Szabolcs Nagy[9]

Sport Socialization and Its Role in Shaping Social Innovation in European and African Contexts

This article explores how sport socialization fosters social innovation in Europe and Africa. Drawing on interdisciplinary literature and empirical studies, the research highlights how sport participation serves as a catalyst for building social capital, promoting inclusion, and fostering community engagement. The analysis identifies family, peers, coaches, organizations, and digital platforms as pivotal agents facilitating sport socialization and driving social innovation. Differences in governance, policy frameworks, and socio-economic contexts between Europe and Africa result in distinct trajectories for leveraging sport in social innovation initiatives. European cases are marked by structured policies and decentralized governance, while African examples demonstrate dynamic grassroots innovation amidst limited formal support. Despite contextual challenges, both regions harness sport to address social exclusion and empower marginalized groups. The findings underscore the need for context-sensitive, participatory approaches to optimize the societal impact of sport-driven social innovations.
Keywords: sport socialization, social innovation, Europe, Africa
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Introduction

The era we currently live in can be characterized as the age of global crises. The most pressing global challenges today are primarily centered around geopolitical armed conflicts, climate change and extreme weather events, societal polarization, economic instability, and technological risks, as highlighted by leading international reports in 2025 (Elsner et al., 2025; United Nations, 2025). Beyond the ongoing wars in regions such as Ukraine, the Middle East, and Sudan, alongside proxy conflicts, coups, and terrorism (IRC, 2024), severe weather phenomena including heatwaves, floods, wildfires, and hurricanes rank among the top short- and long-term risks (United Nations, 2025). Climate change also drives wider environmental issues such as pollution and biodiversity collapse. The spread of misinformation and disinformation, along with deepening social divisions, poses serious threats, fueling instability and weakening systems of governance. Heightened tensions between major global powers particularly between the United States and China along with sanctions, tariffs, and the fragmentation of the global economic system, further exacerbate these risks.

Artificial intelligence represents a major long-term risk, especially as regulatory measures struggle to keep pace with rapid technological advancement (Elsner et al., 2025). Continuing humanitarian crises, including food insecurity, displacement, and fragile state structures in countries such as Sudan, Syria, Myanmar, and Somalia, constitute critical global challenges (IRC, 2024). Moreover, inflation, unemployment, and poverty remain pervasive concerns, amplified by geopolitical and climatic factors (Nadler, 2025).

These complex problems are often closely interconnected. Addressing them increasingly relies on social innovation which encompasses novel solutions to social problems that are more effective, sustainable, or just than existing approaches, with value accruing primarily to society rather than individuals (Guenther & Guenther, 2013). Social innovation has come to represent a genuine paradigm shift in both innovation theory and the management of societal challenges. The significance of social innovation is widely regarded as commensurate with that of economic and scientific innovation (Kocziszky at. al., 2017). Frequently, it is economic and scientific

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[9] University of Miskolc, PhD, habil., Professor, szabolcs.nagy@uni-miskolc.hu

innovations themselves that generate social issues - problems that can only be effectively resolved through social innovation. Social innovation typically originates from addressing a social need, in contrast to traditional innovation, which may be sparked by invention. The key distinction lies in its origin: social innovation begins with "problematisation" rather than deliberate intention (Neumeier, 2017). While profitability often motivates traditional innovation, social innovations frequently arise despite the absence of viable commercial markets for their products or services (OECD, 2025).

Sport socialization is generally understood as the process by which individuals internalize social norms and values through sport participation, shaping their identity, interpersonal skills, and community engagement, influenced by family, peers, coaches, and organizational contexts, however, it is not consistently defined in literature (Moustakas & Robrade, 2023).

