

Heroic Actions by Sports Personalities, Clubs and Associations in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This chapter focuses on the philanthropic, educational and socially responsible responses to the COVID-19 pandemic by sports personalities and sporting bodies in the African context. The chapter contributes to knowledge by showing that sports personalities and sporting bodies have an obligation to help communities in times of pandemics such as COVID-19 and other forms of disasters. It is from these communities that fans and spectators come. These fans and spectators have legitimate expectations on their favourite players and athletes, their teams or clubs and the associations to which these teams and clubs affiliate to do heroic actions in times of need. These heroic actions can take the form of messages of encouragement, material donations from personal resources, fundraising, the mobilisation of other resources and behaving in a socially responsible way so as to model expected behaviour such as hand washing, physical distancing and respecting lockdown rules. Fans and spectators see sports personalities as celebrities and role models. This places an obligation on celebrities to return the favour. Some fans support their favourite sports personalities and their clubs even when they experience poor performance as it happens even to the best sports teams or clubs. Through narrative review of both news media and scholarly literature, the chapter identifies and describes philanthropic, educational and responsible behaviours by sports personalities, sport clubs and sport associations in the African context. Scholarly literature suggests reasons for heroic actions during disasters, while news media demonstrate the types of these heroic actions. Celebrities use news media to show fans their heroic actions, and sports journalists are willing to report these heroic actions as there are no live sports to report.

Keywords: coronavirus, celebrity, constant comparison analysis, food security, health ambassador, health system, lockdown, narrative review, protective gear for health workers

1 Introduction

Most African countries introduced lockdown which involves strict regulations in order to delay the spread of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). Lockdown refers to a non-pharmaceutical intervention which involves the implementation of physical distancing by prohibiting public gatherings; closing schools, universities and churches; and preventing people working in non-essential services from going to work (Neil, Ferguson, Laydon & Nedjati-Gilani 2020). Physical distancing, as part of lockdown, means keeping a space of between one and two metres between people who are not sharing a living space, or are not from the same household to prevent the spread of the virus. Health experts admit that the spread of the virus cannot be prevented but can be delayed. This will help countries to prepare their health systems in order to manage the novel 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and minimise the damage that it can cause to people. Piryani, Piryani, Piryani, Shakya and Huq (2020) argue that lockdown is implemented to flatten the curve by containing the virus from spreading to other parts of a country and in the meantime, get the health system ready to test, prevent and treat people. Flattening the curve is a public health strategy implemented to slow down the spread of the virus during a pandemic to ensure that the health system is able to cope with the demand of its services.

The WHO (2020) advised sporting bodies to continually assess risks of infection when organising events, to identify mitigation activities and to make informed evidence-based decisions about continuing with the events. As risks increased, almost all sporting bodies suspended their activities. Sports, like other social activities, was subsequently affected; and players, athletes, coaches and club officials had to be released to their families. As players, athletes, coaches and other officials stay away from sports activities, they witness suffering amongst their people and therefore feel obliged to give money, food and time according to their means. Fans and spectators are affected by the absence of live sports while also feeling the suffering induced by lockdown. They then develop expectations that their sports idols and heroes

will help them as most sports personalities and clubs have resources. Besides lockdown, countries should implement infection control and preventive measures such as robust testing, isolating and treating those who tested positive as well as tracing and quarantining their contacts (Piryani *et al.* 2020). Some African players, athletes, coaches and club officials also lent their helping hands in these activities.

This chapter discusses obligations that players, athletes, coaches and club officials have to assist communities that suffer as a result of COVID-19 pandemic. The chapter starts with a short discussion of the research method used. This is followed by theories that explain the obligation to give as well as the type of donations made. Giving is described in terms of issues that the donations support such as food and nutrition security as well as the health system. A discussion on sports personalities as role models is also presented by showing some of them role modelling expected behaviours necessary to prevent and control COVID-19.

