

# Sports in the State of Puntland-Somalia: Not Just Beyond a Physical Exercise

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## Abstract

Revealing the status of sports in State of Puntland-Somalia, this article presents a new information and insights, in which of its kind has not presented before that reflects the reality and can be generalized to rest of Somalia at all. The study employed qualitative analysis of the FGDs and a semi-structured KII, collection of documented materials and observations that were participated in 39 (30 by FGDs, 9 by interview) sports community aged 25-65 years. Generally, the respondents validated the hypothesis of the study: Sports in Puntland is no just beyond a physical exercise by providing more information about the kinds of sports, sports clubs, their management, capacities; professionalism; governance; financial situation and source of revenue, sports facilities and the legal frameworks that shape their functionalities administratively and politically and other key challenges sports club encounter. The study found that sports in Puntland is administratively and politically failure because sport activities are outright amateurism-oriented rather than professionalism. Moreover, sports science as a discipline is not taught as academic programmes nor as a physical education in schools or as subject mainstreamed in the school curriculum. The study also uncovered that sport in Puntland is suffering for lacking technical capacity in sports management and inadequate and insufficient financial support. It seems that the government has no interest in sports in general because there are no governing documents in place, for example, sports policy, sports act, strategic plan and fundraising strategy. The only sport facility available in Puntland is soccer field owned and administered by the state government ministry in charge of sports. The study also revealed the sports in Puntland is just for physical exercise, and the only game performed in tournament format is a football and it is played by male, and held once in a blue moon.

**Keywords:** Professionalism, amateurism, FC Sport Club, sports facilities, policy

## 1. Introduction

Obviously, the world we live in today is a field of entertainment and fun, sports clubs are the pillar that can contribute to the survival of such fun through sports (Ferguson, J. 2022). Sports is a fact of life. It makes individual, families, and communities grow strong and healthy in so many ways—physically, emotionally, socially, and economically. Sport has been attributed to enhancing people's lives and organizations. it reinforces physical body activity, supports human rights, and it is a tool for pursuing development goals in underprivileged communities (UNESCO, 2013). On the other hand, sports itself is an activity of contestation, competition, and clash of both human mind, body, and spirit not only among players but even among sports leaders, managers, coaches, and policy-implementers and policy-makers. (Marjoribanks & Farquharson, 2011). The sports mirrors and reflects the particular nation or society's values, character, spirit, and excellence. (Blanco, 2017). Sports, as a subject known as 'physical education', is taught in schools, higher education institutions and even sports academies. Since, physical education has a long and broad range of traditional forms that can be included in its educational process of socialization. Aiming to prepare a young member of society to enter the world of adulthood with the most developed potential ("hidden talents") so that they can contribute to society comprehensively (Bronikowski, 2010).

Somalia, as the other nations, resides with the spirit of sports. Somali people are naturally sportsmen due to their physical appearance— taller and thinner and of their association with the pastoral nomadism. Despite, Somalia urbanization project boomed after 1960s— the independence era, eventhough, the Somali people remained to be

connected with the countryside in terms of food supply – livestock is one of the main sources of Somalis staple food, and for child raising – beliefs that the child grown up in rural is stronger and healthier than the one in urban areas.

In Somalia, the first Somali football teams were established in the mid 1940's and mostly compete locally with not a lot of international exposure. (Topen, 2015). In the recent times, the Somali authorities embolden playing the football competition as every authority holds a tournament once in its tenure, entitled 'Interstate game' at national level and/or 'interregional game' at the Federal Member State level, whose players are mobilized in the time of match regardless age, fitness, qualification, and ethics. This custom made the football as the most popular game played in Somalia! And yet, Somalia never reached a position to be a qualified to the second round of the FIFA World Cup, rather to win for trophy. Somalia is a joined the Olympics in 1972 and competed in most summer Olympics since 1984. Nonetheless, they have never competed in any winter Olympics. (Macenzie, 2013).