Sport socialization can foster social innovation by creating inclusive communities, enhancing social capital, and facilitating communication across diverse social groups. Sport enables individuals to "live together" and build social innovations by reinforcing community ties (Romanelli, 2023). and has a potential in addressing social challenges like exclusion, particularly through educational and service innovations (Stănescu et al., 2020). Nałęcz et al., 2020 provides empirical backing, showing a strong correlation between sports participation, social capital, and national innovativeness. Baciu & Baciu (2015) further supports this, highlighting sport's ability to contribute to problem-solving and enhance life quality for individuals and communities.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between sport socialization and social innovation, and to explore how sport socialization contributes to the advancement of social innovation. Particular attention is devoted to the identification of similarities and differences between European and African approaches, an area that has remained largely underexplored. Given that the level of social innovation tends to be higher in European countries and lower on the African continent (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2016), the research also extends to the comparative analysis of contexts representing both socially innovation-advanced and less-developed societies.

Social Innovation

The term social innovation originated in the mid-1970s, with its dissemination notably advanced by the International Sociological Association and its dedicated working group concentrating on innovative methods of social change (Michalkó et al., 2018). Due to its interdisciplinary scope and broad range of applications, the definition of the concept remains heterogeneous, resulting in significant divergence among social scientists regarding its precise meaning. Despite the absence of a universally accepted definition of social innovation, the OECD was among the first organizations to articulate the concept in 2000, defining it as "creating and implementing new solutions that entail conceptual, process, product or organisational changes, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the welfare and well-being of individuals and communities (OECD, 2010)".

Social innovation refers to novel solutions targeting social problems that are more effective, efficient, and sustainable than existing approaches, with the value generated primarily benefiting society as a whole rather than individuals (Phills, Deiglmeier, & Miller, 2008).

Social innovation encompasses initiatives, products, processes, or programs that fundamentally alter the core routines, resource access, social processes, and belief systems of any societal structure. Successful social innovations are characterized by their sustainability and broad societal impact. The capacity of a society to generate a continuous flow of social innovations - particularly those that re-engage the most vulnerable groups - plays a crucial role in fostering the resilience of both the social and the natural environment (Westley, 2008).

According to the European Commission ESF+ Regulation (European Union, 2021), the definition of social innovation is "an activity that is social as to both its ends and its means and, in particular, an activity which relates to the development and implementation of new ideas concerning products, services, practices and models that simultaneously meets social needs and creates new

social relationships or collaborations between public, civil society or private organisations, thereby benefiting society and boosting its capacity to act".

According to the Centre for Social Innovation at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, social innovation is the development and implementation of effective solutions to complex, often systemic social and environmental challenges that aim to advance social progress. It is not confined to any specific organizational form or legal structure; rather, it transcends institutional boundaries. The creation of such solutions frequently necessitates active collaboration among stakeholders across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors (Soule, 2025).

Expanding upon the foundational work OECD (2010), the 2022 OECD Recommendation on the Social and Solidarity Economy and Social Innovation identifies social innovation as one of nine separate building blocks that establish the necessary conditions for the social economy to flourish (OECD, 2022). Social innovation has the potential to impact both urban and rural settings by addressing public service deficits, fostering experimentation with innovative business models, and enhancing community cohesion, especially in rural areas (OECD, 2024).

Social innovation provides new or novel responses to the problems faced by a given community, with the aim of improving overall well-being. The concept of social innovation potential refers to the aggregate of latent capacities that facilitate the creation of social innovations (Benedek, Kocziszky & Veresné Somosi, 2015). Consequently, the measurement of social innovation potential is both feasible and has been implemented in practice. To date, the only cross-country comparative study in this field is the report by The Economist Intelligence Unit (2016), titled "Old Problems, New Solutions: Measuring the Capacity for Social Innovation Across the World." which examines the capacity of 45 countries to foster social innovation. It focuses on measuring how well countries enable social innovation by evaluating four key pillars: the policy and institutional framework, availability of financing, level of entrepreneurialism, and strength of civil society. The report highlights the importance of supportive government policies, financing mechanisms, entrepreneurial culture, and active civil society networks in enabling social innovation to address societal challenges. It also discusses different country performances, examples of social innovations, and stresses that social innovation is a means to tackle social problems through novel solutions that benefit society broadly rather than individual profit. The report provides a comparative index that helps policymakers and stakeholders understand how to better encourage social innovation in diverse economic and social context.