2 Method

This chapter used scholarly literature and news media as sources of information. In modern times, people are repeatedly exposed to news media through various channels such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines and the internet. Rowbotham, Astell-Burt, Barakat and Hawe (2020) posit that this repeated exposure has potential to influence people to adopt behaviours that contribute to the prevention of diseases. Many people have access to news media anytime and anywhere due to the increasing availability of digital technologies. They use these technologies to access media platforms and blogs, and to share content across social networks. The Media Monitoring Africa indicates a dramatic increase in news reporting of COVID-19 and lockdown since the first positive case was confirmed in South Africa in March 2020 (Danyile 2020). By reviewing both scholarly and news media, the study identifies and describes philanthropic, educational and responsible behaviours by sports personalities, sport clubs and sport associations in Africa. Scholarly literature suggests reasons for heroic actions during disasters while news media in the form of online newspapers and websites show the types of these heroic actions. When reviewing literature, a researcher searches databases, retrieves information and synthesises findings into themes (Green, Johnson & Adams 2006). This chapter used narrative review of literature as research design.

Narrative review is a literature review design in which a researcher identifies themes from literature on a specific subject. It enables a description of selected studies on a specific topic. Researchers use narrative review to identify few studies that describe a problem of interest and read them to extract themes. The narrative review method was selected because it allows for the consolidation of existing literature on heroic actions by sports personalities, clubs and associations in order to have a general idea of the topic. In this chapter, the steps described below were followed as guided by Demir, Oliver and Washington (2019), Green, Johnson and Adams (2006), Record-Lemon and Buchanan (2017), University of Texas Arlington (2020) and Springer (2020).

- Formulate a title of the chapter: *‘Heroic actions by sports personalities, clubs and associations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic’* was selected as the relevant title of this chapter. Springer (2020) asserts that authors should formulate titles that are concise but accurately describe the contents of a manuscript and make people want to read the whole manuscript beyond the title and abstract. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, heroic actions are continuing, and others are not reported in the media. This chapter discusses only those that were reported in the media at the time of data collection.
- Identify keywords: Keywords relevant to the topic are important to locate literature, and can be identified through literature, brainstorming or mind maps.
- Database search: These keywords were searched on Google and Google Scholar. The author created a search string which is a combination of keywords, truncation symbols and Boolean operators. Boolean operators are connector words while truncation symbols are asterisk (*), a question mark (?) and others. Combinations used included ‘athletes and role modelling’, ‘hero and obligation’, ‘giving and religion’, ‘ubuntu and suffering’ as well as ‘sports and disaster’.
- Reference list search. The reference lists of articles obtained from database search were scanned for cited articles that were relevant to the topic. Relevant articles were then obtained from Google and Google Scholar databases.

The constant comparison analysis method was used to analyse information extracted from literature review. The author developed codes by doing open coding on the first few sources and then used those codes on the rest of the sources (Leech & Onwuegbuzie 2008; Onwuegbuzie, Leech and Collins 2012). The themes became headings and subheadings which are described below as reasons for and types of heroic actions.

Narrative reviews are weak as they are neither systematic nor follow a specified protocol. As Demir, Olivier and Washington (2019) argue, narrative reviews are guided by a topic of interest with neither predetermined research question nor specified search strategy. Green *et al.* (2006) and Ferrari (2015) posit that narrative reviews may have researcher biases as they are a synthesis of previously published information subjectively chosen by a researcher. Another weakness is that narrative reviews do not yield a comprehensive understanding of the problem, but only a general idea. Demir, Olivier and Washington (2019) are of the view that researchers are divided about critiquing studies reviewed, and suggest that a narrative review should critique all studies included. Others suggest that critiquing studies is not a requirement of narrative reviews.

As celebrities, sports personalities use news media to show fans their heroic actions. At the same time, sports journalists are willing to report these heroic actions as there are no live sports to report during a lockdown.

