

Sociological Variables Influencing the Nigeria Premier League

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Abstract

The study investigated sociological variable influencing the Nigeria premier League. Three research questions and three hypotheses were raised. The area of the study was Nigeria. The population for the study was 1,118 which comprised of sports administrators, coaches and players in the Nigeria Premier League. The survey research design was adopted for the study. The proportional stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting 559 respondents for the study. The questionnaire consisted of 17 items which were validated and subjected to reliability test. The reliability coefficient of 0.91 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while one way analysis of variance was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed that sports administrators, coaches and players' mean perception was above criterion mean of 2.50. It implied that corrupt practices, lack of quality coaches/coaching and fans/spectators attitude were perceived as sociological variables influencing the Nigeria Premier League negatively. The three hypotheses of no significant difference were rejected. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations which focused on how to solve these negative sociological variables influencing the Nigeria Premier League in order to attract more followership were advanced.

Introduction

The Nigeria football league was renamed the "Professional League" in 1990 with a goal to modernize the game and make clubs self-sufficient. The Premier League was upgraded from the First Division of the Nigerian League in 2004. From 1999-2007, there was an end of season Championship to mini-league called the "Super Four". The top four teams would play a round robin at a neutral site to determine the league champion. After the 2006 competition, the league changed its calendar to more closely match the common European regular season structure, i.e. starting around August and ending around May. However, since the Nigeria premier league assumed its professional status, the league has never operated within the tenets of professionalism. The key actors involved in the organization and administration of the league have failed to implement what is

considered to be real professionalism in soccer as it is the practice in Europe and other parts of the world.

Asagba (2007) is of the view that the level of professionalism in Nigeria sports is low, unattractive and uninspiring; sponsors are therefore selective and skeptical about the sports and sportsmen they sponsor. Reasons for the low level of professionalism was attributed to the lack of quality coaches, corrupt practices and excessive control of football by the Nigerian government and inability of clubs to own their own stadium and be self sufficient as stated in decree 11 of 1990.

Decrees 10 and 11 which codified the introduction of professional football in Nigeria stipulates that professional clubs should be run as limited liability companies each governed by a regularly-constituted board of directors and required to hold annual general meetings, present independently audited accounts, cultivate youth/feeder teams and own their own stadia within five years of registration with the Pro League Department.

According to Okocha (2010) the talent base of Nigeria football has diminished because of the absence of quality domestic league and age group competition as was witnessed in the 70's and 80's. Okocha further states that because there is no rewarding league in Nigeria there are over 90,000 Nigerian players playing in Thailand, India and Equatorial Guinea and other lowly places. Okocha calls for the revival of the Nigerian Premier League so as to attract players, fans and make the League more interesting, and invigorating, like other leagues in the world.

The sociological variables concerned in this study are corrupt practices, poor quality coaches and poor fan attitude towards attendance and involvement. These variables are negative in nature, contentious and focal to the present study as there are other sociological variables which could not be handled in this study.

According to Ikulayo (2003), Boye, Money, and Eboh (2006), coaches are at the centre of any sports in building talents in athletes. Similarly Silva (1983), Vallerand and Losier (1994), Trudel, Dionne and Bernard (1992) are of the view, that coaches have strong influence on every aspect of their athletes. From various research findings, it was revealed that coaches have strong influence on their athletes both negatively and positively. In one of the studies Silva (1983) showed that a coach's behaviour is one of the major factors in the development and use of aggressive behaviour in team sports like soccer. Certificated coaches play vital role in modeling and improving sportsmen and women.

Like good teachers, coaches are expected to possess knowledge across a wide range of domains (Wade & Trudel, 1999). However, the training provided to coaches and teachers is very different. Most teachers, for example, must first obtain a university degree and several months of field experience before

receiving certification. Even this extensive period of professional development has been considered inadequate to allow teachers to develop the required professional knowledge.

Wade and Trudel (1999) further reiterate that sports coaches are expected to develop knowledge in a wide range of disciplines, and typically receive sparse formal training through coach education programs that have been considered worthwhile to the coaching profession. The obvious question then becomes: How do sports coaches construct coaching knowledge?