Sport socialization

Sports socialization is a complex, lifelong process of learning and internalizing societal norms through athletic participation, involving behavioral, cognitive, and emotional components (Joncheray et al., 2016). The evidence in literature suggests multiple mechanisms of socialization. Sport socialization is not merely about learning to play a sport; it encompasses the acquisition of social identities, behavioral norms, and cultural values that are embedded within broader social, political, and economic contexts (Pot et al., 2016).

Early papers like Spreitzer & Snyder (1976) portray it as a dynamic process, which is often bidirectional, where children may influence parental involvement (Dorsch et al., 2009), while parents transmit values and skills (Kremer-Sadlik and Kim, 2007). They provide concrete evidence, showing that sports activities are positively associated with skill development and value transmission, with parents playing an active role in this process. Nucci & Young-Shim (2005) further notes that sports provide a "microcosm for living and society," influencing participants' social skill development.

Sport socialization is not merely about learning to play a sport; it encompasses the acquisition of social identities, behavioral norms, and cultural values that are embedded within broader social, political, and economic contexts. Individuals are not passive recipients; they actively engage with and negotiate the meanings, norms, and expectations of sport within their social environment (Benson et al., 2016). Sport socialization is culturally embedded, i.e. the process is shaped by

cultural, social, and institutional contexts, reflecting and reproducing broader societal structures, including class, gender, and race (Lenartowicz, 2016). According to Jiang et al. (2023) sport socialization is central to the development of social identity, particularly through group membership (e.g., teams, fan communities).

Across definitions, several recurring elements emerge such as social agents, internalization of values, broader social forces, as well as identity and belonging. The main social agents are the family (especially parents), peers, coaches, community organizations, and increasingly, media and digital platforms (Pot et al., 2016; Dorsch et al., 2015).

Internalization of values involves not only learning the technical aspects of sport but also internalizing values such as teamwork, fair play, and competition (Joncheray et al., 2016; Asada & Ko, 2019). Sport socialization is influenced by and reproduces broader social, political, and economic orders, including relations of gender, race, and class (Haycock & Smith, 2014, Joncheray et al., 2016). Participation in sport and sport-related communities fosters a sense of belonging and shapes individual and collective identities (Asada & Ko, 2019; Jiang et al. 2023) 2019; Mastromartino et al., 2022).

Research on sport socialization identifies multiple agents influencing individuals' participation and identity in sport. Spreitzer and Snyder (1976) first highlighted the family including parents, siblings, and relatives as primary socializing agents. Later work, such as Dorsch et al. (2009) expanded this view by showing that children can also socialize parents into sport, indicating a bidirectional influence within families. Kremer-Sadlik and Kim (2007) emphasized how parental roles are shaped by broader cultural and societal expectations. Beyond family, several researchers (MacPhail et al. (2003), Benson and Eys (2017); Dorsch et al., 2009) underscored the importance of peers and teammates in fostering motivation and belonging, while Benson et al. (2016) identified coaches and instructors as key leaders shaping both skill and character. Institutional factors such as clubs and leagues (Dorsch et al., 2009; MacPhail et al., 2003; Asada & Ko, 2019) and broader community or media influences (Beamon, 2010; Ruddell & Shinew, 2006; Mastromartino et al., 2022; Oh, 2023) further structure opportunities and meanings in sport. Social media platforms, YouTube, and online fan communities are increasingly central to sport socialization, especially among youth. These platforms facilitate new forms of engagement, identity formation, and community building (Kirkwood et al., 2019, Yadav et al., 2023). Digital fan communities create new rituals and experiences (e.g., communal viewing, social media engagement), with phenomena like Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) driving deeper involvement and identification (Choi et al., 2025). Some researcers such as Ruddell and Shinew (2006), Oh (2023) and Brown (2017) demonstrated how socialization varies by race, gender, and ability. According to Mastromartino et al., (2022), participation in fan communities enhances social capital, fosters a sense of belonging, and can influence broader social behaviors (e.g., civic engagement). Overall, the literature reflects a shift from early, family-centered models to multilayered, ecological frameworks recognizing the interplay among family, peers, institutions, and culture in shaping sport involvement.