3 Reasons for Heroic Actions during Disasters

Sports personalities and sporting bodies are obliged to help communities in times of pandemics like COVID-19 and other forms of disaster. It is from these communities that fans and spectators come. These fans and spectators have legitimate expectations of their favourite players and athletes, their teams or clubs and the associations to which these teams and clubs affiliate to do heroic actions in times of need. They see sports personalities as celebrities and role models. This puts obligations on sports personalities to return the favour. Some fans support their favourite sports personalities and their clubs even when they experience poor performance as it usually happens to the best sports teams or clubs. The need to help can be explained in terms of theory of obligation, ubuntu, religion and the motivational theory of role modelling as discussed below.

3.1 Theory of Obligation

The theory of obligations is described by Van Arsdale and Nockerts (2008) as an assumption that people have a moral obligation to help those in need. There is an obligation to those with resources to give to those in need. A moral obligation implies that people with resources have to accept the burden that they have to carry, which motivates caring and compassionate responses to those in need. A compassionate response to needs is stimulated by selfless awareness and appreciation of the suffering of others and a desire to relieve the suffering. Van Arsdale and Nockerts (2008) further argue that the obligation to give to those in need devolves onto individuals. As a result, some will give while others may not, although all are aware of the suffering or needs of others.

3.2 Ubuntu

Ubuntu is a way of living for people in almost all African countries. People call ubuntu differently according to the language of their country, but its meaning is the same (Jowah 2015; Ibnouf 2020). Some call it unhu, hunhu, obuntu, botho, vumunhu or ubunthu in their languages, but the word commonly used in many writings is ubuntu. Ubuntu encourages collective interests over individual interests as it assumes that a person exists in relation to others in the community. In communities with ubuntu, people see themselves as having an obligation or a duty to support each other for the wellbeing of the whole community. Ubuntu guides people to see other people's lives as valuable as their own (Ibnouf 2020). It makes it possible for those with resources to give those in need. This giving becomes more important during a disaster.

3.3 Religion

Africa is a big continent with different religious practices. According to Wikipedia (2020), the three main religions are Christianity, Islam and African Traditional religion. Of course, there are many other minor religions to choose from. The words 'main' and 'minor' are used in this chapter to refer to the number of followers and not to the importance of each religion. Religions such as Islam, Sikhism, Judaism, Christianity and Buddhism influence people's

way of life and how they live with others in the community (Hegarty 2020). According to Einolf (2011), religion teaches people about the shared humanity of all people and therefore the need to help each other. Religious people are inspired by Jesus Christ's teachings, his life of helping the needy and for sacrificing his life on the cross for all people. Those who have material resources are aware that they have obligations to care for all members of the community and to share with those in need. Religion inspires Africans to be aware of the needs of their fellow community members and to willingly give in order to meet the identified needs (Agbiji & Swart 2015; Beyers 2017). As Einolf (2011) would argue, religion makes people kind and caring. This motivates people to help those in need. Furthermore, religion makes people feel that they have a duty to serve God. Giving the needy is one of the ways of fulfilling this duty. People who give expect that salvation and divine reward will follow as a consequence. Others feel that God inspires them to give willingly; they see themselves as under his control or under his divine command (Beyers 2017).

3.4 The Motivational Theory of Role Modelling

Role models are people who motivate others to take right decisions in life. Morgenroth, Ryan and Peters (2015) contend that role models are people that others look up to and base their own characters, values and aspirations. Furthermore, role models are sources of social influence and inspirations as they can make a particular behaviour desirable. Human beings need heroes or idols who are ideals to provide direction of how people should conduct themselves (Biskup & Pfister 1999). People model their behaviours by emulating the conducts of popular people or those that are associated with victory. Sports personalities such as players and athletes are idols admired by people because sports shows instances of phenomenal achievements and commitment resulting in victories and successes for players, athletes or their teams and clubs. In public health, sports celebrities have been used as ambassadors to support public health issues by encouraging testing campaigns and living ideal lives as the messenger is as important as the message they deliver (Delate, Bessenaar, Hajiyanis, Myers, Maxwell & Ndlovu 2011). Various sports personalities such as Teko Modise, Graeme Smith, John Smit, Anthony Johnson, Ryan Giggs and Matthew Booth were used by Brothers for Life as health ambassadors to motivate people to use HIV prevention, counselling and testing servi-