Likewise, Puntland, as a federal member state, locates in the north-east of Somalia with a total area of 212,510 km<sup>2</sup> (roughly one-third of Somalia's geographical area), shares much with the Federal Republic of Somalia which instituted in 2012 (Majid et al., 2021). Despite, Puntland retains her own constitution. Puntland is an independent integral part of Somalia and aspires to restore and maintain the unity of Somalia on the basis of a Federal System. It was established in 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1998 through a social contract made by the local people after 7 years of civil war and chaos in Somalia. (FYDP – 3, 2020-2024).

Exploring the sports in Puntland, the study seeks to find insights that could contribute much insights to the sports literature since it's the first of its kind ever studied in Somalia, and in particularly Puntland. This study is also intended to analyze the issues around the sports in Puntland such as the establishment and maintenance of sport clubs, their capacities and governance, financial situation and source of revenue, professionalism; sports facilities; and the legal frameworks that shape their functionalities administratively and politically.

## 2. Methods

As the main methods for data collection approaches, there are numerous ways including list of interviews, focus groups, observations, collection of documented materials, collection of narrative, and open-ended questions in questionnaires (Hancock et al, 2007) and (Farquhar, 2012). Accordingly, the researcher employed a qualitative research method of key Interview Informants and Focus Groups Discussions in a semi-structured questions alongside with recording and notetaking for a proper analyzing. The study was participated in wide-range of sports community aged 25-65 years – of the 30 FGD respondents (only 5 were female while other 25 were male) from key sports stakeholders of Puntland associations of football, Basketball, Chess, Athletics as well as other key players, coaches, sports trainers and referees. Followed by 9 interviews with the sports leadership including the key staff of Ministry of Labor, Youth and Sports, Director General, Director of Sports, Head of Basketball; the sports associations and management of sports clubs.

Consequently, the researcher reviewed sport-related literature in English via journal hand searching, i.e articles, papers and national documents (Puntland Five-Years Development Plan, Ministry's Three-Years Strategic plan and the Executive Orders issued by the government). Besides, the researcher himself served as a senior youth and sports advisor to the Minister of Puntland's Ministry of Labour, Youth and Sports for six years funding by World Bank's Capacity Injection Programme for Somalia. And this helped him to generate relevant questions asking the responding as well as accessing government documents.

## 3. The Current Situation of Sports in in Puntland, Somalia

### 3.1 Sports Clubs Structure in Puntland

Sports clubs are generally considered to have a strong integrative power and play an important role in competitive sports. They organize other sporting activities for their members, both independently and in cooperation with partners, like, training camps, sports festivals, excursions, tournaments, and mass sports events. (Breuer, Feiler & Rossi, 2020). Old sport structures and customs grounded in amateur traditions have not kept pace with professionalization (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011).

The questions of interest then become, How Many Clubs in Puntland? Who owns the sports clubs? In response, the respondents stated that *“there are nine registered football clubs across the nine regions of Puntland, three Mudug, three of Nugal, two of Bari, one for Karkaar, of which considered amateur sports clubs, some has functional offices, although its rental! And four out of the nine registered football clubs are owned by the government, but privately administered a management team, for instance, Horseed FC is owned by Puntland Police Force and Garoowe City FC by Garoowe Municipality- the capital city of the State of Puntland in Nugal region, Bosaso FC is owned by Bosaso City- the commercial town of Puntland in Bari region, Qardho FC is owned by Qardho Town in Karkaar region whereby the other sports clubs are owned by businesspeople, for example and SCB FC in Nugal, Bari FC in Bari, Hombabaro FC, Somtel FC and COMSET FC in Mudug. Besides, most of these clubs, whether government-owned or private, have no*

*offices in their respective stations”.*

This interprets that Puntland sports culture is more or less amateurism oriented and managed by voluntary-based sports club. It has strong tie with Somalia whose sports management is more associated with the Socialism ideology, of which the Republic of Somalia adopted in 1970s. In the socialist countries, where professional sports do not exist, all sports clubs are amateur whose budgets are made up of trade union dues, rental payments for the use of sports facilities, and members' dues. The USSR had three types of sports clubs: those affiliated with trade unions, with the armed forces and with the Voluntary Society for cooperation with the Arms, Airforce, and Navy (DOSAAF). Voluntary sports sector is based on the values of amateurism and therefore it is crucial to understand motivational aspects of the workers in the sector (Tiusanen, 2016). It is extremely important to have motivation and willingness to do good job in order to achieve results. (Ruoranen et al. (2016).