The managerial implications of sport socialization include understanding the mechanisms and agents of sport socialization can inform policies aimed at promoting inclusive and equitable sport participation. Coaches, educators, and community leaders can leverage insights into socialization processes to foster positive sport environments and support identity development. port organizations and fan communities can harness digital platforms to enhance engagement, build community, and promote positive socialization outcomes. Sport can serve as a tool for social integration, particularly for migrants and minority groups, by facilitating both cultural adaptation and the maintenance of identity.

As for the outcomes and consequences of sport socialization, participation in sport affects individuals and families across behavioral, psychological, and social dimensions. Spreitzer and Snyder (1976) found that sport involvement shapes behavior, family relationships, and personal identity formation. Extending this, Dorsch et al. (2009) showed that sport experiences can transform parents' behaviors, emotions, and family communication, fostering greater parental

engagement and psychological growth. Parents are often the primary socializing agents, shaping children's initial attitudes, values, and habits related to sport. Parental support, modeling, and involvement are critical in early sport socialization (Pot et al., 2016; Dorsch et al., 2015). Kremer-Sadlik and Kim (2007) linked sport participation to reduced delinquency and improved academic and social performance, emphasizing the development of values and life skills. MacPhail et al. (2003) noted outcomes ranging from friendship and social integration to public health and elite sport aspirations, suggesting sport as both a personal and societal asset. Benson et al. (2016) highlighted the tension between conformity and individuality in sport, showing how socialization shapes identity alignment within teams. Conversely, Beamon (2010) documented negative outcomes, such as identity narrowing and unrealistic career expectations, particularly among racialized youth who experience overrepresentation in sport. Ruddell and Shinew (2006) emphasized that sport fosters character, discipline, and moral development.

While the core process of sport socialization is widely recognized, its specific manifestations and outcomes are deeply shaped by cultural, institutional, and socioeconomic contexts. This underscores the need for context-sensitive research and theory such as comparing sport socialization in different cultures as well as developing and developed countries.

Sports Socialization as a Catalyst for Social Innovation

Analyzing the relationship between sports socialization and social innovation is crucial for understanding how sport can be leveraged as a catalyst for social change, particularly in addressing health disparities, social exclusion, and organizational transformation. To examine the relationship between sport socialization and social innovation, this study conducted a comprehensive literature analysis using Scopus-indexed publications spanning from the 1980s to 2024, with particular emphasis on research published from 2000 onward. My analysis encompassed interdisciplinary contributions from the fields of sport management, social innovation, public health, organizational studies, digital media, and social psychology.

Sports socialization is a multi-level, lifelong process influenced by individual, organizational, and societal factors, while social innovation encompasses new ideas, practices, organizational forms, and digital tools that address social needs, enhance social inclusion, and create social value. In the context of sport, social innovation is often linked to Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) initiatives, social entrepreneurship, and the use of sport as a platform for public health, gender equality, and community empowerment (Cardella et al., 2021). Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) refers to the strategic use of sport and physical activity as instruments for advancing broader social objectives, including youth empowerment, peace-building, health promotion, and gender equality (Darnell, 2012). Innovation capacity in SDP organizations is a key predictor of social innovation practices and mediates organizational performance. Five dimensions including human resources, finance, partnerships, infrastructure, and planning explain significant variance in social innovation outcomes (Svensson et al., 2020; McSweeney et al., 2025). Shared leadership and a mission-driven culture enhance innovative work behavior and adaptability, while entrepreneurial mindsets and intentional management practices are critical for sustaining innovation (McSweeney et al., 2025; Svensson & Mahoney, 2020). Bricolage, i.e. adaptive resource use is positively associated with higher levels of social innovation, except for process-focused innovations, which are significantly associated with environmental turbulence (Andersson et al., 2024). Community size and group cohesion shape early-stage sport socialization by influencing perceptions, group identity, and self-efficacy, which in turn mediate well-being and social innovation outcomes (Lin et al., 2022; Asada & Ko, 2019). Social capital developed through sports participation is foundational for broader social innovation, with bonding and bridging capital supporting both individual and community-level outcome (Lin, 2022).