ces. Brothers for Life is a national HIV/AIDS campaign that primarily targets men over the age of thirty in South Africa. The campaign uses sports ambassadors to reach secondary audiences of younger men and women.

Some sports personalities are celebrities. Celebrities such as athletes and players are famous and highly noticeable people in society with social capital resulting from media visibility and recognisability. People wish to be like celebrities that they admire. Celebrities activate people's natural tendency to make decisions based on how the former act in similar situations. Celebrities have influence on people's knowledge, attitudes and behaviours regarding health issues as they are conditioned to react positively to celebrity advice. Such advice on public health issues has the ability to change how they perceive health information and how the media reports on a particular health condition with which a celebrity was recently diagnosed (Hoffman, Mansoor, Natt, Sritharan, Belluz, Caulfield, Freedhoff, Lavis & Sharma 2017).

4 Types of Heroic Actions

The world governing body for athletics, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), advised its member associations to suspend events. All sporting bodies such as the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Global Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF) followed suit. The international governing body of football (FIFA) recommended the suspension of organised soccer for member associations as this is a contact sport. FIFA also committed itself to use soccer to fight COVID-19 pandemic, and encouraged member associations, clubs and players to also get involved (FIFA 2020). The message filtered down through federations to clubs and players. The football governing body in Africa, the Confederation of African Football (CAF), issued a statement to all member associations to suspend football activities until the COVID-19 pandemic is under control (Dove & Ndumo 2020). As a result, the South African Football Association (SAFA) took a decision to suspend all football activities in the country until government allowed and made a recommendation to the Professional Soccer League (PSL) to postpone all matches (Baleka 2020). The PSL complied with SAFA recommendations and informed all clubs to respect the decision (Kelly-Klate 2020). Ultimately, all football activities were suspended throughout the continent.

Heroic actions can take the form of messages of encouragement, material donation from personal resources, fundraising and the mobilisation of other resources. Furthermore, behaving in a socially responsible way such as hand washing, physical distancing and respecting lockdown rules as a way of modelling expected behaviour is a heroic action.

4.1 Modelling of Expected Behaviour

According to Hall (2020), the spread of COVID-19 can be prevented by following certain behaviours. These include frequent and proper washing of hands with soap and water; covering of mouth with a flexed elbow when coughing or sneezing; avoiding close contact with people suspected or already infected with the coronavirus; using a liquid containing 70% alcohol to clean or sanitise cell phone screens at least twice a day; and avoiding touching our faces with unwashed hands as the mouth, nose, eyes and ears are routes for viruses into the body when fingers touch surfaces that may contain viruses. People can sanitise hands if washing them with soap and water is not convenient. Other important behaviours are to go for testing and treatment if a person does not feel well or if he or she has been in contact with a person who has tested positive for coronavirus, and the wearing of face masks when leaving homes to go to public spaces. Adopting these behaviours is generally referred to as ‘the new normal’ as people have to learn new behaviours to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Expected behaviour refers to these infection prevention practices and respecting lockdown rules.

