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Research Article

The Role of Sports in Islamic Festivals and Its Relevance to Pluralistic Society: An Analysis from the Prophet Muhammed's Tradition

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Abstract. The celebration of Islamic festivals, primarily Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, traditionally encompasses spiritual practices and communal activities, including sports that foster unity among Muslims and others. However, in contemporary times, the role of sports within these celebrations has diminished, leading to a disconnect from the holistic nature of these festivities as practised during the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) time. This paper explores the historical significance of sports in Islamic festivals, drawing upon the Prophet's (PBUH) traditions that emphasise physical activities as

an integral part of celebratory events. In contrast, other religious traditions, such as the celebration of Buddha's birthday in Sri Lanka, maintain sports as a central feature of their festival celebrations, often involving diverse communities, including Muslims. This paper argues that reintroducing sports into Islamic festival celebrations can serve as a vital platform for intercultural and interfaith exchanges, enhancing mutual understanding in pluralistic societies. By analysing the potential of sports to bridge communities, this study highlights how such integration can contribute to a more inclusive and harmonious social fabric, aligning with the broader goals of interreligious engagement and cooperation.

Keywords: Sports, Islamic Festivals, Pluralistic Society, Bridging communities, Prophetic Tradition

INTRODUCTION

Sports have long played a significant role in human society, transcending cultural and religious boundaries. (Islam et al., 2019) In the context of Islamic festivals, sports and physical activities hold a distinctive place, reflecting broader social, cultural, and religious values (Abdul Muhsin Bin Najr A'atibi, 2023). The traditions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) offer a rich tapestry of references to sports, showcasing their importance as physical endeavours and communal and spiritual activities (Lone, 2017). This paper aims to explore the role of sports in Islamic festivals and its relevance to multicultural contexts, focusing on the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Islamic festivals, such as Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, are celebrated with activities that boost the relationship with God and strengthen community bonds and enhance spiritual well-being (Munshi, 2022). Within these celebrations, sports and physical activities are often integrated, serving as a means of fostering unity, joy, and physical health. The Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) traditions, recorded in various hadith collections, provide numerous examples of his engagement in and encouragement of sports (Lone, 2017). These traditions highlight the holistic approach of Islam towards physical fitness, emphasizing the balance between spiritual and physical well-being. Similarly, the relevance of sports in Islamic festivals extends beyond historical practices and offers valuable insights for contemporary multicultural societies. As Muslim communities grow and integrate into diverse cultural contexts, the role of sports in religious celebrations becomes a bridge between different cultural practices and values. This intersection of sports, religion, and culture provides an opportunity to promote inclusivity, mutual respect, and understanding among diverse populations (Ryba et al., 2024).

The primary sources for this study are hadith collections and the Seerah (biography) of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which document various instances of his involvement in sports. These sources reveal that sports were not merely recreational activities but were imbued with significant cultural and religious meanings. For instance, the Prophet (PBUH) encouraged archery, horseback riding,

and swimming, viewing these activities as essential for physical health and preparedness (Sahal, 2017). Furthermore, the communal aspect of sports, where individuals come together in a spirit of camaraderie and fair play, aligns with the Islamic principles of brotherhood and community. In addition to primary sources, a review of existing scholarly literature provides a comprehensive understanding of sports' historical and contemporary roles in Islam. This literature encompasses various aspects, from the theological underpinnings of physical activities to their practical applications in different cultural contexts. By examining these sources, this study aims to present a nuanced perspective on the integration of sports into Islamic festivals and their broader societal implications.

This study employs qualitative research to explore the role of sports in Islamic festivals and its relevance to Multicultural contexts through Prophet Muhammad's traditions. Utilizing primary and secondary sources, including al-Quran and hadith collections journal articles and other sources, and a comprehensive literature review, the study conducts a thematic analysis of scriptures and a content analysis of literature and case studies. Limitations include reliance on hadith collections and potential cultural variability. This methodology aims to provide an intense understanding grounded in prophetic traditions and contemporary practices.

While this study focuses on the role of sports in Islamic festivals from the perspective of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) traditions, it also acknowledges the limitations inherent in this approach. The reliance on hadith collections and Seerah literature means that not all references to sports may be captured, and there may be variability in sports practices across different cultural and geographical contexts. Despite these limitations, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the significance of sports in Islamic festivals and their relevance to multicultural societies hence it is believed that sports is an ideal platform for communication between different religious traditions in multi-cultural settings.

