social benefits acquired through the social connection.

Method of work

Subject of the research

Subject of this research are children from 9-13 years old on whom we have theoretically and practically tested the role of traditional games and sports as models of social and ethnic cohesion, inclusion and integration in post-conflict and transitional societies.

Goals of the research

The main goal (TMG)

TMG – The main goal in our research was to examine the role of traditional games and sports for social and ethnic cohesion, inclusion and integration in post-conflict and transitional societies like ours.

Special goals (SG)

SG1. - Determination of a set of traditional games and sports that demonstrate impact on the target group.

SG2. - Determination of a special program for traditional playing and sporting for 9 to 13 years old children.

Respondents in the research

As a sample for this research we took respondents from school age children from 9 to 13 years from six municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia: Municipality of Prilep, Municipality of Tetovo, Municipality of Center, Municipality of Šuto Orizari, Municipality of Vrapčište and Municipality of Staro Nagoričane

The number of respondents was 208 respondents who were surveyed and divided by several socio-demographic characteristics, gender and ethnicity.

Temporal and spatial determination of the research

The analysis of the research was conducted from April 2013 until November 2013 with the participation of children from 9 to 13 years from 6 municipalities (local communities) in the country. Criteria for selection of municipalities provided in the survey were determined by three features:

- 1) Size of the municipality with over 5,000 inhabitants
- 2) Geographic location - representation of all regions (urban and rural)
- 3) Structure of population.
 - Ethnically clean composition of population
 - Ethnically mixed composition of population

Results of the research

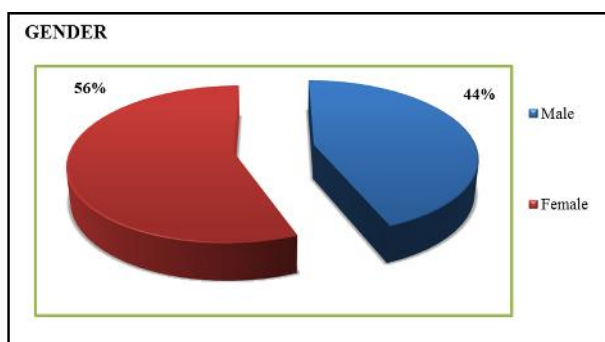
The results of this research are interpreted in accordance with the received analyses of the surveyed respondents in several cities in the country. What can be certainly stated is that the accent was placed on the role of traditional games and sports for social and ethnic cohesion, inclusion and integration in post-conflict and transition societies. All the necessary elements for the analysis were included in the questionnaire designed by a group of university professors from our country who make researches in social and sports science. Of particular importance is to note that 208 respondents, school children aged 9 to 13 years, were surveyed for the research.

Table 1. Overview of percentages of the Gender of respondents in the survey

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	92	44.2 %
Female	116	55.8 %
Total	208	100,0 %

Source: Research and measuring 2013

Picture No.1: Percentage distribution of Gender of respondents in the survey



Source: Research and measuring 2013

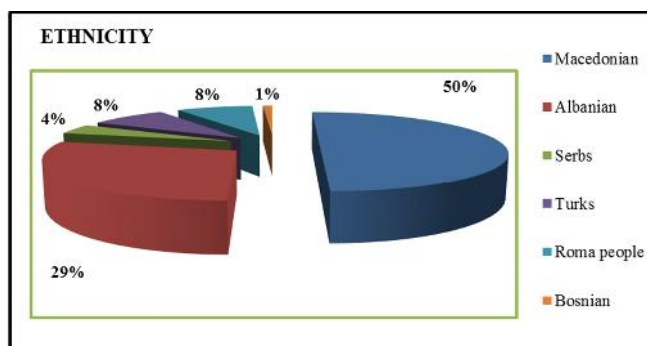
According to the gender participation of respondents in this survey, we identified two genders, and this is: male - 44.0 percent and female - 56.0 percent (see the above table and graph no. 1).

Table 2. Overview of percentages of the Ethnicity of respondents in the survey

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage
Macedonian	103	49.5 %
Albanian	59	28.4 %
Serbs	9	4.3 %
Turks	17	8.2 %
Roma people	18	8.7 %
Bosnian	2	1.0 %
Total	208	100,0 %