As for the actor roles and mechanisms in sport social entrepreneurship, it is found that intermediaries (e.g., NGOs, local facilitators) play crucial roles in linking actors, building communities of social innovators, and supporting social business ecosystems (Ho & Yoon, 2022).

Collaboration mechanisms (e.g., Design Thinking, co-creation) are essential for effective social innovation but require intentional design and management (Pinheiro et al., 2020).

Sport-driven social innovation programs promote social inclusion and public health by enhancing social cohesion, trust, and community engagement, especially among vulnerable groups (Bunde-Birouste et al., 2022). Challenges include limited transferability for highly vulnerable youth, sustainability issues, and management skill gaps, underscoring the need for tailored, context-sensitive approaches (Philip et al., 2022). Digital social innovations show promise but face adoption challenges including the resistance toward the technology (Harith et al., 2025)

Social innovation in the context of sport can be conceptualized as a political and organizational form grounded in social entrepreneurship (Schenker et al. 2021). They further argue that prevailing theories of social innovation often lack clear conceptualizations of the actors involved, whereas the theoretical framework of social entrepreneurship places central emphasis on the figure of the social entrepreneur.

Glocalization - the concept that combines globalization and localization, referring to the process by which global products, ideas, or practices are adapted to fit local cultures - balances global strategies with local cultural identities, enabling sports organizations to foster social innovation through adaptation and localized engagement. Empirical evidence from global events (e.g., FIFA World Cup, Tour de France) shows that glocalization enhances fan engagement, economic sustainability, and cultural diversity (Li et al., 2025). Glocalization facilitates social innovation by enabling context-sensitive adaptation, but outcomes are shaped by local realities and organizational strategies.

The current literature indicates that sports socialization and social innovation are interconnected through a complex interplay of individual agency, intraorganizational practices, and digital behavioral interventions. Research on sports socialization and social innovation is expanding (239 publication on social innovation in sport published between 1990 and 2022 (Sobarna et al., 2024)), with increasing thematic diversity and international collaboration in sports sociology. Integrated theoretical frameworks such as glocalization help explain how sport socialization contributes to social innovation by fostering empowerment, social capital, and transformative leadership. However, causal mechanisms between sports socialization and social innovation are often inferred rather than directly tested. Under-representation of marginalized groups and non-Western contexts can be found in much of the empirical literature.

As far as the implications concerned, building innovation capacity and shared leadership in SDP organizations enhances social innovation and organizational performance. Community-based and digital interventions can effectively promote social inclusion, health, and empowerment, but must be tailored to local contexts and address structural barriers. Grassroots sports clubs and digital platforms are critical for sustaining participation and social innovation legacies. Sports participation is an effective tool for improving mental well-being, cognitive health, and social capital, especially among older adults and marginalized groups. Digital media and social support mechanisms can amplify these effects but require careful design to ensure accessibility and equity. Entrepreneurial bricolage and resourcefulness are key drivers of social innovation in resource-constrained environments. Intentional management, participatory culture, and adaptive leadership are essential for fostering innovation and resilience.

Future research should prioritize mixed-method, interdisciplinary approaches, with a focus on digital innovation, marginalized populations, and the operationalization of agency and constraint negotiation. Addressing these gaps through interdisciplinary, critical, and technologically advanced research will be essential for realizing the full potential of sport as a vehicle for social innovation.