Some soccer coaches, players and officials shared their videos of handwashing, and encouraged other people to wash their hands regularly as a behaviour to prevent the transmission of coronavirus. These include award winning South African soccer coach, Pitso Mosimane; a league official, Nande Becker; and players such as Reyaad Pieterse and Peter Leeuwenburgh (Ditlhobolo 2020). Other soccer players such as Khama Billiat from Zimbabwe, Samuel Eto’o from Cameroon and Ben Motshwari from South Africa showed respect for lockdown regulations and encouraged people to do the same (Mphahlele 2020). Khama Billiat is popular in South Africa, and in Zimbabwe where he plays for the national team. He is currently playing for Kaizer Chiefs in South Africa and played for other popular clubs as well. Samuel Eto’o is a retired player who played for many teams outside Africa and for the Cameroon national team, the Indomitable Lions. During his

playing days, Samuel Eto'o was referred to as one of the best strikers in the world and the greatest African player of all time.

Many players and athletes who donated food parcels and medical supplies also participated in the distribution and handing over of these food parcels and medical supplies to various organisations and communities. While doing so, they took photos and shared them on social media platforms. Most are seen wearing face masks as a way to model expected behaviour. Besides making donations, others also posted or sent messages of encouragement to people to take COVID-19 pandemic seriously and to follow preventive measures.

4.2 Food and Nutrition Security

The concept 'food and nutrition security' refers to a situation where all people have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to satisfy hunger, their food preferences and health needs. Hwalla, El Labban and Bahn (2016) argue that in a food and nutrition secure environment, access to food should be guaranteed even during a disaster. Having access to nutritious food is an important public health concern as nutrients strengthen the immune system to fight infections and repair body tissues damaged by diseases. Nutritious food is needed as it leads to a stronger immune system, lower risk of developing comorbidities and of getting infectious diseases, including COVID-19 (Galanakis 2020; Matsungu & Chopera 2020).

In South Africa, many households access food by buying from shops (Drysdale, Moshabela & Bob 2019). This is possible for people with income, and therefore are able to afford a daily meal. Most economies in Africa are largely informal, with many people living from hand-to-mouth. As such, lockdown affects their capacity to earn an income. The lockdown restrictions introduced in almost all African countries to control COVID-19 pandemic threatens food security because people cannot earn income, and children can no longer access nutritious food provided by school feeding schemes (Mukiibi 2020; United Nations 2020). Lockdown threatens food security as it restricts movements, disrupts food supply and limits access to nutritious food for people in Zimbabwe (Matsungu & Chopera 2020; Dzobo, Chitungo & Dzina-marira 2020). It also leads to an increase in food prices which reduces access to preferred and nutritious food for low income households. This is true for all African countries that implemented the lockdown. Matsungu and Chopera

(2020) claim that as there is currently no cure for COVID-19, nutritious food can be regarded as medicine as it strengthens the immune system and repairs damaged body organs.

The Comrades Marathon Association (CMA) and the South African Cricket Association (SACA) donated money to a non-government organisation (NGO) for distribution to beneficiaries. The CMA has been made popular for hosting the annual Comrades Marathon in South Africa. It is hailed as the world's largest and oldest ultramarathon race, attracting many local and international runners. Lawrence Cheronu, a long-distance runner from Kenya, donated food parcels to the needy in his community (Mulkeen & Ramsak 2020). Besides the donation that they made through SACA, popular cricket players such as Faf du Plessis, Vernon Philander and Temba Bavuma donated their time and resources to needy people in their communities. Temba Bavuma donated and distributed food parcels through his foundation (Mkhize 2020). Faf du Plessis, the former captain of the South African national cricket team (the Proteas), partnered with Siya Kolisi, captain of the national rugby team in South Africa (the Springboks), and their families, to donate and distribute food parcels in various communities (Nkanjeni 2020). Protea cricket star, Vernon Philander, partnered with other famous people to donate and distribute food parcels amongst the needy (Karrim 2020). Baroka Football Club, which gained popularity after defeating Orlando Pirates in a cup final, also donated and distributed food parcels. The Stormers rugby club also donated food parcels, where players personally donated and the club partnered with a food retailer to distribute among needy people throughout South Africa. Another former Springbok captain, Jean de Villiers, also made a donation to an NGO. Adrian van Westenbrugge, a popular adventure swimmer, and cyclist, Gavin Brophy, raised funds and donated it to an NGO. George Matthys Beukes, a famous mountain biker, also raised funds and donated it to an NGO (Ephraim 2020; Silo 2020).