The role of sports in Islamic festivals, as reflected in the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), offers a rich field of study that bridges historical practices and contemporary multicultural contexts. By exploring this intersection, this paper seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of sports' cultural and religious significance in Islam, promoting greater appreciation and integration of these practices in diverse societies. Consequently, this study makes the case that restoring sports to Islamic festivals can act as a crucial forum for interfaith and intercultural dialogue, improving understanding among people in pluralistic societies. Through an analysis of sports' capacity to unite people, this study demonstrates how this kind of integration can support a more harmonious and inclusive social fabric, which is consistent with the more general objectives of interreligious cooperation and involvement.

Literature review:

Sports participation during Islamic festivals in the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) held significant importance, reflecting a deep integration of physical activity into religious and social life. Islamic teachings advocate for maintaining health and physical strength, and the Prophet actively participated in various games and sports (Rahim et al., 2019). He not only engaged in activities such as horse riding, archery, and wrestling but also encouraged his companions to partake in these activities as part of a balanced and healthy lifestyle (Kizar, 2018). This endorsement is supported by numerous Hadiths that emphasize the benefits of physical exercise for both spiritual and physical well-being.

The Qur'an and Hadith support physical activities, including swimming, shooting, and wrestling. These activities are highlighted as beneficial for maintaining a healthy body and enhancing physical capabilities (Maroof Rasikh, 2021). This guidance is deeply rooted in the Islamic principles of preserving health and ensuring physical fitness, which are seen as essential for fulfilling one's religious and worldly responsibilities.

In contemporary contexts, Muslim societies continue to invest significantly in sports, underscoring their cultural and national identities (Taylor et al., 2023). This investment is reflected in the participation of Muslim athletes in major international multi-sport events, such as the Commonwealth and Olympic Games, where they represent their countries and showcase their talents on a global stage. This participation not only highlights the continued importance of sports in Muslim societies but also demonstrates how modern sports practices are intertwined with cultural and national pride.

Furthermore, Understanding Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah in sports is crucial for practising Muslims. It addresses barriers they face, emphasizing the need for scholarly and specialist discussions to enhance Muslim sports participation (Ahmad et al., 2023). Addressing these barriers is crucial for promoting inclusive participation and ensuring that the benefits of sports are accessible to all members of the Muslim community.

Overall, the role of sports in Islamic festivals and in the broader context of Muslim societies is multifaceted, encompassing religious, cultural, and social dimensions. While Islamic teachings and historical practices highlight the significance of physical activities, contemporary challenges continue to shape how sports are practised and valued in Muslim communities.

Festival and Sports in Prophetic Tradition

Islamic festivals, particularly Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, are of immense significance within the Muslim tradition, as they follow two of the most important rituals in Islam: fasting during the month of Ramadan and the pilgrimage of Hajj. These festivals carry a profound spiritual dimension, reflecting the culmination of

significant acts of worship. However, the significance of these days extends beyond spirituality; they also serve as an occasion for social and individual well-being (Šalaby,1986). In the prophetic tradition, festivals are constructed to foster strong communal bonds, promote brotherhood, and cultivate various positive social virtues. They are not only moments of reflection and worship but also opportunities for the Muslim community to express happiness and joy collectively (Āl-‘bbāsi, 2023). Islam guides how to express this joy in ways that benefit both the individual and the community. Among the recommended practices are sharing greetings, wearing new clothes, reciting *Takbeer* and *Tahleel*, visiting relatives and friends, exchanging gifts, and singing songs (‘Alibi, 2023). These activities serve to strengthen social ties and bring the community together in a spirit of celebration.

Participating in sports is a noteworthy manner that which the Prophet (PBUH) expressed satisfaction during Islamic festivals. This aspect is deeply rooted in the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions. A well-known narration by Anas ibn Malik highlights the introduction of Islamic festivals in Medina. When the Prophet (PBUH) arrived in Medina, he observed that the people had two days on which they engaged in games, a practice from their pre-Islamic past. Upon inquiry, the Prophet (PBUH) stated, "God has substituted for them something better than them, the day of sacrifice and the day of the breaking of the fast" (Sunan Abi Dawud,1134). This statement not only established the new Islamic festivals but also recognized the role of permissible recreational activities as part of the celebration. Nevertheless, this narration elaborates on the Prophet's acknowledgement of these games as permissible indicating that such activities are an accepted form of enjoyment during Islamic festivals, provided they remain within the boundaries of Islamic teachings (Al-Saffaq, 2024). This perspective underscores the Prophet's (PBUH) balanced approach to integrating spiritual devotion with permissible forms of worldly pleasure, particularly in the context of communal celebrations. Further evidence of the role of sporting activities during Islamic festivals can be found in other narrations from the time of the Prophet (PBUH). For instance, Sahih Bukhari records a narration from Aisha (RA).