Source: Research and measuring 2013

Picture No.2: Percentage distribution of Ethnicity of respondents in the survey



Source: Research and measuring 2013

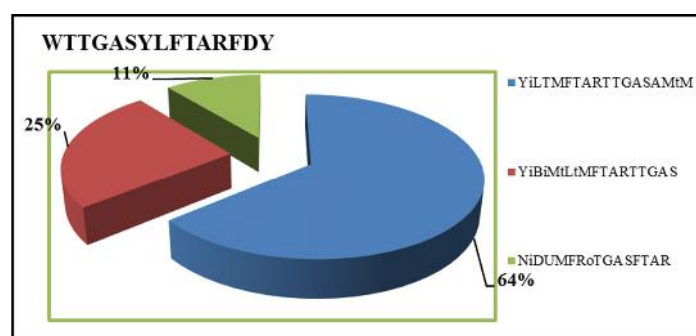
According to the ethnicity of the respondents in this survey we identified several ethnic communities in the Republic of Macedonia. The dividing was made according to which affiliation prescribed in the Constitution of RM (see the above table and graph no. 2) as follows: Macedonians - 49.5 percent, Albanians - 28.4 percent, Serbs - 4.3 percent, Turks - 8.2 percent, Roma people are 8.7 percent, and Bosnians are 1.0 percent.

Table 3. Overview of percentages of responses to the question "Whether through traditional games and sports you learned what tolerance and respect for differences is".

Whether through traditional games and sports you learned what tolerance and respect for differences is	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, I learn too much for tolerance and respect through traditional games and sports, and it means a lot to me	167	80.3 %
Yes, but I might learn much more about tolerance and respect through traditional games and sports	30	14.4 %
No, I don't understand the message for the role of traditional games and sports	11	5.3 %
Total	208	100,0 %

Source: Research and measuring 2013

Picture No. 3: Graphical distribution of percentages of responses to the question "Whether through traditional games and sports you learned what tolerance and respect for differences is".



Source: Research and measuring 2013

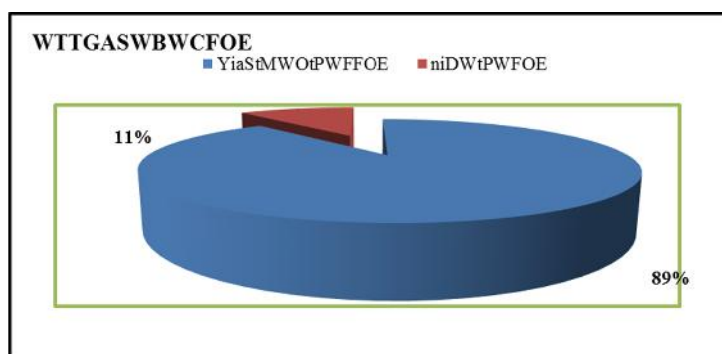
The analysis of responses to the question “Whether through traditional games and sports you learned what tolerance and respect for differences is” (see the above table and graph. No. 3) shows that 80.3 percent of the children answered with *Yes, I learned a lot about tolerance and respect through traditional games and sports, and it means a lot to me.* While, only 5.3 percent of the children answered with *No, I do not understand the message about the role of traditional games and sports.*

Table 4. Overview of percentage of respondents to the question “Whether through traditional games and sports we befriend with children from other ethnicity”

Whether through traditional games and sports we befriend with children from other ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, I am satisfied to much with opportunity to play with friends from other ethnicity	184	88.5 %
No, I don't want to play with children from other ethnicity	24	11.5 %
Total	208	100, 0 %

Source: Research and measuring 2013

Picture No. 5: Graphical distribution of percentages of responses to the question “Whether through traditional games and sports we befriend with children from other ethnicity”



Source: Research and measuring 2013

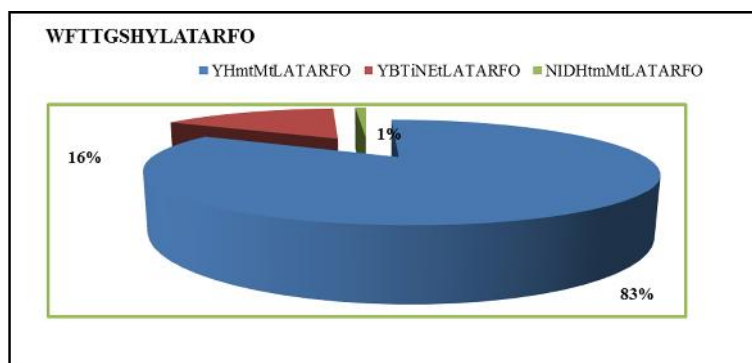
In the analysis of answers to the question "Whether through traditional games and sports you make friends with children of different ethnicity" (see the above table and chart No. 4), which shows the percentage of distribution of responses of the respondents would you be friends with children of different ethnicity based on traditional games and sports. You can see that high 88.5 percent of respondents have answered with "Yes, I am really contented with opportunity to play with friends from other ethnicity", suggesting that traditional games and sports can be a positive model of social and ethnic integration, cohesion and inclusion especially among children in school age. While only 11.5 percent of respondents regardless of their gender and ethnic affiliation answered with *No, I do not want to associate with children of different ethnicity!*

