

Enhancing Sports Activism and Team Sports Advocacy among Team Sports Athletes in Henan, China



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ABSTRACT: This study examines the relationship between the level of sports activism and athletic advocacy among team sports athletes. The analysis focuses on various forms of activism, including symbolic, scholarly, grassroots, sport-based, and economic activism, and their correlation with advocacy efforts in areas such as fair play, social justice, and historical successes. The findings reveal that scholarly activism has a significant positive relationship with advocacy for fair play and social justice as well as engagement with historical successes in sports. Grassroots activism also shows a strong correlation with advocacy for fair play and social justice, highlighting the importance of community involvement in driving social change. However, no significant correlation is found between symbolic, sport-based, or economic activism and advocacy, suggesting that these forms of activism may not directly translate into concrete advocacy outcomes. The study concludes that athletes who engage intellectually and at the community level are more likely to advocate for social justice, while symbolic and economic actions, though impactful, may require further integration with broader advocacy strategies to achieve lasting change.

KEYWORDS: Sports Activism, Team Sports Advocacy, Team Sports Athletes, Henan, China

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, athletes often lead the battle for social justice and raise awareness of causes they care about. Using their exposure and influence, athletes have helped social causes. They have addressed issues that are relevant to a wide range of groups and have beyond the boundaries of their own sports. Despite the fact that sports activism and athletic advocacy have been well recorded on a global scale, there is still a significant gap in the literature about these concepts among athletes competing in team sports in the province of Henan in China. This uncharted territory presents an opportunity to get an understanding of the ways in which sports activism shows itself within specific cultural and geographical contexts.

The term "sports activism" refers to a phenomenon that is both dynamic and multidimensional, covering a variety of actions that are attempted to address social and political issues. In the case of Colin Kaepernick kneeling during the playing of the national anthem to protest racial inequality and police brutality is an example of a protest that incorporates symbolic gestures and protests to bring attention to injustices (Allen & Williams, 2021). This kind of work promotes public conversation, which then questions the present and increases knowledge about it. Sports activism also involves the use of advocacy and awareness campaigns whereby athletes use social media and other forums to change their opinions on significant issues. By expressing their personal experiences and supporting certain policies or activities for the public, sportsmen can inspire popular support and help to bring about real social change. Chagas and Fonseca (2020)

Closely allied to activism, athletic advocacy is the process by which athletes actively address a broad spectrum of social issues including racial justice, gender equity, disability rights, and athlete well-being (Mitchell et al., 2018; Ogiso et al., 2022; Bundon et al., 2015; Barnett & Hardin, 2011). Though it usually ties in with the ideas of justice and social fairness, advocacy might start from personal interests. Whatever the case, it is quite important in raising awareness of problems not sufficiently addressed inside the sports community. It also gives athletes a stage from which they may advocate for change and attempt to reform policies. Advocates for athletic opportunities can increase public awareness, exert pressure on governing bodies, and provide support to victims, all of which contribute to the resolution of key issues such as hazing, bullying, and gender inequity (Heil, 2019).

Thus, sports activism and athletic advocacy share a commitment to social change and a conviction in sports' potential to do so. Activism-focused athletes use their platforms to advocate for justice, showing how sports voices can shape society. Sports activism is growing more popular worldwide, although there is little research on it among team athletes in Henan, China.

This study intends to fill this gap by investigating the athletic advocacy and sports activism among these athletes, specifically focusing on their motives, techniques, and the repercussions of their actions. This research aims to expose the potential of sports in Henan to promote social change by examining their distinct approaches and problems. It seeks to better comprehend sports' transformative effect in this cultural and geographical context. This study is expected to be important for academics, players, sports

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organizations, and policymakers who want to use sports to improve society. This research amplifies Henan team sports athletes' voices to contribute to the global narrative of sports as a force for social good.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What is the assessment of the respondents on the level of sports activism among team sports athletes in terms of :
 - 2.1. Symbolic Activism;
 - 2.2. Scholarly Activism;
 - 2.3. Grassroots Activism;
 - 2.4. Sport-Based Activism
 - 2.5. Economic Activism?
2. What is the assessment of the athletic advocacy of team sports athletes in terms of:
 - 4.1. Fair Play and Social Justice;
 - 4.2. Historical Successes;
 - 4.3. Addressing Power Imbalances;
 - 4.4. Wide-Ranging Issues;
 - 4.5. Professional Role;
 - 4.6. Professional and Personal Dynamics?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the level of sports activism and the assessment of athletic advocacy of team sports athletes?

