World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews
eISSN: 2581-9615 CODEN (USA): WJARAI
Cross Ref DOI: 10.30574/wjarr
Journal homepage: https://wjarr.com/

(RESEARCH ARTICLE)

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SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF FOOTBALL FANS IN SENEGAL

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World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2026, 32(02), 711–726

Publication history: Received on 03 October 2026; revised on 09 November 2026; accepted on 11 November 2026

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2026.32.2.2887

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ABSTRACT

In Senegal, football plays a central role in public life and generates considerable popular enthusiasm, fuelled in particular by passionate supporters who bring the stadiums to life every weekend. However, this overwhelming passion amongst supporters is very often accompanied by a worrying recurrence of violent incidents within sports venues. Beyond these incidents, which receive widespread media coverage, there is also the question of the positive role that these supporter groups could play in Senegalese society. This article sets out to examine the social responsibility initiatives undertaken by Senegalese supporters.

Drawing on a theoretical framework that combines stakeholder theory, social identity, organisational legitimacy and the co-production of sporting services, a primarily qualitative study conducted amongst groups of Senegalese supporters (of the 'Navétane' and professional football) highlights a rich repertoire of responsible actions: health campaigns, charitable and educational initiatives, and self-regulation through codes of ethics. These responsible actions coexist, however, with structural tensions, notably violence, inter-group rivalries and the political exploitation of the most influential supporter groups. The findings show that this very real social responsibility remains unevenly distributed depending on the degree to which groups are organised, and is undermined by their dependence on external resources. The article concludes that Senegalese sporting bodies must replace a strictly repressive management approach with one based on recognition and collaborative engagement with supporters, which alone is capable of consolidating their social responsibility in the long term.

Keywords: Social Responsibility, Football, Navetane, Social Identity, Stakeholder, Fan, Supporter

1 INTRODUCTION

In Senegal, football plays a central role in public life and is much more than just a sporting pastime. The performances of the national football team, twice African champions in 2022 and 2025, have sparked unprecedented scenes of collective jubilation, revealing the sport's extraordinary ability to bring people together in a country characterised by its ethnic and religious diversity. This fervour is not confined to major international tournaments: every weekend, football stadiums buzz with the excitement of matches in the Professional Football League, brought to life by groups of supporters who are as creative as they are passionate. Whilst the stands in Senegal resound with the songs and dances for which the festive atmosphere of African stadiums is renowned, they are also the scene of sporadic violence, heightened rivalries and, at times, incidents that tarnish the image of national football. This overflowing passion amongst supporters raises the question of the social responsibility of these key players in the football spectacle: How

do Senegalese supporters view their role and responsibilities within society? What concrete initiatives have football supporters' groups developed in terms of social and civic action?

Research into football supporters in Africa remains largely dominated by a security-focused approach centred on violence and risks. The pioneering work of [1] on African football, that of [2] on South African supporters, and the studies by [3], [4] and [5] on football mobilisations in West Africa have opened up fruitful avenues of research but leave many gaps. In Senegal specifically, apart from a few dissertations and academic works focusing on violence ([6] ; [7]; [8]; [9]) and press articles, few in-depth scientific studies have been devoted to the social practices of supporters' groups and their impact on society. Yet the issue of supporters is also of interest to the field of sports marketing, one of whose most well-established principles is to regard the supporter as a key strategic resource: a source of atmosphere and spectacle, a driver of media appeal and the value of sponsorship deals, and the foundation of identity and loyalty to the club brand.

This study aims to partially fill this gap by offering an analysis of the social responsibility of football supporters in Senegal. It has two objectives: firstly, to document and analyse the actual practices of Senegalese supporters' groups; and secondly, to formulate operational recommendations to strengthen the positive contribution of supporters to social development and national cohesion.

2 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Definition and dimensions of supporters' social responsibility

The notion of supporters' social responsibility is a recent extension of the broader concept of social responsibility, traditionally applied to businesses and gradually extended to sports organisations and stakeholders in the world of sport ([10]).

Indeed, the first academic formulation of social responsibility dates back to Bowen's seminal work (1953) on the social responsibility of business leaders. This concept spread to the field of sports organisation management from the 2000s onwards, driven by North American and subsequently European research on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). When applied to sport, this literature generally starts from the same observation: professional clubs must address issues of legitimacy in the face of a series of recurring scandals (violence, doping, corruption, racism, trafficking of young players) which damage their image and reveal a lack of transparency.

In the context of football, the social responsibility of supporters can be defined as the set of moral, ethical and civic obligations that supporters bear as collective participants in the sporting spectacle, as well as their voluntary contribution to the well-being of the community beyond their mere role as spectators. Thus, this concept of supporters' social responsibility, which has yet to be fully explored in the African context, merits examination in the light of the realities in Senegal.

This social responsibility encompasses several interconnected dimensions. [12] proposes a pyramid comprising four levels of responsibility: economic (being profitable), legal (complying with the law), ethical (acting fairly) and philanthropic (contributing to society). Thus, based on Carroll's ([12]) proposal, we can distinguish several dimensions of social responsibility: 1) the behavioural dimension, which concerns respect for the rules, opponents, referees and sports facilities, as well as the rejection of all forms of violence, discrimination or anti-social behaviour; 2) the civic dimension, which refers to the exercise of active citizenship through football, including democratic participation in club governing bodies, respect for institutions and the promotion of republican values; 3) the solidarity dimension, which encompasses charitable, humanitarian and community initiatives undertaken by supporters' groups for the benefit of vulnerable groups; 4) the educational dimension, which concerns the transmission of positive values, the mentoring of young people and the contribution to the socialisation of new generations through football; 5) the socio-economic dimension, relating to job creation and local socio-economic development.