"Allah's Messenger (PBUH) came to my house while two girls were singing beside me the songs of Buath (a story about the war between the two tribes of the Ansar, the Khazraj and the Aus, before Islam). The Prophet (PBUH) lay down and turned his face to the other side. Then Abu Bakr came and spoke to me harshly saying, "Musical instruments of Satan near the Prophet (PBUH)?" Allah's Messenger (PBUH) turned his face towards him and said, "Leave them." When Abu Bakr became inattentive, I signalled to those girls to go out and they left. It was the day of `Id, and the Black people were playing with shields and spears; so either I requested the Prophet (p.b.u.h) or he asked me whether I would like to see the display. I replied in the

affirmative. Then the Prophet (PBUH) made me stand behind him and my cheek was touching his cheek, and he was saying, "Carry on! O Bani Arfida," till I got tired. The Prophet (PBUH) asked me, "Are you satisfied (Is that sufficient for you)?" I replied in the affirmative and he told me to leave" (Sahih al-Bukhari 949, 950).

A similar narration in Sunan an-Nasa'i describes how the Prophet (PBUH) invited Aisha to watch a performance by the Abyssinians on Eid, further emphasizing the permissibility and encouragement of such activities as a form of joy and entertainment during Islamic festivals (Sunan an-Nasa'i 1556). The two Eids—Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha—are moments of joy that follow the completion of significant religious obligations. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) permitted expressions of happiness in culturally familiar ways, such as martial displays by the Abyssinians. These activities were not only considered acceptable but also encouraged as a form of celebrating the festivals, as they did not conflict with Islamic principles (Sālim,2024).

The importance of these activities is further reinforced by another narration involving Umar ibn al-Khattab (RA). It is reported by Abu Huraira (RA) that when Umar attempted to stop the Ethiopians from playing in the mosque on Eid, the Prophet (PBUH) intervened, saying, "Let them be there, O Umar, for they are Banu Arfidah" (Sahih al-Bukhari 987, 988.). This intervention highlights the inclusive and accommodating nature of Islamic teachings, recognizing the value of cultural expressions of joy within the context of religious observance.

In addition to these hadiths, historical accounts also reflect the role of sporting and entertainment activities during Islamic festivals. During Eid al-Fitr, people entertained themselves by singing and playing various games, including the famous Sudanese game involving shields and spears. Furthermore, the people of Yathrib (Medina) were particularly fond of music and singing, and on Eid days, they would engage in such activities in the mosque, with the Prophet (PBUH) not prohibiting them from doing so (Ali, 2024). Therefore, clearly, sporting and recreational activities during Islamic festivals are deeply embedded in the Prophet's (PBUH) tradition. These activities are not merely cultural expressions but are endorsed by the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). They serve as a means of expressing joy, enhancing social bonds, and promoting the overall well-being of individuals and communities. By allowing and encouraging such activities, Islam provides a holistic approach to celebrating its festivals, one that integrates spiritual devotion with permissible worldly enjoyment, thus enriching the lives of its followers.

Role of Sports in Islam

Islam places significant emphasis on the holistic well-being of individuals, encompassing both spiritual and physical health. The Qur'an and Hadith provide comprehensive guidance on maintaining good health, which includes cultivating beneficial habits such as balanced eating and avoiding harmful practices (Saeed et al., 2023). Islam recognises the importance of preserving the body as a trust from God, which is evident in the numerous teachings that stress moderation, cleanliness, and the mindful treatment of one's body (Yousefi-asl et al., 2024). The traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also reinforce this, underscoring that physical health is an essential aspect of a Muslim's life, intertwined with spiritual duties and overall well-being.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) actively promoted physical activities and participated in various sports, illustrating the importance of physical fitness. His involvement in sports like horse riding, camel riding, running races, and walking is well-documented in numerous Hadiths. These activities were a means of personal fitness and served as communal practices that bonded the Muslim community. The Prophet's engagement in archery, javelin throwing, and wrestling further highlights the significance of these activities in the Islamic tradition (Al-Bukhti, 2012). The well-known wrestling match between the Prophet and Rukana is a notable example, demonstrating the Prophet's encouragement of physical strength and skill (Ayoob, 2022). Additionally, the Prophet's approval of weightlifting and swimming underscores the wide range of physical activities that were deemed beneficial and encouraged within the Islamic framework.