Table 5. Overview of percentage of respondents to the question “Whether friendships through traditional games and sports help you learn about tolerance and respect for others”

Whether friendship through traditional games and sports helps you learn about tolerance and respect for others	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, it helped me learn much about tolerance and respect for other	172	82.7 %
Yes, but this is not enough to learn about tolerance and respect for other	34	16.3 %
No, it did not help me learn about tolerance and respect for other	2	1,0 %
Total	208	100,0 %

Source: Research and measuring 2013

Picture No. 5: Graphical distribution of percentages of responses to the question “Whether friendships through traditional games and sports help you learn about tolerance and respect for others”



Source: Research and measuring 2013

In the analysis of the responses to the question “Whether friendship through traditional games and sports helps you learn about tolerance and respect for others” (see the above table and graph No. 5). We can see that high percent (82.7%) of respondents have answered with “Yes, it helped me learn much about tolerance and respect for other” suggesting that traditional games and sports can be a positive model of social and ethnic integration, cohesion and inclusion, especially in the school age children. Only 1.0 percent of respondents regardless of their gender and ethnic affiliation answer with “No, it did not help me learn about tolerance and respect for other”.

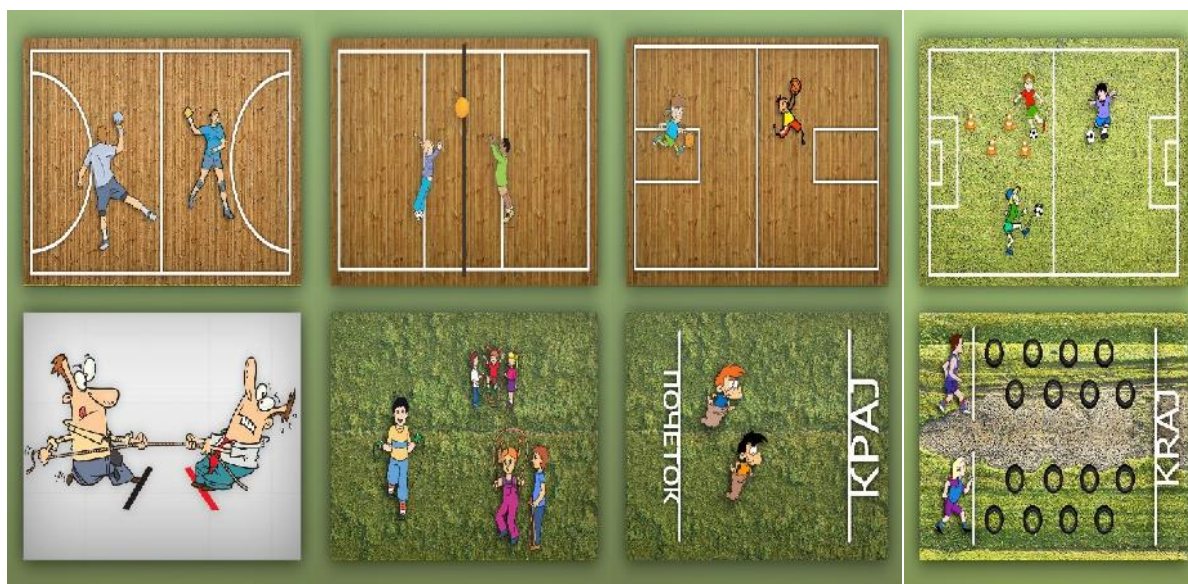
Table No. 6: Tabular review of traditional games and sports which are part of practical activities in this research

Name of the traditional games and sports	Necessary requisites	Short description
OLIMPIC JUMPS RACE	10 tires in different colors, Stopwatches, High tripod, Pots with crushed chalk.	Olympic jumps race is a competitive game which involves two teams that will jump through 5 Olympic color tires. One player jumps through tires and runs towards a set goal and then touch with one hand the pot with crushed chalk and immediately comes back to touch with hand the next player who continues the same.
MUSICAL CHAIRS GAME	Chair in different colors, Music	The musical chairs game is a typical game where children run in the circle outside of the placed chairs with different colors, whereas the number of children is bigger than the number of chairs. On the sign of the volunteer (trainer) they run to seat on an empty chair. The child that does not take a place leaves the game and the game goes on with one chair out. Children sing all the time while running in the circle.
ROPE PULING	Rope - 25 m (marine rope or improvised rope), lag in the middle – plumb-bob to determine the median line, Short ropes	Rope pooling is a popular sports game where 2 teams pull on opposite ends of a rope in order to beat the opponent.
TRADITIONAL JUMPING IN SACKS	10 Sacks, Stopwatches, Bands	The game is played so that children are lined up on the starting line with the lower part of the body in bags which they hold with hands. At sign the children go to the line at a distance of 5-7 meters bypass and come back. When they return other competitors start and so on until the last ones finish. Winning team is the one that finishes the running first.