2.2 Social Identity and Collective Behaviour Theories in Sport

To examine supporters' social responsibility, it is pertinent to draw on the social identity theory developed by [13], [14]. This theory posits that membership in a social group, such as a supporters' group, constitutes an important component of individual identity. Individuals derive part of their self-esteem from their affiliation with groups that they value. They are also inclined to favour their own group, referred to as the in-group, and to differentiate themselves from—or even compete with—other groups, referred to as out-groups.

In football, this perspective helps explain several concrete phenomena. Strong identification with a club or national team may foster a sense of belonging that transcends conventional social divisions. It may consequently lead to what [15] terms "depersonalisation," namely the adoption of a shared collective identity. Such strong identification may encourage prosocial behaviours towards in-group members, including solidarity, mutual support, and collective

mobilisation. However, it may also generate hostile attitudes towards opposing supporters, thereby accounting for the coexistence of positive and negative manifestations of social responsibility.

This framework makes it possible to analyse the dynamics of intergroup violence observed in Senegalese stadiums ([16]; [7]), while underscoring the integrative and socialising role that membership in a supporters' group may fulfil.

2.3 Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholder theory developed by [17] encourages sports organisations to consider all groups that influence their activities or are affected by them. These groups include internal stakeholders, such as players, staff, shareholders, and active supporters, as well as external stakeholders, including local authorities, sponsors, federations, the media, stadium neighbours, local associations, competitors, and regulatory bodies. From this perspective, supporters should no longer be regarded merely as consumers. Rather, they constitute stakeholders in their own right ([10] Babiak & Wolfe, 2009), directly concerned by the organisation's corporate social responsibility policies. Recent studies have also examined supporters' expectations regarding CSR in social, ethical, environmental, and economic domains, as well as the importance attributed to these expectations.

The stakeholder typology proposed by [19] classifies stakeholders according to three attributes: power, defined as the capacity to influence; legitimacy, which refers to the right to make claims; and urgency, which relates to time-sensitive pressure. A stakeholder that possesses all three attributes is considered definitive and should be given priority in a CSR strategy. Stakeholders possessing only two attributes are classified as expectant, whereas those possessing a single attribute are considered latent. Within this framework, organised supporters, particularly supporters' associations, may possess all three attributes when they are able to mobilise the media and elected representatives. Their inclusion therefore constitutes a significant social responsibility issue for clubs and federations.

Stakeholder theory ([17]; [20]) thus conceptualises supporters as actors whose interests and behaviours must be incorporated into sports governance. It also prompts consideration of the responsibility that supporters assume towards other stakeholders, including clubs, other supporters, local residents, the State, and sponsors.

2.4 Social Legitimacy Theory

Legitimacy theory ([21] is widely mobilised in CSR research. It helps explain why companies publish non-financial, environmental, and social reports. Such publications do not necessarily reflect a purely ethical commitment; they also enable organisations to demonstrate that they are responsive to societal expectations and to maintain their "licence to operate" by safeguarding their legitimacy. According to [22], an organisation is considered legitimate when its activities are perceived as desirable, appropriate, and consistent with prevailing social norms. The management of legitimacy therefore entails responding to the expectations of internal and external stakeholders by considering their interests and values through concrete or symbolic actions. As demonstrated by [23], [24], and [21], organisations do not passively receive legitimacy assessments. Rather, they seek to influence the manner in which stakeholders evaluate their actions and may even attempt to shape these perceptions, although their scope for action remains limited.

Legitimacy theory therefore encourages CSR practices to be understood not only as expressions of genuine commitment but also as instruments for managing organisational reputation. Nevertheless, this interpretation does not preclude recognition of the tangible effects that such practices may produce.

2.5 The Concept of "Social Fair Play" and Sports Citizenship

Historically associated with respect for the rules of the game and athletes' ethical conduct, fair play has been extended to supporters through the concept of "spectator fair play," promoted by the International Fédération of Association Football. This development has been reinforced by the emergence of the concept of "social fair play," notably developed in the work of [26] and [27].

Social fair play extends beyond mere compliance with rules. It refers to a broader ethical responsibility towards the sporting community and society as a whole. It entails not only refraining from harmful behaviours, such as violence, discrimination, or cheating, but also actively promoting social inclusion, justice, solidarity, and community development. From this perspective, supporters are not merely consumers of sporting events; they are also sports citizens endowed with social responsibility.

The concept of sports citizenship, proposed by [28] and subsequently developed by [29], follows the same rationale. It is based on the premise that participation in the sporting sphere, including as a supporter, provides access to certain rights, such as access to sporting events, freedom of expression, and participation in decision-making. It also entails duties, including respect for others, contribution to the common good, and the preservation of sport's integrity. In

contexts in which traditional democratic spaces are restricted or difficult for certain social groups to access, sports citizenship may foster the development of broader political and social citizenship.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Our methodological framework drew on three main data-collection tools, each serving specific objectives and yielding complementary types of information: ethnographic observation, questionnaire surveys and documentary analysis.

Ethnographic observation formed the basis of our qualitative approach. Our main field of study is the Dakar region, the capital of Senegal and the main hub of Senegalese football. There are several reasons for this choice. Firstly, Dakar is home to the country's main historic clubs (Jaraaf, US Gorée, ASC Ouakam), as well as its most organised and active supporters. The data collection period spanned fourteen months, from May 2025 to July 2026.

For thirteen months, we regularly visited stadiums, supporters' club headquarters, and pre-match and post-match gatherings, observing practices, interactions, rituals and atmospheres. This extended immersion enabled us to gain a detailed and contextualised understanding of the realities of Senegalese football fandom. Three groups of supporters representing different types of groups were observed: 1) the supporters' committee of the Sports and et Cultural Association of Niarry Tally-Grand Dakar-Biscuiterie (ASC NGB), which plays in the Senegalese professional football league; 2) the Allez Casa supporters' committee, which supports Casa Sports (a Ligue 1 club) as well as the national football team; 3) a supporters' group from the Santhiaba Sports and Cultural Association, which plays in 'Navétane' football. The latter is a grassroots football league that emerged just before independence (between 1950 and 1960), starting with informal tournaments pitting young residents from neighbouring streets against one another, and later evolving into matches between neighbourhoods. These organisations have come together to field increasingly well-structured teams known as 'Sports and Cultural Associations' (ASC). In 2022, the Navatane league comprised nearly 10,690 sports and cultural associations (clubs), more than 30,000 administrative and technical staff, over 300,000 registered members, and organised more than 50,000 matches each year [12].