Sports in Islam, therefore, are viewed not merely as recreational activities but as integral components of a healthy lifestyle that contribute to both physical wellness and the expression of joy. Engaging in sports during festivals and on regular days was encouraged by the Prophet as a way to celebrate life, promote physical fitness, and strengthen community ties. These activities reflect Islam's broader perspective on the balanced development of the individual, where physical activities serve both practical and spiritual purposes. By participating in sports, Muslims can uphold the Prophetic tradition of valuing physical health while also experiencing the joy and camaraderie that these activities bring.

Sporting Activities on Festival Days after Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Period

After the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), his companions upheld the importance of sporting activities, particularly on festival days. Caliph Omar emphasized the value of physical training by instructing his governors in Sham to teach archery, swimming, and horsemanship to the people (Al-bayhqi, 2000). Companions like Usaid ibn Hudhair and Sa'ad ibn Ubada were masters in these sports, reflecting the ongoing commitment to physical excellence in the Muslim community (Al-Athir, n.d.). This tradition extended into various regions and eras, with

Muslim rulers and their subjects engaging in diverse sports during festivals. In Medieval Cordoba, for instance, both the Sultans and the people actively participated in sports such as horse racing, polo, fencing, and archery, making these activities integral to both festival celebrations and daily life (Funes-Pérez et al., 2016).

The tradition of organizing sporting events on festival days continued through different Islamic dynasties. In Mamluk Egypt, the Sultan would arrange various sporting events during Eid and other festive occasions, maintaining a culture of physical prowess and communal entertainment (Ahamed, 2022). One of the most notable games during Eid was "Qabq Shooting," a highly skilled archery practice popularized by Sultan Nur al-Din Zangi. This game involved shooting arrows through a wooden circle atop a tall pole, serving as both entertainment and military training (Rayyan, 2021). These activities, along with children's games like playing with walnuts, became cherished aspects of Eid celebrations, illustrating how the Muslim community valued physical activity and communal joy, rooted in the traditions established during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

DISCUSSION

Sports in Islamic Festivals: Bridging Cultures in Pluralistic Societies

A pluralistic society is one where people of diverse religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds coexist, often sharing common public spaces and civic life (Wirman, 2017). In such a society, the interactions between different groups can either lead to harmonious relationships or, if not managed well, to misunderstandings and conflicts. Islam, as a universal religion, guides how to navigate these relationships with wisdom and mutual respect. Respecting the "otherness of others" is crucial in maintaining harmony and preventing discord in pluralistic settings (Wirman, 2017). The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasize inclusivity, respect for diversity, and the importance of social cohesion. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) created a society without racism and racial superiority, welcoming racial and ethnic diversity and engaging in linguistic and cultural interactions (Hasan 2021). These values are particularly relevant in today's globalized world, where Muslims live in diverse communities alongside people of various faiths and cultural backgrounds

Sporting activities have long played a significant role in fostering unity and understanding within pluralistic societies, particularly during Islamic festivals. It is said that Spectator sports can act as a unifying mechanism for national unity by acting as an entry point, promoter, educator, symbol, initiator of conversations, and initiator of dialogues in multiracial societies (Weng Marc Lim, 2019) These events offer a unique opportunity to bring together people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, promoting social cohesion and mutual respect. The Islamic tradition, rooted in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), emphasizes the importance of physical well-being and communal harmony, which are often

reflected in the sporting activities associated with Islamic festivals (Khan et al., 2020). In a multicultural society, these activities not only celebrate religious and cultural identity but also serve as a bridge between different communities, fostering a spirit of inclusivity and shared joy. Through the lens of Islamic festivals, the role of sports in promoting social integration and peaceful coexistence becomes evident, highlighting the relevance of these practices in contemporary pluralistic societies.