Comparative Insights from Africa and Europe

The social innovation performance of European and African countries reveals notable differences rooted in their institutional frameworks, financing availability, entrepreneurial culture, and civil

society strength (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2016). European countries generally score higher than African countries on the overall social innovation index (Figure 1).
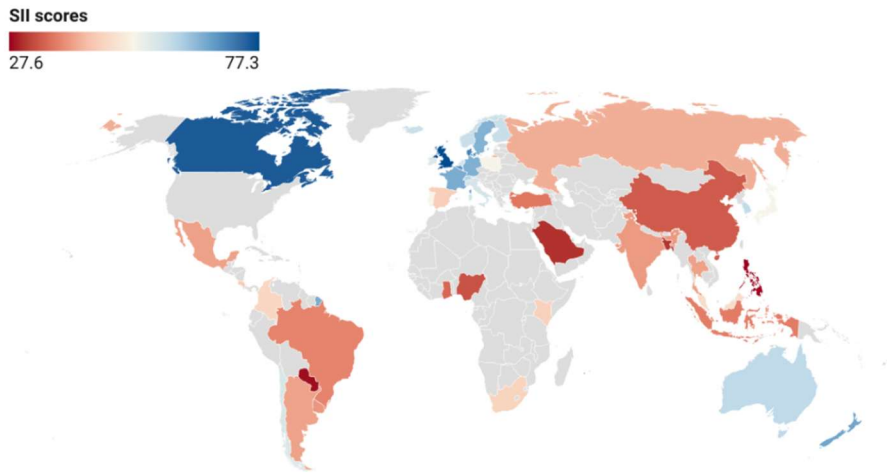
Figure 1: Social Innovation Index (SII) - Overall scores
Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2016

Comparing Europe and Africa reveals both convergences and divergences rooted in governance structures, cultural and socioeconomic contexts, and historical legacies (Riordan & Krüger, 2003; Petry et al., 2004; McSweeney et al., 2023; Tchimgungule et al., 2024). Understanding these similarities and differences is crucial for advancing inclusive sport policies, effective talent development, and equitable social outcomes. Table 1 summarizes similarities and differences in sport socialization between Europe and Africa.

Similarities in sport socialization between Europe and Africa include a shared emphasis on sport as a tool for social cohesion, identity formation, and community integration, as well as involvement of family and community institutions. Differences stem largely from governance structures and socioeconomic contexts. While both continents use sport as a means for social integration and identity construction, European models benefit from decentralized systems and structured policies, whereas African contexts are influenced by centralized governance, economic constraints, and colonial legacies. In Europe there is progression toward decentralized, multi-stakeholder governance enhances flexibility and grassroots integration.

Table 1: Sport Socialization in Europe and Africa

Dimension	Europe	Africa	Similarities	Differences
Governance Structures	Decentralized, multi-stakeholder, flexible, grassroots integration	Centralized, state-controlled, colonial legacies, elite focus	Sport as socialization tool; family/community involvement	Governance models; grassroots vs. elite focus; colonial impact
Cultural/ Socioeconomic Contexts	Identity, social cohesion, welfare policies, structured sport systems	National identity, economic empowerment, post-	Sport for social cohesion, identity, integration	Emphasis on economic empowerment, migration, colonial legacy

Dimension	Europe	Africa	Similarities	Differences
		colonial legacies, migration		
Family and Community Influence	Lifelong engagement, integration, clubs, immigrant support	Traditional structures, emotional/social support, economic constraints	Family/community as key agents	Structure, resources, historical/cultural practices
Methodological Challenges	Integrated, participatory, intersectional approaches emerging	Limited indigenous perspectives, colonial influence, need for decolonization	Need for robust, culturally sensitive comparative methodologies	Underrepresentation of indigenous perspectives

Source: Own compilation based on literature review

Welfare state frameworks and local authorities play significant roles, with voluntary sports clubs (VSCs) and community programs fostering broad participation (Ibsen et al., 2022). Decentralization supports grassroots sport, multi-level governance, and stakeholder involvement. In Africa centralized, state-controlled regimes dominate, especially in French-speaking countries, with sport managed through Ministries of Youth and Sports and National Olympic Committees. Colonial legacies persist, focusing on elite athlete development and limiting grassroots diversification (Du Plessis & Koen, 2024). Centralization prioritizes elite development, legalistic control, and administrative rigidity. Political interference, resource constraints, and gender disparities hinder grassroots participation and social inclusion (Burnett, 2023).