Two methods of observation were adopted: a) Non-participant observation during matches, where we positioned ourselves in the supporters' stands with the explicit role of observing behaviour; b) Participant observation during non-football activities of supporters' groups (preparatory meetings, general assemblies, charitable initiatives, etc.). In these contexts, our role was that of an ordinary participant, contributing to the activities whilst maintaining a reflective observational stance. All our observations were recorded in a journal comprising approximately 150 handwritten pages, which proved to be an essential resource during the analysis phase.

Twenty-five (25) semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with various categories of stakeholders: leaders of supporters' associations (chairpersons, treasurers, general secretaries), active members (those responsible for events, security and social committees), ordinary supporters, club officials, officials from the Senegalese Professional Football League, officials from the Ministry of Sport, and sports journalists. These interviews, which lasted an average of 53 minutes (ranging from 26 minutes to 1 hour 40 minutes), were conducted using several interview guides tailored to the different categories of respondents, but all structured around a number of key themes (personal background and journey within the supporter movement; perceptions of the role and responsibilities of supporters; actual practices and initiatives developed; Relationships with institutions (clubs, the federation, public authorities) and other supporter groups). The interviews were recorded with the participants' explicit consent and then transcribed in full, producing a corpus of over 98 pages of verbatim transcripts.

The literature review focused on the archives of the Senegalese sports press; on internal documents from supporters' associations (articles of association and internal regulations, minutes of general meetings, activity reports, codes of ethics, press releases, etc.); and on audiovisual material produced by supporters (videos of events posted on YouTube and social media).

The data collected, which was of various types (observations, interviews, documents), was subjected to analytical processing. The qualitative corpus (verbatim interview transcripts, field notes, documents) was subjected to thematic content analysis [31].

4 FINDINGS ON MANIFESTATIONS OF FANS' SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

This section analyses the main manifestations of this social responsibility across four areas: civic and solidarity-based actions; community and charitable initiatives; adherence to the rules and fair play in stadiums; and, finally, the role of education and the transmission of values.

4.1 Civic and solidarity-based actions by supporters' groups

One of the most significant aspects of Senegalese supporters' social responsibility lies in their ability to mobilise for civic causes that go far beyond the strictly sporting sphere.

4.1.1 Health and social awareness campaigns

All the supporters' groups observed stood out for their involvement in awareness campaigns on public health issues.

During the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, ASC NGB supporters ran an awareness campaign promoting adherence to protective measures in the Grand Dakar and Niarry Tally neighbourhoods. Wearing T-shirts in their club's colours, members distributed face masks, hand sanitiser and information leaflets, thereby reaching communities that are often unreceptive to official messages.

Similarly, the Allez Casa committee used its high profile and linguistic diversity (Wolof, Diola, Pulaar, Serer) to relay public health messages. As a result, several awareness-raising messages aimed at the general public were shared via social media, in line with the Senegalese government's approach. "At the time, we wanted to play and win this match against the coronavirus," said Malamine, the former president of "Allez Casa".

The Allez Casa committee regularly organises blood donation drives for hospitals in Dakar (the Main Hospital and the Ouakam Military Hospital), as well as for healthcare facilities in the regions (the Ziguinchor and Saint-Louis Regional Hospitals). In addition, cervical cancer screening sessions are offered to residents of the suburbs of Dakar (Parcelles Assainies, Pikine and Guédiawaye), and the proceeds from the telethon were donated to Ziguinchor Hospital.

Like most sports clubs in the Navetane movement, the ASC Santhiaba supporters' committee has organised, and continues to organise, regular malaria awareness campaigns in the old Medina district, in partnership with local health districts. "We have a capacity to mobilise people that the health authorities do not have," explains Momar, the chairman of the supporters' committee. "When we speak, the young people in the neighbourhood listen, because we are their brothers; we face the same realities as they do" (an ASC official).

Santhiaba supporters regularly collaborate with healthcare professionals from the Medina to provide free medical consultations and donations of medicines to elderly residents in the neighbourhood. These initiatives demonstrate that the passion of these supporters extends far beyond the football pitch, becoming a genuine pillar of local development and solidarity

This social legitimacy, based on proximity and a shared identity, gives supporters' groups particular effectiveness in conveying health prevention messages. Our observations show that these campaigns are part of a genuine understanding of the social role of supporters as agents of community development.

4.1.2 Citizen engagement in government projects and national events

Beyond public health, several supporters' groups have also mobilised to promote citizen participation, particularly during election campaigns. In 2019, ahead of the presidential elections, the ASC Santhiaba supporters' committee, following on from the 'Y'en a marre' movement, launched a campaign entitled 'Ma carte, Mon arme' ('My card, my weapon'), encouraging young people to register on the electoral roll and collect their voter cards.

As part of the 'Ni Barça, ni barsax, Togg Tékki Sénégal' (in Wolof: neither Barcelona nor hell; stay and develop Senegal), led by the European Union in collaboration with the Government of Senegal, ASC Santhiaba supporters, like many others involved in the Navetane movement, have played an active role in raising awareness amongst young people about the dangers of illegal emigration.

Beyond the pitch, the Allez Casa committee promotes the cultural values of Casamance (unity, shared sacrifice and mutual support) whilst campaigning for the protection and wellbeing of Senegalese supporters. The committee leaders' efforts to secure the release of the 18 Senegalese supporters detained in Morocco in January 2025 are a perfect illustration of this. They led a national campaign and lobbied the Senegalese authorities extensively to use diplomatic channels to secure the supporters' release.