Eid Celebrations as a Model of Pluralistic Engagement

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) set a precedent for how Muslims should interact with people of other faiths. Prophet (PBUH) welcomed people of various backgrounds into his community and treated them with dignity and fairness (Dogan, 2015). This attitude extended to all aspects of life, including social and recreational activities.

Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, the two major Islamic festivals, are not only times for worship but also communal gathering and celebrations. For example, a community could organize an Eid fair that includes sports competitions, in which people of different faiths can participate. Such events could be structured to include traditional Muslim games, alongside more widely recognized sports, creating an environment where everyone feels included. The shared experience of playing and competing in a friendly atmosphere can help to reduce prejudice and foster a sense of community. Moreover, it provides an opportunity for non-Muslims to learn about Islamic customs and values in a non-threatening, enjoyable setting.

The Hadith in which the Prophet (PBUH) allowed Abyssinian men to perform their traditional spear play in the mosque on Eid is a profound example of how Islamic festivals can include cultural expressions that are not exclusive to Muslims (Sahih Muslim 892). The Prophet (PBUH) demonstrated that Islamic holidays can be accepting of various cultural customs as long as they don't conflict with Islamic teachings by allowing such displays. The recognition and admiration of diverse cultural manifestations can greatly improve social harmony, which makes inclusion essential in a heterogeneous society.

1. The Sports of the Abyssinians and Ethiopians: Embracing diverse cultural practices

One of the most notable examples of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) promoting diverse cultural practices through sports is the event where he allowed Aisha (RA) to watch the Abyssinians perform their sports in the mosque during Eid.

'A'isha reported that Abu Bakr came to her and there were with her two girls on Adha days who were singing and beating the tambourine, and the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) had wrapped himself with his mantle. Abu Bakr scolded them. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) uncovered (his face) and said: Abu Bakr, leave them

alone for these are the days of 'Id. And 'A'isha said: I recapitulate to my mind the fact that once the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) screened me with his mantle and I saw the sports of the Abyssinians, and I was only a girl, and so you can well imagine how a girl of tender age is fond of watching the sport (Sahih Muslim, 892).

This hadith highlights the Prophet's encouragement of cultural diversity and inclusivity. By allowing the Abyssinians to perform their traditional sports in the mosque, the Prophet (PBUH) demonstrated respect and appreciation for different cultures. This event also provided an opportunity for the Muslim community to engage with and learn about the traditions of another culture, promoting mutual respect and understanding.

An additional account involving Umar ibn al-Khattab (RA) reinforces the importance of these undertakings. The Prophet (PBUH) reportedly stepped in to prevent Umar from stopping the Ethiopians from playing in the mosque on Eid, saying, "Let them be there, O Umar, for they are Banu Arfidah." Abu Huraira (RA) narrated this (Sahih al-Bukhari 987, 988). This intervention recognizes the relevance of cultural manifestations of joy within the framework of religious practice, highlighting the open and tolerant nature of Islamic teachings.

2. Encouragement of Archery and Horse Riding

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) encouraged physical activities such as archery and horse riding, which were common sports in various cultures.

It was narrated from 'Uqbah bin 'Amir Al-Juhani that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Allah will admit three people to Paradise by virtue of one arrow: The one who makes it, seeking reward by making it well; the one who shoots it; and the one who hands it to him." And the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "Shoot and ride, and if you shoot that is dearer to me than if you ride. All things that a Muslim man does for entertainment are in vain except for shooting arrows, training his horse and playing with his wife, for these are things that bring reward" (Sunan Ibn Majah 2811)

This hadith emphasizes the importance of physical activities and sports in Islam. By encouraging archery and horse riding, the Prophet (PBUH) promoted skills that were valued across different cultures. These activities not only served as a means of physical fitness but also provided opportunities for cultural exchange and interaction.

3. Sports as a Universal Language

Sports have long been recognized as a universal language that transcends cultural, linguistic, and religious barriers. Whether it's a game of soccer in a park, a marathon in a city, or traditional games during religious festivals, sports provide a common ground where people can interact on equal footing. Some studies inspect sports performance as a tool of living together inside any community despite variations in their sects, castes, cultures, religions and races (Muhammad et al., 2018). This universality of sports makes it an ideal medium for fostering social cohesion in a pluralistic society.

When Muslim festivals incorporate sports and recreational activities, they create opportunities for Muslims and non-Muslims to engage in shared experiences. These activities allow participants to bond over common interests, thereby breaking down stereotypes and fostering mutual understanding. For instance, organizing an Eid sports event that invites participation from all community members, regardless of faith, can serve as a powerful tool for building bridges between different groups.