Many South African soccer players such as Aubrey Modiba, Grant Kekana and Ronwen Williams of Supersport United Football Club teamed up with Ramahlwe Mphahlele of Kaizer Chiefs Football Club to donate and distribute food parcels to communities on their own or through their foundations (Ntsoelengoe 2020). These players are popular amongst South Africans as they play for award-winning clubs and represented the country at under-23 and national senior levels. Gift Motupa, who played for Orlando Pirates Football Club and Baroka Football Club, also represented the country

at under-23 and national senior levels. He followed suit by donating and distributing food parcels amongst the needy in his community.

African soccer players playing outside their countries of birth donated to their home countries (ESPN Cable Company 2020; Hambly 2020). These include Sadio Mane from Senegal, Didier Drogba from Ivory Coast, Willard Katsande from Zimbabwe, Mohamed Salah from Egypt and John Obi Mikel from Nigeria. Sadio Mane is very popular as he won many awards while playing for top clubs in England and the Senegal national team, The Lions of Teranga. Didier Drogba is a retired player and former captain of the Ivory Coast national team, The Elephants. His numerous achievements include being chosen the African Footballer of the Year in 2006 and 2009, footballer of the year and player of the year, and has earned the title of all-time top scorer in his country. Willard Katsande is popular in both South Africa and Zimbabwe as he plays for Kaizer Chiefs and the Zimbabwe national team, The Warriors. Mohamed Salah is popular as he plays for the Egyptian national team, The Pharaohs, and a top international club outside his country. John Obi Mikel is a former captain of the Nigerian national team, The Super Eagles. He won several awards while playing for various clubs outside the African continent.

4.3 Supporting the Health System

According to Chee, Pielemeier, Lion and Connor (2013), supporting the health system means making inputs to improve the functioning of one or more of the building blocks of the health system such as upgrading health facilities, purchasing medical equipment and distributing protective equipment to promote and protect health. This is different from strengthening the health system, which refers to wide-ranging changes to policies, regulations and relationships between the building blocks of the health system to allow effective and efficient use of resources to improve health services. A functioning health system is made of six building blocks which work together to ensure that citizens have access to acceptable, affordable and quality health services. The six building blocks are delivery of health services; health workers; health information; medicine, vaccines and health equipment; health financing as well as management, leadership and governance (Malakoane, Heunis, Chikobvu, Kigozi & Kruger 2020). Due to weakened health systems, many African countries are unable to meet the health needs of their citizens. The

health system in many African countries is described as fragile due to continuing struggles to contain existing public health challenges and diseases such as Ebola, cholera, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and malaria. Many African countries rely on donor funding to supplement their public health budgets and remain with underfunded health systems. The challenge during this COVID-19 pandemic is that countries that normally donate funds to African countries are currently struggling to control COVID-19 in their own backyards (Dzinamarira, Dzobo & Chitungo 2020).

Governments have constitutional responsibilities to provide quality health services to all citizens, but they cannot achieve this alone without the involvement of individuals and companies as well as international donors. Health systems of most countries in Africa are weak and do not function adequately. COVID-19 pandemic requires well-functioned health systems. This provides further impetus for the need to donate resources to support health systems.