These initiatives demonstrate a keen political awareness among certain supporters' leaders, who see their role as extending beyond the mere sporting sphere. "We therefore have a particular responsibility to encourage our members, especially young people, to be active citizens and not just passive supporters," says Bodian, a leader of Allez Casa.

4.2 Community and charitable initiatives

Solidarity is a value deeply rooted in Senegalese culture, particularly through the traditions of 'teranga' (hospitality) and community mutual-aid schemes. Supporters' groups bring these traditions of solidarity to life in the world of sport through various charitable initiatives.

4.2.1 Support for disadvantaged families and orphanages

All the supporters' groups we studied organise, at least once a year, initiatives to support vulnerable communities. These initiatives generally take the form of distributions of food, clothing or school supplies, particularly during the month of Ramadan, the Tabaski festival or at the start of the new school year.

NGB supporters are renowned for their strong social engagement and their community solidarity initiatives in Dakar. During the month of Ramadan, they regularly organise an initiative called 'Ndogou for All' (iftar meals for everyone). This involves raising funds amongst members and supporters to put together 'ndogou' food parcels for local residents, road users and vulnerable people in the Niary Tally neighbourhoods of Greater Dakar. In 2025, this initiative enabled the distribution of more than 200 ndogou kits, each containing rice, oil, sugar and other staple food items.



Figure 1: ASC NGB supporters organising and distributing food parcels

Given the greater resources it is able to mobilise, the Allez Casa Committee regularly supports, at the start of the school year, a number of children from disadvantaged families by providing them with bags, school supplies and, on occasion, clothes collected from its members. Orphanages are also regular beneficiaries of Allez Casa's charitable initiatives; every year, the committee visits several nurseries in the capital (notably those run by the Franciscan Sisters of the Medina and in Ouakam), delivering donations. During the Covid-19 pandemic, 'Allez Casa' mobilised its resources to distribute food, hygiene products and antiseptics to charitable organisations and two shelters run by the NGO Univers Sénégal. Allez Casa operates as a genuine chain of solidarity and organises itself to support its members through both the happy and difficult times in life (family events, bereavements, weddings or hardships).

4.2.2 School sponsorship and support for education

Several supporters' groups have developed long-term partnerships with schools in the neighbourhoods where they are based. This is the case with the Allez Casa Supporters' Committee, one of whose sub-committees meets regularly at a school in the Parcelles Assainies district of Dakar. This partnership takes various forms of support: funding school supplies, refurbishing classrooms, and organising award ceremonies to recognise the most deserving pupils. "Education is the foundation of all development," says the committee's former chairman.

Since 2002, following the sinking of the Joola, Casa Sports supporters have also set up a scholarship programme for the children of supporters who have died or are unable to afford their children's education. This programme, funded by special membership contributions and fundraising, has enabled around fifty pupils to remain in the education system. "As supporters, we cannot remain indifferent when children in our community drop out of school due to a lack of resources. Our responsibility does not end at the stadium gates," said one official interviewed.

Supporters of ASC Santhiaba and NGB regularly organise academic support sessions for pupils in their neighbourhoods through 'holiday classes'. These are an area in which most of the sports and cultural associations in the Navétane grassroots football league are regularly involved.

4.2.3 Environmental and sanitation initiatives

An emerging aspect of supporters' social responsibility concerns environmental commitment. Several supporters' groups have launched clean-up operations in stadiums, on beaches or in neighbourhoods, often as part of community days known as 'Set-Setal' (meaning 'to clean and make clean' in Wolof), in reference to the urban movement of the 1990s [32]. 'Set-sétal' is a broad mobilisation movement that involves all residents in cleaning up the neighbourhood by tackling rubbish and mosquitoes, thereby protecting the population from the threat of epidemics. These events provide opportunities for the ASCs to demonstrate young people's ability to mobilise for actions aimed at protecting the environment (weeding, tree planting, cleaning and decorating the neighbourhood).

At ASC Santhiaba, the Sét-sétal initiatives provide opportunities for the committee members to demonstrate the young people's ability to get involved in activities that promote environmental protection (weeding, tree planting, and cleaning and decorating the neighbourhood). It is also a way of reaching out to residents who are less interested in football but who support the social commitment of the ASC's young people. In this respect, they are more inclined to fund certain club activities. 'It's to show local residents that the neighbourhood's ASC isn't just about football; it's also about the environment, keeping the area clean, and organising activities in the neighbourhood during the holidays. And all these activities revolve around the 'set-sétal' – sweeping the neighbourhood, decorating the alleyways, painting the walls in the ASC's colours, writing players' names or their shirt numbers on the walls, drawing portraits of the players on the walls and adding a few slogans" (a representative of the supporters' committee).



Figure 2: Clean-up operation in the Santhiaba neighbourhood organised by supporters

At NGB Club, as the supporters' association comprises supporters from various ASC Navétane clubs in the neighbourhoods of Grand Dakar, Narry Tally and the Biscuiterie district, it is only natural that, every year, they organise a major clean-up operation. This initiative, which mobilises several dozen volunteers, is not limited to a simple clean-up but also includes tree planting, decoration and awareness campaigns against fly-tipping.

Allez Casa oversees a range of initiatives aimed at improving the environment and living conditions in the neighbourhoods where sub-committees are based, as well as the stadiums that host Casa Sports matches. As such, it regularly organises 'Set-sétal' clean-up operations at the venues where these sub-committees hold their meetings, as well as in the cemeteries of Ouakam. These environmental initiatives reflect a growing awareness of ecological issues amongst supporters.

4.3 Compliance with the rules, fair play and behaviour in stadiums

The social responsibility of supporters is also evident – perhaps in a less spectacular but equally important way – in their day-to-day behaviour within sports venues. Whilst violent incidents and disturbances regularly make the headlines, our observations reveal that the vast majority of matches take place in a festive and peaceful atmosphere.