To become better skilled at one's professional practice, a novice teacher or coach needs to do more than simply spend time on the job (Bell, 1997). Ajanonwu (2008) reiterates that the Nigerian league is filled with inept coaches who are not abreast with modern training techniques. Most of the coaches depend on their old methods without moving with the modern trend of attending refresher courses abroad to update their knowledge. He concluded that, if a coach is not sound technically it tells on the club and also the league. Ajanonwu, recommended that coaches in Nigeria should be educated with sound technical knowledge about coaching

Numerous theories have been proposed to explain the phenomenon of sports spectators' involvement. Several theorists describe the benefits of the sports fans role, including increased self-worth, escape from work and tedious aspects of life, excitement, entertainment, a sense of achievement, positive stress (referred to as eustress), group membership, and socialization (Sloan, 1979; Wann, Schrader, & Wilson, 1999). Zillman, Bryant, and Sapolsky (1979) believe involvement as a sports fan can produce many of the same benefits that have been associated with sports participation.

Beth (2003) reiterates that little is known about the process of becoming a fan, however many sport sociologists who researches on sports fans focus largely on the fandom, for example, violence and aggression, which may result from being a fan. Beth (2003) further reiterated that the identity theory is best utilized in explaining a fan. The present study tends to examine the perception of sports administrators, coaches and players on some of the identified sociological problems confronting the Nigeria premier league.

Method

Survey research design was adopted in conducting this study. The population of the study comprised all administrators, coaches and players in the twenty clubs in the Nigeria Premier League. Administrators also include staff of Nigeria football league and board members. The entire population for the study is 1,118 which comprised 430 administrators, 92 coaches, and 596 players. The sample for the study was 559 which is about 50% of the population. The proportionate stratified random sampling technique was adopted for the

selection of the sample for the study. Each of the three categories of respondents (administrators, coaches and players) for the study formed a stratum from where 50% respondents are drawn. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study.

The research instrument used for the study was a guided constructed questionnaire on the sociological variables influencing the Nigeria Premier League as perceived by sports administrators, coaches and players. The instrument consisted of 17 items. A jury of 5 experts drawn from the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka in Anambra State of Nigeria and National Institute of Sports Nigeria validated the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach's alpha and a reliability coefficient of 0.91 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used for the analysis of data on the research questions. The criterion mean set for the study was 2.50. The hypotheses were analysed using inferential statistics of one way analysis of variance at 05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Mean Perceptions of Coaches, Sports Administrators and Players on corrupt practices (as a sociological variable) confronting the Nigeria premier league

One-way Descriptive Responses

Descriptive									
95% Confidence Interval for Mean									
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Q.CP	Coach	45	3.1037	.55878	.08330	2.9358	3.2716	2.00	4.00
	Administrator	211	3.1663	.46437	.03197	3.1033	3.2293	2.17	4.00
	Player	274	3.2408	.38450	.02323	3.1950	3.2865	1.00	4.00
	Total	530	3.1995	.43586	.01893	3.1623	3.2367	1.00	4.00

Criterion mean=2.50

The one way descriptive responses on corrupt practices as a sociological problem confronting the Nigeria premier league shows that mean perception is above criterion mean of 2.50. This implies that corrupt practices were perceived as one of the sociological variables influencing the Nigeria premier league.

Table 2: Mean Perceptions of Coaches, Sports Administrators and Players on coaches' quality (as a sociological variable) influencing the Nigeria

premier league

One-way Descriptive Responses

Descriptive									
95% Confidence Interval for Mean									
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Q.QC	Coach	45	2.8704	.42919	.06398	2.7414	2.9993	2.17	4.00
	Administrator	211	3.1253	.56420	.03884	3.0487	3.2018	1.50	4.00
	Player	274	2.8837	.56554	.03417	2.8164	2.9510	1.00	4.00
	Total	530	2.9787	.56655	.02461	2.9304	3.0271	1.00	4.00

Criterion mean=2.50

The one way descriptive responses on quality of coaching as a sociological variable was considered as a problem confronting the Nigeria premier league because the mean perception is above criterion mean of 2.50. It implies that quality of coaching were perceived to be low and considered to be sociological problem influencing the Nigeria premier league.

Table 3: Mean Perceptions of Coaches, Sports Administrators and Players on fans attitude (as a sociological variable) influencing the Nigeria premier league

One-way Descriptive Responses

Descriptive									
95% Confidence Interval for Mean									
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Q.FS	Coach	45	3.2400	.53189	.07929	3.0802	3.3998	2.00	4.00
	Administrator	211	3.4218	.35092	.02416	3.3742	3.4694	2.20	4.00
	Player	273	3.2363	.47203	.02857	3.1800	3.2925	2.20	5.20
	Total	529	3.3106	.44222	.01923	3.2728	3.3484	2.00	5.20

The one way descriptive responses on fans attitude as a sociological problem influencing the Nigeria premier league shows that mean perception is above criterion mean of 2.50. It implies that fans' negative attitude was perceived as sociological problem influencing the Nigeria premier league.