Accordingly, the researcher then probed further, asking ‘What motivates the players, fame, paid, just an exercise?’ All the respondents pointed out that *“nothings motivate the players accept playing for fun and exercise”*. Justifying their argument, the respondents said, *“the remarkable sport activity in Puntland is only football game, (and played by men only), which is set in a periodical manner. For example, the inter-Regional Football Tournament is held once in every four years after fund is granted”*. Moreover, *“the players are not in contract with the football clubs, they only play for fun and do exercise because, they are not paid, watched on big screens to be known and become fame. In addition to, the respondents also stated that, “The players are not even selected on certain criteria for playing and/or transfer a player from a tam to other, rather than, chosen upon their acquaintance with some of the team or the coach of that team”*. Some respondents underlined that *“the coach has a power to take a unilateral decision because he is the manager, the coach, and sometime the trainer of the team”*.

### 3.2 Qualification and Training for Sportsmen

Professionalization is one of the central aspects of the development of the sports culture, as a process where amateur-based actions and operators are replaced by the hired experts or specialists with the focus on goal-orientation and systematic actions (Koski & Heikkala, 1998). Therefore, studying how could be produced a qualified player, teacher, coach? the researcher, in the KII and FGDs, raised these questions, what is the qualification of the board members of your sport club? Are they trained for their activities? Does the club have a coach, trainers? Is there female coaches and trainers? Do female coaches and trainers are more often qualified than their male colleagues?

The study revealed that sport qualification is neither in the menu of sportsmanship and nor Somalia authorities' government policy. Because, the clubs' board members are selected on friendship, who you know! even though, some clubs have coaches and trainers as a name, who are amateur and untrained. Although, the coach's ability to deliver has a significant relationship with the education level. Even though there is no absolute causal relationship between a coach's performance and educational level, integrating coaches' experience with education is essential for the success of the sports. (Habimana, & Tian, 2022). High quality coaching is one of the most important keys to success in sport. In all sports, it is important that every input be coordinated and controlled, there can only be one director and that person is the coach. (Ferguson, 2022).

Subsequently, the respondents also said that *“there is no a female coach or trainer because, there is no a club associated with female players, even the basketball which is considered as the second game in Puntland apart from the football, and the girls play once in a blue moon, with the sponsorship of the International NGO or UN Agencies whose aim is to crease some sort of awareness against gender-based violence through the game to reach out more spectators”*.

Furthermore, the researcher also noticed that *“at Puntland schools, there is a general focus on competitive sport rather than physical education and there is insufficient time dedicated to the PE subject”* (Puntland FYDP-3, 2020). To this aspect, it is clear that there is no a single school, college and/or university taught sports science and physical education (PE) or attached to the sportsmen as intern to learn the basic principle of sport management. So, the question is, what is physical education for sport?

In a simple answer, Physical education is an integral part of education and serves to ensure the all round development of the physical and moral qualities of schoolchildren, to prepare them for life, labor and defense of their country. More specifically, physical education should strengthen health, develop physical skills, the functional potential of the organism and motor skills, and inculcate moral qualities such as patriotism, internationalism, team-work, boldness, purposefulness, perseverance and self-assurance (Oxford Cambridge & RSA, 2021). Physical education (PE) allows some freedom to the pupils to facilitate reflection and behavior according to their own visions and expressional needs, solving problems on their own and autonomously through creating new games, or other forms of playful activities. It could also lead to the growth of self-esteem, self-autonomy and confidence in their own sport/health related abilities (Bronikowski, 2010).