4.3.1 A culture of celebration and festive entertainment

Senegalese stadiums are renowned for the exceptional atmosphere created by their supporters. This atmosphere is rooted in a tradition of festive entertainment that combines singing, dancing, percussion and elaborate choreographed routines (Fall, 2018). Supporters' groups compete to outdo one another in creativity when composing anthems in honour of their teams.

This culture of celebration is in itself a manifestation of social responsibility, in that it provides a space for popular cultural expression, promotes collective creativity and helps to make football a total spectacle accessible to all. In this regard, both the supporters of the Navétane ASCs (Santhiaba) and those of the professional football league (NGB) have

developed their own distinctive style: the 'assicos', which blend traditional African influences (sabar tam-tam rhythms, mbalax) with elements of Afro-Caribbean rhythms, thereby creating a distinctive cultural identity. Our interviews with supporters' group leaders reveal a legitimate sense of pride in this cultural contribution. "We don't just come to the stadium to watch a match; with our assicos, we come to create a collective work of art," explains Malang, a member of the NGB group.

Allez Casa is the supporters' association that mobilises the largest number of supporters on a regional basis. These supporters are deeply attached to this club, which represents their homeland, the vast region of Casamance. Indeed, the supporters bring a whole array of folkloric elements into the stands (tam-tams, traditional dress, traditional musical instruments) that evoke Casamanse culture. "Yes, Allez Casa supporters bring the cultural riches that, in a way, symbolise Diola identity into the stands. We use typical Diola musical instruments such as the 'Bougeureubou' to create a lively atmosphere," says one supporter. "Our songs, our dances – all of this is part of the cultural heritage of Casamance and Senegal. It's our way of showing the world the richness of our culture" (Chairman of the Allez Casa Committee).

4.3.2 Ethical charters and codes of conduct

The Allez Casa Committee has adopted a 'Supporters' Charter' which sets out, amongst other things, the following principles: respect for the opposition and the referee; a ban on any abusive or discriminatory language; the rejection of violence in all its forms; a ban on bringing dangerous objects into stadiums; and respect for sports facilities and the environment. Tamba, the committee's former chairman, states that it is through the values of 'sportsmanship' and 'fair play' that Allez Casa has managed to become a benchmark at both national and African level. "It is for these reasons that the African Football Confederation awarded them the prize for the most fair-play supporters' group at the African Ballon d'Or ceremony in Nigeria in 2017," says Tamba.

Inspired by the work of Allez Casa, the chairman of the NGB supporters' group has set out his ambition to work with the club's management to create the conditions that could lead to the emergence of a 'new type of NGB supporter'. To this end, he plans to introduce a supporters' charter modelled on that of Allez Casa, as "certain habits amongst supporters need to be changed, even if this will be a difficult task". The club wants supporters who uphold the principles of sporting ethics (fair play), that is to say, respect for the opposition and dignity in both victory and defeat. Because, he says, "certain misbehaviours, which are tolerated at a local level, may not be tolerated at a continental level; this is what happened to some Senegalese supporters during the last Africa Cup of Nations 2025 in Morocco".

However, as the Navetane amateur league is shorter in duration (approximately 3 to 4 months), most neighbourhood clubs do not see the need to introduce a code of conduct to regulate supporters' activities

4.3.3 Initiatives to foster closer ties with opposing supporters

A particularly significant example of social responsibility concerns initiatives to foster closer ties and reconciliation between traditionally rival groups of supporters. Following violent incidents on 9 November 2025 between supporters of Jaraaf and Union Sportive de Ouakam, the leaders of the two main supporters' associations organised a reconciliation meeting under the auspices of the Lébou dignitaries (traditional chiefs of the Lébou ethnic group). These initiatives in 'supporters' diplomacy', however, remain fragile and limited. Rivalries remain intense, and periods of calm alternate with periods of tension. Nevertheless, the very existence of such initiatives demonstrates a willingness, at least amongst certain supporters' leaders, to move beyond mere partisan loyalties in order to foster a more responsible and peaceful fan culture.

In response to recurring incidents of violence, several supporters' associations from LSFP clubs have launched initiatives aimed at promoting responsible behaviour and reconciling the various supporter groups. It is within this framework that the 'Collective of Supporters' Committees of Senegalese Clubs' was established. The Collective's Facebook page states that its main objective is "to unite all the driving forces in the stands in order to promote local football, in a spirit of respect, solidarity and fair play. Through this unity, the Collective works to create a better atmosphere in stadiums, encourage civic engagement amongst supporters and promote local Senegalese football.



Figure 3: Members of the Collective of Supporters' Committees of Senegalese Clubs

4.4 The transmission of educational values and socio-economic integration

Finally, supporters' social responsibility is demonstrated through their role in mentoring and educating younger generations. Supporters' groups often provide, particularly in working-class neighbourhoods, alternative spaces for socialisation for young people seeking guidance and a sense of belonging.

4.4.1 Transmission of positive values

Beyond formal guidance, supporters' groups transmit, often informally, a set of values that contribute to the socialisation of young people. Our ethnographic observations reveal that interactions within these groups emphasise qualities such as loyalty, solidarity, courage, perseverance and respect for elders.

The biographical accounts gathered from young supporters show how their involvement in these groups has marked a positive turning point in their lives. Moussa says: "Among the supporters of the 'Allez CasaCommittee', I found a family, brothers who helped me get my life in order. Now I'm in charge of logistics; I organise the trips. I've learnt discipline and a sense of responsibility."

These accounts, which recurred in various forms throughout our research, suggest that supporters' groups can act as particularly effective secondary socialisation environments for young people who have broken away from traditional institutions (family, school, religious organisations).