The examples from the Prophetic tradition demonstrate how sports and physical activities were used to promote multiculturalism and inclusivity. By encouraging and participating in sports from different cultures, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) set a precedent for fostering mutual respect, understanding, and harmony in a diverse society. These examples serve as valuable lessons for contemporary Muslim communities in promoting interfaith engagement and social cohesion through sports and communal activities.

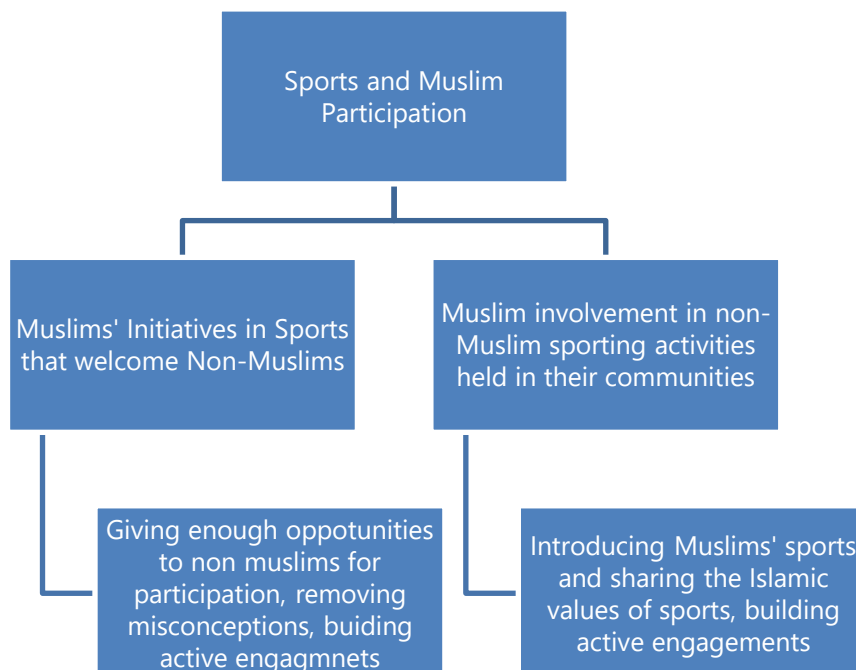
4. A Bridge Between Communities

In a pluralistic society, where different religious and cultural groups often live side by side, there can sometimes be a sense of separation or even tension. Sports and recreational activities during Muslim festivals can act as a bridge between these communities. Cultural awareness and multicultural training initiatives in sports organizations can improve practice and policy for fostering interfaith and intercultural understanding (Ahmad et al., 2020). By inviting non-Muslims to participate in or witness these activities, Muslims can demonstrate the inclusive and universal aspects of their faith. For example, in Malaysia, sports serve as a unifying platform that fosters multiculturalism by bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds and providing them with a common ground to celebrate their differences and shared love for athletic activities (Ramalingam et al., 2011). Furthermore, such interactions can serve to counteract negative stereotypes and misconceptions about Islam. When non-Muslims see Muslims engaging in joyful, communal activities, it challenges the often one-dimensional portrayal of Muslims in the media.

Muslims' Initiatives in Sports that welcome non-Muslims

Organizing sports activities that include both Muslim and non-Muslim participants is a powerful way to build unity. Interfaith sporting events in Muslim festivals are promising. These events allow participants to engage in friendly competition while sharing cultural and religious values, creating an environment of understanding and coexistence. Inclusivity is a key element in these gatherings, as it ensures that everyone, regardless of their faith, feels welcomed and respected. To maintain this inclusivity while respecting Islamic principles, sports activities can be designed to align with Sharia-compliant guidelines, such as ensuring modesty in attire and avoiding practices that conflict with Islamic teachings, like gambling. Introducing alternative sports that adhere to these principles can make the events more accessible to all participants. Alongside the sporting events, educational initiatives can be implemented to raise awareness about the role of sports in Islam, drawing from the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that encourage physical activity and emphasize its benefits for both body and soul. These initiatives can also highlight the health benefits and the community-building aspects of sports, demonstrating how Islamic values support physical well-being and social harmony. By creating such inclusive and educational sporting events, Muslims can not only uphold their religious values but also contribute to a more interconnected and harmonious pluralistic society. The following figure 1 explains the Muslims' participation in sports activities.