The above description of PE highlights that nurturing child with sporting is essential, because it equips the players with both the hard skills for instance defense physical training and the fundamental social skills and/or interpersonal skills i.e., communication, leadership, conflict management, career development, moral principles. The other top-ten skills which are considered as most valuable in the future workplace work includes emotional intelligence, critical thinking, creativity, cognitive flexibility, negotiation, problem-solving skills, service orientation, people management and coordinating with others (Zahidi, 2023).

### 3.3 Sport Regulations

Sports mirrors and reflects the particular nation or society's values, character, spirit, and excellence. It is becoming more essential that sports are managed, governed and administered on the basis of the knowledge on the issues and challenges at hand. (Dennis, 2017). When talking about public sector in sport, it includes governmental actors from national to local level. These institutions are involved in developing and maintaining sport policies and the sport and physical culture itself (Smith, 2008). As sport has professionalized, this rather basic need for governance has blossomed into the full range of functions normally seen in the corporate and non-profit sector. (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011). In addition, the Puntland constitution of 2009 encourages the sports and recreational activities as article 36 (1) on 'Rights of Youth and Promotion of Sports' stipulates that "*Puntland State shall give special importance to the care and development of youth and sports*". The policy and legal framework for the sports subsector is anchored and aligned with Puntland State level development planning framework, Somalia National Development Planning frameworks on youth and sports, the continental aspirations under Agenda 2063 and the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Whereas, the Ministry's mandate is the establishment and management of stadia, recreational facilities as well as enhancement of cultural sports and events (Puntland FYDP-3, 2020).

Knowing the reality on the ground, the researcher enquired all the respondents, the same question 'Do you know any act or policy for sports in place? Most of the respondents said, "*No, there is no a single sport regulatory document, policy or act, approved by cabinet nor passed by legislatives of the Puntland State; some said, not known*". Nonetheless, they highlighted that "*the Ministry of Labor, Youth and Sports strives to formulate sports policy*". Although, the policies and acts enacted the State of Puntland are unilaterally formulated and implemented with no influence or harmonized of the Federal Republic of Somalia. Similarly, "*the Puntland sports associations seems that they do not aware the significance of those legal frame works, and most surprisedly, they perceive the sport is only for fun and physical exercise*".

Conversely, the respondents stated that, "*the sports clubs do not have functional body and governing documents, even a bylaw, to administer their internal affairs whereas the Puntland Sports Associations' constitutions are still a draft because the governing body of those associations – football association, basketball association, athletes association are nominated by the Ministry instead of being elected their leadership by the clubs, however, they closely work with the Somali Olympic Committee and other various sports governing bodies including the Somali Football Federation*". Respondents also perceived that the legal documents are impactful and as a source of guidance to the sports club to control their internal affairs, hold accountable to the government and sport governing bodies and find goals realized to be achieved, as well as their linkage to the public sector on national and local levels.

Subsequently, the researcher asked, if so, how it effects upon your club and sports activities? Most of the respondents said "*Very badly! Because, there is no football league levels in which the clubs contest amongst themselves in order to raise up to the next level and go down if failed, for example, Zero A, B and C levels are not arranged on the basis of criteria; the nine registered football clubs are automatically considered as Zero A in Puntland context, again, there are Zero A in the region as well. If a club loses several times, there is no other category to be demoted and if a FC club is outperformed in the inter-regional tournaments, no place to be promoted, because of there is no criterion for categorization due to lacking proper sport regulation*".

As the respondents' remarks, it concludes that the lacking sports regulations entails the government's uninterested in sports; and its one of the main reasons of lacking sports governance and the decline of sports in Puntland. Sports governance is an emerging paradigm which implies the act of governing sports through the participation of various multiple actors and stakeholders such as the government, business and industry leaders, academe, and civil society organizations in the formulation, legitimization, and implementation of sports programs, policies, and projects for sports excellence and development (Dennis, 2017).