4.4.2 Promoting the success and socio-economic integration of supporters

Some supporters' groups have developed initiatives aimed at encouraging the professional success of their young members. This is the case with the Allez CasaCommittee', which has successfully set up several projects designed to strengthen its members' socio-professional skills, whilst also launching funding programmes for those with business ideas. The committee's former chair explains: "To improve our members' employability, we set up a project called 'One Supporter, One Driving Licence'. Because a driving licence is a tool that enables a person to secure a job." "This project has had a real impact on the beneficiaries, as, thanks to it, many members have found jobs as drivers in supermarkets, advertising agencies or at certain companies."

Similar initiatives are also being taken to support women through the launch of the 'One Woman or Girl, One Loan' programme. Using funds raised from membership fees, grants and donations, the supporters' group set up a fund to help members develop income-generating projects and activities. "We set up a fund intended primarily for women and girls who are leading projects, but especially those who are already in business and needed to strengthen their economic activity" (former president of Allez Casa).

This emphasis on socio-professional success contrasts with the negative stereotypes often associated with supporters, who are sometimes perceived as idle young people lacking ambition. It demonstrates a keen awareness, amongst certain supporters' leaders, of the need to reconcile a passion for football with a constructive life plan.

4.4.3 Education in citizenship and democracy

The internal workings of supporters' groups, when democratic and participatory, constitute in themselves a school of citizenship. General meetings, elections to executive committees and collective decision-making offer members – who are often young and unfamiliar with formal democratic processes – practical experience of democratic participation.

Our observations of several general meetings of supporters' associations reveal debates that are often lively but generally respectful, where differing opinions are expressed, compromises are negotiated and resolutions are voted on. "Here, everyone has the right to speak their mind, regardless of their social status," says Modou, a member of the NGB supporters' executive committee. These deliberative forums, whilst certainly imperfect and sometimes dominated by charismatic leaders, nonetheless constitute particularly valuable laboratories of participatory democracy in a context where spaces for genuine collective deliberation are rare. "In our association, we have quite a diverse range of members: senior executives, school pupils and university students, manual workers, and so on. The minister's son and the caretaker's son debate on an equal footing. That is true democracy, and that is what we learn in the Allez Casa Committee" (former president).

The 'navétane' movement often provides the first – and sometimes the only – opportunity for collective engagement for many young people, particularly in working-class neighbourhoods. Supporters' groups can function as schools of participatory democracy, where young people gain experience in debate, collective decision-making, organising joint actions and conflict resolution. This aspect of fostering democratic citizenship, although rarely highlighted in discussions about supporters, is perhaps one of the most significant contributions these groups make to building a more participatory and inclusive Senegalese society.

5 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Whilst the previous section highlighted the positive manifestations of social responsibility amongst Senegalese supporters, a rigorous scientific analysis also requires an examination of the challenges and limitations that hinder the full realisation of this responsibility. This section analyses three major dimensions of these challenges: the persistence of violence and disturbances, heightened rivalries between groups, and the political exploitation of supporters' groups.

5.1 Violence and disturbances in stadiums

Despite talk of social responsibility and the ethical charters adopted by certain supporters' groups, violence remains a worrying reality within Senegalese football fandom. The local press continues to report incidents involving supporters: physical confrontations, the throwing of projectiles, destruction of property, pitch invasions, and attacks on referees or opposing players.

This violence in Senegalese stadiums takes several forms, which should be analysed separately. Verbal abuse is the most common and most trivialised form: insults hurled at opposing players, referees and officials of rival clubs; chants of an abusive or humiliating nature. During our observations, we noted that virtually no derby match takes place without insults being hurled from the stands. "Insults are part of the culture. It's our way of unsettling the opposition. But it stays within the stadium; after the match, we forget about it," says Samba, an NGB supporter, somewhat paradoxically.

It is also worth noting the direct physical violence between supporters, which generally occurs in three contexts: in the vicinity of stadiums before or after high-risk matches, when supporters travel to 'enemy' territory, and, exceptionally, inside the stadiums themselves when crowd-control measures fail.

Violence against referees, although very rare, is a particularly worrying phenomenon. Our survey identifies three cases of verbal or physical assaults on referees between 2025 and 2026, two of which required police protection to enable the referee to leave the stadium safely. These assaults generally occur following decisions perceived as unfair or scandalous, particularly when they affect the outcome of an important match.

Finally, damage to property represents a less direct but economically costly form of violence: seats torn out and thrown onto the pitch, broken windows, damaged toilet facilities, and vandalism on public transport during supporters' away trips.

5.2 Intensified rivalries between supporter groups

Beyond isolated incidents of violence, rivalries between supporter groups constitute a major obstacle to the emergence of a culture of shared social responsibility. These rivalries, sometimes rooted in history, territory and identity [33], give rise to a culture of confrontation that runs counter to the values of solidarity and citizenship that certain groups claim to embody.

Indeed, the landscape of Senegalese football fandom is shaped by several rivalries of varying intensity. The most iconic rivalries in the LSFP league pit supporters of USO and Jaraaf de Dakar, AS Pikine and Guédiawaye FC against one another. These rivalries, which date back several decades, extend far beyond the sporting arena and are rooted in territorial opposition (the Medina neighbourhood for Diaraf, and Ouakam for USO), It is worth noting the milder and more diffuse

rivalry that exists between the three official supporters' groups of the Senegal national football team: the "Douzième Gaïndé", the Lébou Gui group and the Allez CasaCommittee'.

Within the Navétane football scene, there are classic rivalries between clubs from the same area that are separated by nothing more than an alleyway: this is the case with ASC Santhiaba and ASC Deggo from the Medina neighbourhood. These rivalries manifest themselves in many different ways. Beyond direct physical violence, chants and slogans are a key means of expressing hostility.