Sports personalities and federations donate resources to support some of the building blocks of the health system. Sports personalities, clubs and associations donated protective gear for health workers, commonly referred to as personal protective equipment (PPE) and specific health materials. Others donated funds for health facilities to decide how to use them. Through his foundation, Siya Kolisi partnered with another NGO, while two football clubs, Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates formed a partnership with a sports media company, MultiChoice, to make donations of face and surgical masks, gloves, protective overalls, surgical wipes and shoe covers for health workers (Ndubane 2020). Kaizer Chiefs Football Club, known to its supporters as Amakhosi or the Phefeni Glamour Boys, is a popular South African club. It has won many awards in South Africa and is known all over the continent and beyond. Orlando Pirates Football Club is another popular club in South Africa which also won many awards. It won the CAF Confederation Cup and recruits players and coaches from all over the African continent. MultiChoice is a sports broadcast company and owner of SuperSport United Football Club. Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates are called Soweto Giants as they both come from Soweto. When they play against each other, they fill the biggest stadium in Africa due to their popularity. Many other people watch them on MultiChoice channels all over the continent and beyond (Sports24 2013).

Although they are playing in other countries, Danny Welbeck, Israel Adesanya, Bismack Biyombo, Didier Drogba and Wilfried Zaha made

donations of funds, PPE and other health materials to health facilities in their countries of birth. Didier Drogba made his foundation's hospital available to the government of his country to use for coronavirus testing (Taiwo 2020a). Danny Welbeck of Ghana, who plays football outside his country, donated hand sanitisers and PPE to health workers in his country (Taiwo 2020b). A popular basketball player, Bismack Biyombo of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but who plays outside his country, donated face masks and hazmat suits to health workers. Israel Adesanya, a professional mixed martial artist from Nigeria, but who plays outside his country, also donated face masks and eye protection face shields to health workers in his country. Wilfried Zaha, who plays soccer outside his home country of Ivory Coast, donated clothing and soap to facilities in his country (Taiwo 2020c).

5 Discussion

The novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) is a microorganism that infects people, who in turn develop a disease known as novel 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The virus spread easily when people are close to each other in places of work, education institutions, shopping malls and social gatherings such as weddings, funerals, religious gatherings and sporting events. A lockdown is implemented as a way to minimise contact between people by restricting movement except for few people who are doing services classified as essential. The lockdown gave sports personalities opportunities to take a break from their busy schedule, and to look deeply at realities in their communities and their countries in general. Most were touched by what they saw, and therefore decided to take action, which was motivated by ubuntu, religion and obligation resulting from their status as idols. They donated food and medical supplies; they modelled expected behaviours and encouraged members of their communities to respect lockdown rules. As Manik (2017) shows, supporting the needy with food is a demonstration of ubuntu. It is important to support health systems by donating funds and PPE for health workers. There is a need to protect workers who provide healthcare to COVID-19 patients because there is a shortage of PPE in most African countries. It is, therefore, important for those with resources to donate so that health workers can work without stress of being infected with the coronavirus. There have been cases of health workers being infected with coronavirus and others dying from COVID-19 (Chersich & Gray *et al.* 2020). This has created panic; hence

health workers are increasingly refusing to work if they are not provided with sufficient PPE. The partnership between Kaizer Chiefs, Orlando Pirates and MultiChoice is understandable, given their relationship in which the two popular clubs are given international broadcast when they play against each other. Some players and athletes formed partnerships with existing structures to ensure that donations are coordinated and reach the intended beneficiaries. As Van Arsdale and Nockerts (2008) point out, multiple aid organisations respond to a disaster at the same time. This raises concerns about the need to have the aid coordinated. As a result, players and athletes made their donations using existing structures rather than directly to the people in need.

6 Conclusion

Africa is rich with religious people who love their communities and who do not hesitate to offer help where it is needed. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the spirit of ubuntu is alive as sport personalities, clubs and associations donated food parcels, funds and materials to strengthen health systems. Due to poverty and weak health systems in many African countries, the suffering brought by the COVID-19 pandemic is huge, but sports personalities are also doing their part to relieve the suffering. They work alone or in partnerships with other structures to ensure that donations are coordinated and reach the intended beneficiaries. Sports personalities as celebrities and role models use their power and platform to influence people to adopt behaviours that are meant to prevent and control COVID-19 pandemic.

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