Sports socialization in Africa, particularly South Africa, functions as a dynamic tool for social innovation by improving social cohesion and facilitating community development through grassroots, bottom-up approaches that leverage sport for conflict resolution, empowerment, and addressing exclusion (gender, racial, disability). Sports can serve as a vehicle for reconciliation and social cohesion in South Africa, with initiatives at national, community, and individual levels potentially contributing to peace building and conflict resolution (Höglund & Sundberg, 2008).

One of the best examples of sport socialization programmes in Africa is the Mighty Metres programme, which is a school-based, incentive-driven sport-for-development initiative implemented in South Africa. It aims to promote regular physical exercise among primary school children in underserved communities. The programme has shown positive impacts in several areas including improved school attendance, fitness levels, social recognition, independence, and identification among participants. It involves giving medals and certificates to children for their achievements, which boosts their confidence and self-esteem and encourages parental and community support. Beyond physical benefits, the Mighty Metres programme fosters pro-social behavior, supporting better relationships with teachers and adults, and enriching children's personal lives beyond school hours (Burnett, 2014).

European approaches tend to emphasize individual skills and structured sport policies, whereas African contexts frequently intertwine sport with national identity (Burnett, 2021), economic empowerment, and migration dynamics. Addressing literature gaps and methodological challenges especially the underrepresentation of indigenous African perspectives and the need for participatory, intersectional research will be essential for advancing inclusive sport socialization policies and practices across both continents.

Conclusions

The study provides compelling evidence that sport socialization serves as a significant catalyst for social innovation, shaping both individual and collective capacities for addressing societal challenges. In Europe, strong policy frameworks and vibrant civil societies enable structured support for social innovation, while Africa's entrepreneurial vitality compensates for limitations in formal infrastructure through grassroots initiatives. Despite divergent governance structures, both continents demonstrate the potential of sport to foster social capital, enhance community integration, and drive innovative responses to complex social problems.

For policymakers and practitioners, fostering innovation capacity within sport organizations, promoting shared leadership, and leveraging community-based and digital interventions are essential strategies for maximizing the societal benefits of sport socialization. By advancing context-sensitive strategies and critical research, stakeholders can unlock the transformative potential of sport as a tool for social innovation across diverse settings, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and resilient societies.

Summary

This article investigates the complex relationship between sport socialization and social innovation, emphasizing the comparative context of Europe and Africa. Drawing on multidisciplinary literature and empirical studies, the research explores how the process of sport socialization can foster social innovation by building social capital, promoting inclusion, and facilitating community engagement.

The study identifies that sport socialization operates through multiple agents, including family, peers, coaches, organizations, and increasingly, digital platforms. These agents contribute to the development of individual and collective identities and shape the values and behavioral norms necessary for vibrant communities.

Key findings highlight both similarities and differences in the mechanisms and outcomes of sport socialization and social innovation between Europe and Africa. While both regions leverage sport for social cohesion and community development, European models are characterized by decentralized governance and structured policies, whereas African models often reflect centralized control and socio-economic constraints. Despite systemic obstacles, African countries display dynamic grassroots social innovation, demonstrating resilience and adaptability.

The article concludes that the synergy between sport socialization and social innovation can significantly contribute to addressing contemporary societal issues, particularly when tailored to local contexts and inclusive of marginalized groups. Future research should prioritize interdisciplinary, context-sensitive, and participatory approaches to better operationalize these linkages and enhance the societal impact of sport-driven social innovation.

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