Today, social media has multiplied the spaces in which these rivalries are expressed. The Facebook pages of the various supporters' groups are the scene of constant verbal sparring, mockery and mutual provocation. Every defeat suffered by a rival club triggers waves of online mockery, whilst every victory is met with ostentatious celebrations intended to humiliate the opponent. This online conflict makes the rivalries permanent and omnipresent, no longer confined solely to match days. It exposes a much wider audience – particularly young people – to this hate speech, contributing to its normalisation and perpetuation.



Figure 4: Screenshot of ASC Santhiaba's Facebook page

5.3 Political exploitation of supporters' groups

A third major challenge to supporters' social responsibility lies in their recurring political exploitation. Supporters' groups of Navetane clubs, through their capacity for mass mobilisation, their roots in working-class neighbourhoods and their predominantly young membership, constitute a prime target for various political actors seeking to use them for electoral purposes or to demonstrate strength.

This exploitation takes several forms. The most direct involves recruiting supporters as political campaigners during election campaigns. Our interviews reveal that some leaders of supporters' associations have been approached by political parties or candidates offering them sums of money or promises of jobs in exchange for mobilising their members at rallies or demonstrations. " "Before every election, they come to see us. They offer us 854,000 or 1 708 USD to bring our lads to their rallies, to liven things up and create a buzz. Some accept, especially when we need money for the group. But it's dangerous, because afterwards we become dependent on them," says Birane, president of a supporters' group.

This monetization of mobilization turns certain supporter groups in the Navetane championship into electoral militias, available to the highest bidder. The risk is twofold: first, the financial dependence of supporter groups, which compromises their autonomy and credibility; and second, internal divisions within these groups that may lead to violent clashes when rival groups support opposing candidates. "Once they have given you money, you belong to them. You can no longer say anything against them, even when they do whatever they want with football. Your hands and feet are tied," bluntly summarizes Gora, a former leader of a supporter group.

6 DISCUSSION

The findings show that Senegalese supporters are not merely recipients of clubs' social responsibility initiatives; rather, they are active agents of social responsibility in the fullest sense of the term. The four dimensions identified—civic and health-related actions, charitable initiatives, fair play and self-regulation, and educational roles—document a repertoire of socially responsible actions that is as broad as, if not broader than, that generally examined among sport

organisations themselves (public health campaigns, blood donations, school scholarships, *Set-Setal* initiatives, and professional integration programmes).

6.1 Supporters as salient stakeholders of the club and the wider community

Beyond the recognition of supporter groups as indisputable stakeholders of clubs, the findings demonstrate that they also clearly act as stakeholders within the wider community. Health campaigns conducted by ASC NGB supporters and the Allez Casa Committee, advocacy for the release of supporters detained in Morocco, and the "My Card, My Weapon" campaign illustrate that their role extends well beyond the relationship between supporters and clubs. They also intervene in areas such as public health, electoral citizenship, and environmental action. It therefore appears necessary to broaden the scope of the stakeholders towards whom supporters exercise responsibility: these include not only clubs and other supporters, but also the State, healthcare institutions, schools, and neighbourhood communities.

The data concerning the political instrumentalization of supporter groups provide concrete empirical substance to the salience model [19]. Political actors treat supporter groups as stakeholders possessing real power, particularly because of their capacity for large-scale mobilisation, which is especially valuable during electoral periods. However, their intrinsic legitimacy is not acknowledged. They are paid to "create an atmosphere," yet they are not consulted as genuine partners. Gora's statement—"once they give you money, you belong to them"—clearly illustrates the risk of capture faced by a stakeholder whose power is recognised but whose legitimacy is not. Such a stakeholder consequently becomes an instrument rather than a partner. This situation undermines supporters' social responsibility by creating financial dependency, internal divisions, and difficulties in adopting a critical position.

This finding calls for an extension of the theoretical framework. The concept of resource dependence, closely related to research on organisational dependence on the environment, could complement the salience model. In particular, it would help explain how the lack of independent resources among certain supporter groups, especially those involved in the *navetane* movement—unlike better-resourced European professional clubs—makes them more vulnerable to capture by political actors or other third parties. Such dependence limits their ability to exercise autonomous social responsibility, even when the willingness and competencies are present, as demonstrated by the numerous charitable and educational initiatives identified.

6.2 Social identity theory: a double-edged mechanism

The findings show that supporters' reactions are linked not only to their desire to belong to a group, but also to their need to be seen and recognised as members of that group ([34]. For Allez Casa supporters, the committee constitutes an essential component of their identity and occupies an important place in their everyday lives. Part of their activities is organised around the supporters' association to which they are attached and which they regard "as a symbol of the community" ([35].

However, strong supporter identification with a club may generate both constructive and destructive effects. On the one hand, the exceptional mobilisation capacity of supporter groups—"we have a mobilisation capacity that health authorities do not possess," "we are their brothers"—together with their local legitimacy, makes their awareness-raising campaigns effective. On the other hand, certain groups regard physical violence as a means of asserting their identity and evaluating their supremacy. Such behaviours may extend beyond the framework of sporting competition and transform *navetane* into a space for social affirmation among individuals belonging to neighbouring ASCs.

Strong group identification also explains the rivalries and escalating dynamics observed during derbies. Violence, which is often denounced within the *navetane* movement, may therefore be understood as a means through which certain supporters affirm their identity in opposition to rival supporters. The following testimony illustrates this logic: "Since we created our ASC following the split from ASC Diappo, ASC Diappo supporters declare war on us whenever we meet them on the field. But since we confronted them, they respect us more." This statement describes a rapid dynamic of provocation and retaliation that may lead to physical violence, motivated, in the respondent's own words, by the desire to defend the club's honour against a rival.

6.3 Social legitimacy: a deliberate but fragile construction

The findings show that structured supporter groups, particularly Allez Casa and, to some extent, NGB, implement a conscious and explicit legitimisation strategy consistent with the organisational processes outlined by [21]. This strategy involves adopting an ethical charter, claiming a fair-play award granted by the CAF, and promoting a discourse centred on disciplinary responsibility: "our credibility depends on our capacity for self-regulation." These elements demonstrate that legitimacy in the sphere of supporter culture is not merely conferred externally by governing bodies. It is also actively constructed by the groups themselves. The literature on organisational legitimacy has thus far paid limited attention to this mechanism among non-institutional actors.