### 3.4 Sports Facilities: Use of Public or Own Stadium

The state of Puntland consists of nine regions including Gardafu, Bari, Sanaag, Highland, Karkaar, Nugal, Sool, Ayn and Mudug, each has its own regional capital of which is the administrative city and accommodates most of the population of that region and other 43 districts as well. Only three cities have playfields that can accommodate not more than two-thousand spectators and was constructed in 1970s by the dethroned regime of Somalia, namely - Awale Stadium, with GPS of northing 6.4626 N and Easting of 47.2535 E at Israac Village, Galkaio, Mudug region; Mire

Aware Stadium with GPS of Northing 8.39637 and Easting of 48.47556 at 1 August Village, Gawowe, Nugal region and Bosaso Stadium of with GPS of northing 11.2814 and easting of 49.17598 at Laanta Hawada village, Bosaso, the costal commercial city, Bari region.

All of the three stadia were later on renovated and rehabilitated by the government of Puntland with the collaboration of the local people of those regions, enclosed fencing and surfaced synthetic turf. These stadia do not only serve footballing activities, but sometimes, they are used for presidential addresses, political rallies and Islamic Eid Festival praying.

The football-oriented players use state-government owned stadia because their clubs do not have their own stadia to do exercise, play friendship game, or exchange home and away game nor privately owned facilities in which the clubs could rent occasionally.

Besides, the local governments in State of Puntland do not even administer a single sports facility in their locality which means that sport activities are more centralized, yet the country, in principle, is federal with a decentralized political system. Besides, there is no a place called a playfield in all other six regions of Puntland except a plot of land neither fenced nor constructed with stones or bricks. Thus, the kids play football games in sandy and grubby place mimicked as a field with no a goal net at the outdoors of their houses owned by someone, or along the streets or even schools with a barefooted in their leisure time.

### 3.5 Sports as an Economic Factor for Puntland

Obviously, governments get interested and engaged in sports mainly because of its potential in creating positive economic, social, and political benefits. (Smith, 2008). Sport has been attributed to enhancing people's lives and organizations. Sport is a tool for pursuing development goals in underprivileged communities (UNESCO, 2013). Sport for Development (SFD) is the intentional use of sport to exert a positive influence on public health, the socialization of children, youths and adults, the social inclusion of the disadvantaged, the economic development of regions and states, and on fostering intercultural exchange and conflict resolution (Lyras & Peachey, 2011).

So, the question that comes to your mind: Do the Sports clubs could be considered as an economic factor or contributors to the economy development in the country? Elaborating on the question, firstly, the researcher asked, how is the financial situation of sports clubs in Puntland in order to scrutinizing more on their financial status. As some of the respondents said "*limited, others "very weak, most of them said "very low" because, "the clubs do not receive any support from the government, even the government-owned football clubs' players are given remuneration or incentives whatsoever"*". Consequently, "*None of the members paid membership fees"*". And then, the researched again asked a follow up question, what are the main sources of revenue for sports clubs? All most, all the respondents said, "*from the ticket charge of the tournaments and the reward given the winner"*" and only a few respondents mentioned that there is a contribution, both in-kind and cash from the owners and/or within from the players and their supporters in the times of an inter-regional or interstate football tournament is about to play.

Additionally, the respondents pointed out "*there is much variance in revenue and expenditure of the clubs! Every Football Clubs is always in a budget deficit, in terms of operations cost, particularly rental cost and other overheads"*". This implies that voluntary-based football clubs are not connected to the business sector in terms of sponsorship and advertisement agreements that can cover their day-to-day expenses. In conclusion, the sports activities in Puntland are paltry to contribute to the economy development in the country and burden to the state government as well. Therefore, it is necessary to undertake a dramatic change, shifting from amateurism to professionalization of sports clubs. According to Ruoranen et al. (2016), Dowling et al. (2014), and Koski & Heikkala (1998) (as cited in as Jarno Tiisanen, 2016) defined that "professionalization of a sports organization means that the sports organization moves towards more business-minded actions on the different levels of the organization".