MOSQUE	Balls, Marble tiles in various colors and sizes.	Mosque is a very typical traditional sports game for this region. Two teams is in this game and they use the ball to crash five marbles stones in a pyramidal form. Once the mosque is crashed the team that crashes it down run away and the other team tries to hit them with the ball.
WHEELBARROW RACE	Tracks for lines	A wheelbarrow race is a competitive game in which teams of two players race with one teammate playing the role of the driver, and the other playing the role of the wheelbarrow. The driver holds on to the other player's ankles, while the other player walks on his hands. It is commonly played at fairs and family events.
SURRENDER GAME	Chalk	Surrender game is also a very popular traditional sports game in this region. Two teams participate in the game. The distance between the teams is 10 meters. Children from both teams hold hands and shout asking for surrender of the army and one child from one team runs to the next team in front of him in order to break out the team fence. If he breaks through the fence he takes one child from this team (army).

Traditional games and sports or *“Old-fashioned”* is a popular way of keeping the real sense for childhood trough promoting a different skills and sports activities on the traditional way but still stay in competition a character.

Picture No. 6: Pictures of traditional games and sports covered by this research



Discussion of results from the research

From practical realization of sports activities for a period of eight months it was expected to achieve the following results:

- Increased tolerance among children and youth;
- Strengthening unity in society;
- Respect each other through traditional games and sports;
- Determine the activities that will be guidelines for building the future of new generations through traditional games and sports.

Based on the research results and clearly expressed views of children participating in practical and theoretical analysis, and the media attention and coverage of the entire project we conclude that it fully justified our goal set in the survey. The respondents undoubtedly need to make friends, to learn and to know about each other just through traditional games and sports. This indicates the important role and opportunities of traditional games and sports offered to approach the ethnic communities and their social cohesion, inclusion and integration, thus gaining a much clearer picture of the people different from them regardless of gender and ethnicity affiliation. We believe that children have always belonged to the truth and it is the only thing they know, therefore the children's answers are honest and in the context of the objective we want to achieve by the research.

Conclusion

Based on the results from the survey for the role of traditional games and sports in the social and ethnic cohesion, inclusion and integration in post-conflict and transitional societies we have analyzed the answers of school children aged 9 to 13 years (according to gender and ethnicity) in six municipalities in the country, resulting in the following conclusions:

1. Role and importance of traditional games and sports in the social and ethnic cohesion, inclusion and integration in post-conflict and transitional society is undisputable;
2. Research of this kind are very important for building a common future for all generations in the country, regardless of their ethnic, religious, social, sexual or other affiliation;
3. The activities of empiricism and theory in the study imply that traditional games and sports contribute to raising the level of tolerance towards various children; and
4. Through the activities in the research (practical and theoretical) unity in children was very clearly and indisputably manifested which must be systematically developed and promoted in future.

Most probably, this research presents a realistic picture of the situation in children of all ethnicities, especially in the segment of the sport in the country.

Bibliography:

Анастасовски, И. (2010). Етничка припадност на посетителите во спорт, научен труд, *Конференција*, "Промовирање на интеркултурен дијалог во спортот", Холидеј Ин, Скопје 14-15.10.2010, истиот е објавен и во Фудбал Магазин, Официјана публикација на ФФМ, Скопје, септември, 2010, стр. 22-23.

Анастасовски, И., Величковска, А.Л. (2011). Вредностите и границите на спортот – базирани на социјални интервенции во пост-конфликтни општества, Дојран: Меѓународно стручно-научен собир, стр. 45-48.

Анастасовски, И. (2011). "Social characteristics of the fans with risk factors for deviant behaviour at sports events in the Republic of Macedonia" Palermo: 1-st International Conference Science and Football, str. 48

Анастасовски, И. Стојаноска, И.Т. (2010). Насилство, агресија и спорт, Скопје: ФФК, Флексограф-Куманово, стр.84-91.

Beedie, Paul. (2007). "Legislators and Interpreters: an Examination of Changes in Philosophical Interpretations of being a Mountaineer". In *Philosophy, Risk and Adventure Sports*, Edited by: McNamee, Mike. 25–42. London: Routledge

Van Bottenburg & Van Sterkenburg (2005). *Sociology of Sport, Sports Participation*, Utrecht: ARKO Sports Media (Nieuwegein),