Nevertheless, this legitimacy remains fragile and contested internally. The paradoxical testimony of an NGB supporter, who justifies insults as "folklore" that "remains in the stadium," provides an illustration. Displayed social responsibility may therefore coexist, within the same individual or group, with the normalisation of certain problematic behaviours that are regarded as acceptable provided that they do not exceed an implicit threshold. This finding calls for moving beyond a binary distinction between responsible and irresponsible supporters. Instead, it encourages a graduated interpretation in which social responsibility coexists with grey areas tolerated by group culture.

6.4 Co-production of the sporting spectacle: supporters' civic responsibility

The finding concerning festive culture and *assicos* clearly illustrates the co-production thesis: supporters do not merely attend the spectacle; they participate in its creation. Supporters are not solely consumers of sporting entertainment or merchandise. They constitute an integral component of the sport product because they enhance the quality of the spectacle by creating an emotionally charged stadium atmosphere that is both visual and auditory. The most strongly identified supporters are personally and emotionally committed to their favourite clubs. They "animate the stands, encourage and support clubs that are expected to defend the colours, culture, and even the traditions and values of a tribe or community" ([34]. In this respect, they remain co-creators of the "spectator experience" [36].

The phrase "we come to create a collective work" closely corresponds to the theoretical definition of co-production employed in this study [36]. This finding makes it possible to move beyond the existing literature on co-production, which is often focused on atmosphere and loyalty. The data show that such co-production also has a heritage and identity dimension, through the blending of traditional and Afro-Caribbean rhythms and the assertion of a "Casamance cultural heritage." This suggests the need to enrich the theoretical framework through a cultural and heritage-based perspective, which remains underdeveloped in Western sport marketing.

Recommendations

The findings of this research identify several strategic directions for strengthening the social responsibility of Senegalese supporters. They reveal a clear contrast between highly structured groups, such as Allez Casa and ASC NGB, which possess statutes, charters, and sustainable programmes, and supporter groups within the *navetane* movement as a whole, including ASC Santhiaba. Among the latter, the short duration of the season, which lasts three to four months, is explicitly invoked to explain the absence of a regulatory charter.

This observation introduces a variable that was not anticipated in the initial conceptual model: the degree of temporal and organisational institutionalisation of a supporter group directly influences its capacity to establish formal social responsibility mechanisms. At the institutional level, supporters must be recognised as legitimate partners. This requires the establishment of institutionalised dialogue, support for positive initiatives, and the adoption of an appropriate legal framework.

Senegalese football institutions—federations, leagues, and clubs—must move beyond an exclusively security-based and repressive approach. They should develop a strategic vision of supporter culture as a potential resource for the development of football and society. Supporters constitute an important source of revenue for sport organisations, notably through ticket sales, merchandise purchases, audiences valued by sponsors, and their role as co-creators of the spectacle. According to [37], fans' identification with a team or athlete has a consumerist dimension, insofar as strongly identified supporters are generally particularly attracted to merchandise bearing their club's image. They seek to acquire a wide range of products and services, to the extent that they may become "Super fans" [38].

Among supporters themselves, strengthening organisational capacities and self-regulatory mechanisms appears necessary. This would involve the professionalisation of association leaders, the continuous training of members, and the establishment of genuinely effective disciplinary systems, particularly through a charter promoting a model of responsible citizenship. It is also necessary to diversify funding sources in order to preserve supporter groups' autonomy and prevent their political instrumentalization. The creation of solidarity networks and the sharing of experiences among supporter groups, beyond club rivalries, could also encourage the dissemination of good practices in social responsibility.

At the societal level, perceptions of supporters must evolve. The media, public authorities, and public opinion should recognise the diversity of the supporter community and avoid collectively stigmatising supporters on the basis of the behaviour of a minority. Highlighting and publicising positive initiatives, which are currently largely overlooked in favour of coverage of violent incidents, could encourage such practices and progressively contribute to transforming supporter culture.

7 CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate the effective existence of social responsibility among Senegalese supporters. This responsibility is not an abstract concept; it is expressed through concrete and diverse practices. Supporter groups undertake important civic actions through health-awareness campaigns and the promotion of civic values. They also develop substantial charitable and community initiatives, such as supporting disadvantaged families, sponsoring orphanages and schools, awarding school scholarships, and conducting environmental actions. Through their festive culture and ethical charters, they also contribute to promoting a celebratory and peaceful form of supporter culture. Finally, they play a significant educational role through youth supervision, the transmission of positive values, and training in democratic citizenship. Although these forms of social responsibility are unevenly developed across groups and contexts, they demonstrate the substantial potential of supporters as agents of social development and community cohesion.

However, the research also revealed several challenges and limitations that hinder the full development of this social responsibility. The persistence of violence and disorder within and around stadiums severely damages supporters' image and weakens the credibility of their positive initiatives. Exacerbated rivalries among groups, even when they fulfil certain social functions, create dynamics of confrontation and exclusion that are contrary to the values of solidarity and citizenship. Finally, recurrent political instrumentalization compromises the autonomy of supporter groups and calls into question the sincerity of their social commitment.

These findings provide an important empirical basis, as they support the idea that an actor long regarded as a target of CSR may also be a fully fledged producer of CSR. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that this study focused primarily on football supporters. Further research on supporters attending other sporting events, such as Senegalese wrestling, would broaden understanding of the phenomenon.

STATEMENTS ON COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Acknowledgments

The author acknowledges the National Higher Institute of Popular Education and Sport (INSEPS) of Cheikh Anta Diop University, as well as all the respondents who participated in the survey

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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