Realizing the Right to Sport to Address the Socialization and Trauma Healing of Children in Refugee Camps (abstract)

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Research Panel: Humanitarian Concerns

Presenter: Konstantinos Koutsioumpas, University of Massachusetts, Boston

Title: Realizing the Right to Sport to Address the Socialization and Trauma Healing of Children in Refugee Camps

Abstract: The forced displacement of human beings around the globe as a result of natural and humane disasters has placed great social, political and economical pressure on the international system like never before. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)(2012), there are approximately 35.8 million people of concern to UNHCR, including refugees, internally displaced people, people affected by major natural disasters, stateless or asylum seekers, and people displaced in urban areas. Almost half of this forcibly displaced population is children (UNHCR, 2014).

Children, in particular, who are exposed to these catastrophic situations, experience adverse consequences on their physiological, behavioural and psychosocial stratum (Betancourt et al., 2012). In addition, these populations encounter challenges at community levels, including the breakdown of communities, increased risk of violence, increased risk of tension within the host communities and increased risk of familial separation (Machel, 1996).

Thus, considering the magnitude of forcibly displaced children in refugee and IDPs camps, as well as, the complexity of their challenges, this paper will examine the pragmatic use of sport as a strategy for healing traumatized refugee and displaced children in catastrophic situations like war and natural disaster. It will review the theoretical underpinnings and practical methods that explain the traumatic experiences of the children and utilize sport and recreation as potentially effective psychosocial interventions in healing the trauma of refugee children in the four systems of the bio-ecological model by Brofenbrenner and Ceci (1994): (1) ontogenic or biophysical system (2) microsystem, (3) exosystem, and (4) the macrostystem. Lastly, the capacity for designing, implementing and evaluating sports programs in that particular setting and with this population will be explored through two interdependent dimensions of sport and human rights: 1) Sport as a human right and 2) the use of sport to promote human rights.

Keywords: Sport and Recreation, Trauma, Human Rights, Refugees, Children

Biography: Konstantinos Koutsioumpas is a PhD student and graduate assistant in the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development at the University of Massachusetts Boston. He received his BSc from the Democritus University of Thrace, in Greece; MSc from Teesside University in UK and a Fellowship by the Indian Spinal Injuries Centre in India. His studies have an emphasis on the intersection of research, policy and practice to advance sport and human rights as means of transformative empowerment and social change.

References