Figure 1



Muslim involvement in non-Muslim sporting activities held in their communities

Muslim participation in non-Muslim festival sporting activities represents an important aspect of interfaith engagement and cultural exchange in a Pluralistic Society as explained in Figure 1. Islam encourages Muslims to engage with the broader society, and participating in sports during non-Muslim festivals can be a meaningful way to strengthen community ties and demonstrate the universal values of sportsmanship, discipline, and respect. The involvement of Muslims in these events can help dispel misconceptions and build bridges between different religious communities. It is essential, however, that such participation remains within the ethical guidelines set by Islam, ensuring that activities do not conflict with Islamic teachings. Moreover, these occasions present an opportunity for Muslims to introduce Islamic sports traditions to a wider audience, showcasing how Islamic values can coexist with and even enhance the experience of sports. By engaging in this manner, Muslims can contribute to the promotion of a pluralistic society where diversity is celebrated, and mutual respect is cultivated.

The significance and impact of both Muslims' Initiative on Sports in Festivals and Muslim participation in non-Muslim sporting events held in their communities are underscored in Tables 1 and 2.

Table: 1. Muslims' Initiative on Sports in Festivals

Initiatives/Activities	Description	Relevance to Pluralistic Society	Potential Outcomes
Sports Events during Eid Festivals	Organizing traditional games (e.g., archery, horse riding, wrestling) as part of Eid celebrations	Promotes interreligious communication by inviting non-Muslims to participate, observe, and engage.	Enhances mutual understanding, breaks barriers, and fosters interreligious friendships.
Interfaith Sports Tournaments	Hosting tournaments involving teams from different religious backgrounds during Islamic festivals.	Provides a platform for interreligious engagement and cooperation in a friendly competitive environment.	Promotes peaceful coexistence, teamwork, and respect for diversity.
Community Fitness Programs	Launching community fitness and wellness programs during Ramadan and Eid, including activities like walking clubs, meditation, and exercises.	Encourages participation from non-Muslims, promoting a shared interest in health and wellness.	Builds community bonds and encourages a healthy, active lifestyle among all participants.

Educational Workshops on Sportsmanship in Islam	Organizing workshops that teach Islamic perspectives on sportsmanship, fair play, and ethics.	Non-Muslim participants learn about Islamic values and the emphasis on ethical conduct in sports.	Increases awareness and appreciation of Islamic teachings on ethics, fostering respect and reducing misconceptions.
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Table: 2. Muslims' Participation in Non-Muslims' Sporting Activities

Participation And Engagement	Description	Relevance to Pluralistic Society	Potential Outcomes
Joining Non-Muslim Organized Sporting Events	Muslims actively participate in sports events organized during non-Muslim festivals (e.g., Christmas, Diwali).	Demonstrates solidarity and openness, while providing an opportunity to introduce Islamic perspectives on sports and ethics.	Builds bridges between communities, fostering interfaith understanding and cooperation.
Interfaith Dialogue during Sporting Events	Engaging in discussions about the ethical and moral dimensions of sports during non-Muslim festivals.	Offers a platform for sharing Islamic teachings on sportsmanship and moral conduct in a pluralistic setting.	Encourages mutual respect and learning, reducing prejudice and fostering a sense of shared values
Islamic Sports Demonstrations	Demonstrating traditional Islamic sports or ethical practices in sports at non-Muslim events (e.g., archery, ethics in competition).	Educates non-Muslims on the values Islam places on physical activity, fair play, and health.	Introduces Islamic culture in a positive light, enhancing cross-cultural understanding
Hosting Joint Sports Events	Muslims and non-Muslims collaborate to organize sports events during both communities' festivals.	Encourages dialogue and cooperation, leading to shared experiences and mutual respect.	Strengthens interfaith relationships and promotes a culture of inclusion and mutual respect.