II. METHODOLOGY

This research investigated on the development of sports activism and the role of athletic advocacy within team sports athletes located in Henan, China. It employed a quantitative and comparative correlational design, focusing on the experiences and perspectives of 200 athletes from various educational institutions. A stratified sampling technique was employed to guarantee a representative sample, segmenting the larger population into specific subgroups according to sport type and grade level. The study involved a sample size of 132 athletes, utilizing a questionnaire that was segmented into three distinct sections. The first section evaluated the characteristics of the participants, whereas the second section examined the degree of sports activism present among the athletes. The average scale range utilized for evaluating sports activism fell between 3.51 and 4.00, while the range from 2.51 to 3.50 was also noted. The third section assessed the athletes' perceptions on sports advocacy, concentrating on topics such as social justice, fair play, historical accomplishments, power imbalances, and the interaction between personal and professional connections. To ensure the precision and consistency of the data collected, the validity and reliability of the instrument were continuously evaluated. The reliability index was .735, indicating that Henan's team sports athletes exhibit a notable level of advocacy and sports activism.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Athletes are visibly active in numerous styles of sports activism. Athletes also regularly participate in more low-intensity symbolic activism—where they wear symbols and make gestures that signal their support for social causes. Athletes are most engaged in scholarly activism, particularly on research and conversations related to social justice. Athletes are also getting involved at the grassroots level, participating in local campaigns and community programs. The level of activity is steady in sport-based activism, where athletes advocate for reforms within their sports to address social issues. Nevertheless, economic activism is the least exercised—in other words, athletes are less likely to deploy financial resources, e.g., donating or fundraising for advocacy work.
2. Athletic advocacy: athletes are most passionate about the importance of fair play and social justice as ideals that create fairness and ethics in sport. While athletes appreciate the impact of historical victories in advocating for a sport, their involvement with earlier movements is minimal. Athletes further contribute to tackling power imbalances by attempting to disrupt dynamics within their teams and organizations. There is advocacy for broader topics like mental health and athlete welfare, but not as much. Recognizing the role of advocacy and action Leaders & key players places their profession at the heart of advocacy efforts. Support player less willing to see that their role also has an importance in the fight Athletes, too, bring their lived and learned experiences to their activism, albeit with a varying amount of personal background by team role.
3. The results show that symbolic activism does not have a role in the advocacy of athletes in any thematic area (exemplary behavior and social justice, historical achievements, closing the gap between dominance groups and dominated ones, broad issues, professional position or professional-personal situation). Athletic Advocacy: Explanations of Scholarly Activism Positive correlations were found between scholarly activism and both dimensions of athletic advocacy – fair play ($r = .661, p < .001$) and social justice and historical successes. However, it does not have much in the way of significant relationships with other dimensions—such as addressing different power imbalances, systemic issues, professional role or professional and personal dynamics.

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The positive relationship between grassroots activism and fair play / social justice shows that athletes who engage in community sport-based activism are more likely to advocate for fairness and equity in sport. But grassroots activism is not strongly associated with other dimensions of advocacy such as addressing power relations or integrating historical insights into activist advocacy.

Neither of these orientations to sport-based activism have significant correlations with any of the athletic advocacy dimensions (and vice versa), indicating that athletes who focus on either reforming their sports or utilizing their athletic role for advocacy are not significantly different in their commitment to advocating for fair play, engaging with historical movements, or challenging structure and systemic issues in their sports.

Economic activism fails to correlate with any of the athletic advocacy dimensions, indicating that athletes' employment of financial capital bears no strong relationship to their perceived efficacy in advocacy across these different areas.

There is a negligible association between the overall level of sports activism, and that of general athletic advocacy, indicating that no single athlete's broad degree of activism heavily shapes their perception in what they advocate within sports more generally.

IV. CONCLUSION

While engaging in activism in all three cases, athletes are primarily symbolic activists or engaged in scholarly/grassroots activism for social justice/fair play/ethical sports through their media statements. Positive correlates of advocacy values include fairness and social justice, yet scholarly activism is less well associated with systemic power arrangements and politically rooted movements. While athletes engage with local community programs, grassroots activism also highlights the importance of equity in sport in ways that do not always translate into other areas of focus such as power relations. There is no significant correlation between the ideals of athletic advocacy and economic activism, which remains strikingly sparse. These results portray a more complex story of athletic activism where athletes themselves tailor their endeavors according to mitigated symbolic and educational activism instead of financial contributions or a systemic restructuring, underscoring that the areas where they understand or feel that physical activism may have the most impact are limited.

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