### 3.6 Main Challenges for Sports Clubs in Puntland

Notably, Puntland FYDP-3 (2020-2024) indicates that "there are key challenges observed including, but not limited to, (1) lack of technical capacity in sports management; (2) Lack of affiliation to the international sports associations and organizations; (3) Limited financial support from both government and the development partners; and (4) Gender inequality in sports management where women are under-represented. Subsequently, most of the respondents also highlighted several key challenges such as (1) Inadequate fund for sports development; (2) Nonexistent of fixed for all sports facilities; or stadia for exercise; (3) No clear criterion for tournament management; (4) Unstructured sports clubs (5) No qualification for sports management team; (6) There is no female trainers, female coaches or even managers or member of committee management; (7) Irregularity of sports tournament; (8) Insufficient sports coaching and (9) lack of sports regulations and polices enacted by the government.

In regard to the aforementioned challenges, particularly those cited from the State-government Five-Years Development

Plan-3 depicts that the sports stakeholders, particularly the players, trainers, coaches, owners, sports associations and government seem that they have no interest in sports development because the government itself and sport clubs have no single document directing towards desirable change, and since the drafting of that FYDP-3 which is about to end in 2014 up to now, the challenges are still fresh and up-to-date. Successful organizational change is highly dependent on an organization's readiness (i.e., organizational culture, strategy or direction) and capacity to change (i.e., systems) (Oakland & Tanner, 2007). Understanding an organization's readiness for change is important for gaining stakeholder support, providing appropriate leadership and direction, and planning change programs (Oakland & Tanner, 2007).

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Sport is one of the main driven forces for career prospects for the youth, in terms of integration, skillfulness and famousness to contribute positively to the future development.

This study is the first of its kind conducted in Somalia and intended to shed a light on the current situation of Sports in Puntland, that can be generalized to the rest of Somalia since Puntland shares much with the Federal Republic of Somalia and other Federal Member States, though FGDs and KII with players, coaches, owners of clubs, sports associations and government leadership.

The findings indicates that Sports clubs in Puntland are in a worse situation both administratively and politically because sport activities are more amateurism-oriented, the schools or academia programmes for sports are nonexant. Besides, the only sport facility available in Puntland is soccer field, of a three main town and not fit-for-all, that owned and administered by the state government ministry in charge of sports.

The study also found that there is no budgetary allocation for sport development nor fundraising strategy and governing documents that could assist in resource mobilization.

In conclusion, the study discovered that the only game played in a form of tournament is football, but lacking publicity spirit or media outlets dedicated to publicizing sports broadcasts.

Based on the findings, the study recommends that the Ministry in charge of sports should be developed sports regulations such policies, acts, SoPs, guidelines through holistic and participatory approach as well as introducing sports for development programme.

The Sports Associations in Puntland in collaboration is required to advocate, spur and push the youthful society to the formation of sports organizations and clubs with a unique brand, rules, principles, colors, membership card and independent from a particular clan, ideology or party symbol.

Puntland Professional Sports Leagues should be established that extends from school-based competitions to clubs that can participate in the international sporting events. Additionally, due to the increasing free and leisure time, introducing the other sports such as, beach soccer, swimming, surfing, yachting, wrestling, gymnastics, golf, handball, chess and shooting that could help Puntland's sport scene recover. Because, Puntland has the longest coastline in Somalia where the two seas: the red sea and Indian ocean meets; and two of the largest valleys: Nugal Valley and Dharor valley. This establishes the fact that sport is structured on an industrial basis and contributes to the production and upkeep of sporting and recreational facilities.

In a nutshell, sport is an instrument that brings all different ideologies into one industry, I.e entertainment scene by means of integration and having a common goal. It also equips the young sportsmen with skills, professional ethics: loyalty, obedience, fair play and discipline.

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No additional data are available.

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