Challenges and Opportunities

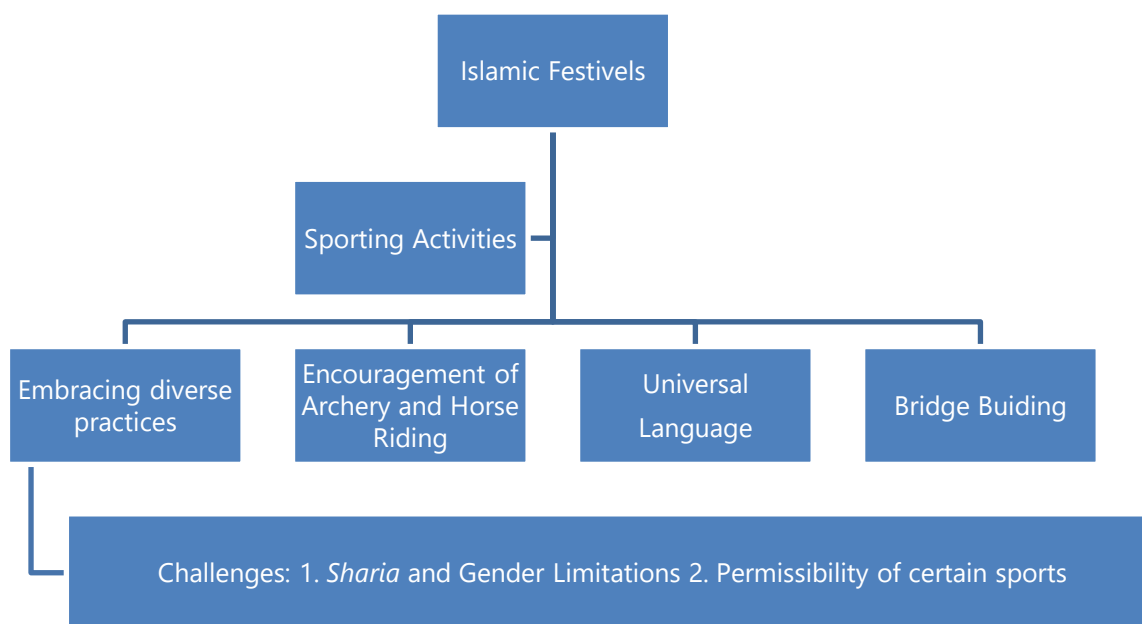
While the inclusion of sports in Muslim festivals presents many opportunities for fostering social cohesion in a pluralistic society, it is not without challenges. One potential challenge is ensuring that these activities remain within the boundaries of Islamic teachings. For instance, the segregation of genders during certain activities may be necessary in some contexts, which could be misunderstood by non-Muslims.

Organizers need to communicate clearly about these practices, explaining that they are rooted in Islamic values and not intended to exclude or alienate others.

Another challenge is the potential for cultural misinterpretation. In a pluralistic society, there may be varying levels of understanding about what constitutes acceptable recreational activities in Islam. For example, while some sports may be universally accepted, others might raise concerns among more conservative segments of the Muslim community. Balancing the need for inclusivity with the preservation of Islamic identity requires careful consideration and planning.

However, these challenges also present opportunities for education and dialogue. By engaging in open conversations about the role of sports in Muslim festivals, Muslims can educate others about their faith and practices, fostering greater understanding and reducing misconceptions. This dialogue can also help Muslims to learn from others, enriching their own cultural practices in the process. The figure - 2 illustrates the role of sports activities in Islamic festivals, as well as the potential benefits and challenges associated with their implementation.

Figure 2



CONCLUSION

The reintroduction of sports into Islamic festival celebrations offers a promising avenue for fostering intercultural and interreligious engagement in pluralistic societies. By drawing on the rich traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), where sports were once an integral part of festivities, Muslim communities today can revive these practices to build bridges with others, promoting a spirit of unity and understanding. Practical suggestions include organizing community

sports events during Eid celebrations, inviting participation from diverse religious and cultural groups, and incorporating programs that emphasize the historical and religious significance of sports in Islam. However, it is crucial to approach this integration with sensitivity to Islamic principles. Potential negative consequences, such as the risk of assimilation, inappropriate gender mixing, and sports activities that may not align with Sharia boundaries, must be carefully considered. Activities should be designed to respect Islamic values, ensuring that sports events maintain modesty and are inclusive, without compromising religious guidelines.

Future research could explore the historical context of sports in Islamic traditions across diverse cultures, as well as investigate the psychological and social impacts of such integration on community cohesion. Additionally, it could examine case studies where sports have successfully enhanced interreligious interactions without violating Sharia boundaries. Comparative studies between Islamic and other religious festivals that incorporate sports could offer further insights into how these practices can be adapted and optimized for modern, multicultural settings while maintaining adherence to Islamic teachings.

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