Table 4: ANOVA Summary Table for Perception of Sports Administrators, Coaches and Players on Corrupt Practices as a Sociological variable

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	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.112	2	.556	2.949	.053
Within Groups	99.382	527	.189		
Total	100.495	529			

*P<0.05 SIGNIFICANT

Table 4; The result of ANOVA table of perception of sports administrators, coaches and players on corrupt practices influencing the Nigeria Premier League revealed the mean square of .556 and .189 with significant P-value of .053. It implies that the hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected.

Table 5: ANOVA Summary Table for Perception of Sports Administrators, Coaches and Players on Quality of Coaches (as a Sociological variable) Influencing the Nigeria Premier League

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.534	2	3.767	12.235	.000
Within Groups	162.266	527	.308		
Total	169.800	529			

P<0.001 HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT

Table 5; The result of ANOVA table of perception of sports administrators, coaches and players on coaches quality as a sociological problem influencing the Nigeria Premier League revealed the mean square of 3.767 and .308 with significant P-value of .000 and F value at 12.235. It implies that the hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected.

Table 6: ANOVA Summary Table for Perception of Sports Administrators, Coaches and Players on fans attitude (as a Sociological Variable) influencing the growth of the Nigeria Premier League

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.342	2	2.171	11.545	.000
Within Groups	98.914	526	.188		
Total	103.256	528			

P<0.001 HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT

Table 5; The result of ANOVA table of perception of sports administrators, coaches and players on coaches quality as a sociological problem influencing the Nigeria Premier League revealed the mean square of 2.171 and .188 with significant P-value of .000 and F value at 11.545. It implies that the hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected.

Discussion

The results from the study show that there is significant difference in the perceptions of sport administrators coaches and players on the sociological problems influencing the Nigeria Premier League. Coaches and players perceptions on the sociological problems influencing the Nigeria Premier League are not significantly different. The findings from the study revealed that bias attitude of officiating officials, club managers giving bribe and fixing officiating officials, coaches influencing match officials to gain undue favour, undue favouritism by coaches and club managers in selecting of players, influencing the board of NFL to assign officials and diverting of funds meant for the Nigeria Premier League are social problems otherwise known as corrupt practices influencing the Nigeria premier League. Weighted mean perceptions were above the criterion mean of 2.50. The finding is in line with Ajanonwu (2008) who identify corrupt practices as a problem facing the Nigeria Premier League. In addition, Anibeze (2009), Omorodion (2009) accused Nigeria referees of being corrupt in their officiating. In their accusation they cited the non utilization of Nigeria referees during important international competition as a pointer to corrupt attitude of the officials.

The findings from the study affirmed to the assertions of Musa (2007) and Al-Ghazali (2009) that corruption, and bias attitude of referees may be some problems facing the Nigeria Premier League. Similarly the findings from the study is in line with Anibeze (2008) who asserted that there may be a strong cartel fixing corrupt practices such as helping in assigning referees to club, greed among coaches and sports administrators in the Nigeria Premier League. The findings from the study revealed that club managers give bribe and fix officiating officials. Similarly the result shows that funds meant for the Nigeria Premier League are diverted. Influencing the board of the Nigeria Premier League in

order to assign officials was identified as a problem influencing the League. Undue favouritism by coaches and club managers was also identified as a problem confronting the Nigeria Premier League.

The perceptions of coaches, sport administrators and players from the result of the study have shown that a lot of corrupt practices are within the Nigeria Premier League. The findings are in agreement with the views of Adesanya (1992) who stated that football lovers, sportsmen, sports women and sports analyst have been commenting on the corrupt practices within the Nigeria Premier league.

The study revealed that the Nigeria Premier League lack quality coaches. The success of an athlete and talent building rest on quality coaching from certificated and knowledgeable coaches. This assertion is in line with Ikulayo(2003), Boye, Money, and Eboh (2006) who are of the view that coaches are at the centre of any sports in building talents in athletes.

Philippe and Nathalie (2007) corroborated this finding by observing that knowledgeable coaches have strong influence on athletes. The findings from this study is further corroborated by Ajanonwun (2008) who asserted that Nigeria League is filled with inept coaches who are not abreast with modern training techniques. An interesting part of this study is that coaches, sports administrators and players hold similar view about character building i.e. ability to instil good moral character. Their mean responses are not significantly different. There is a strong indication from the study that coaches in the Nigeria Premier League lack ability to instill good moral character in players because of their quest to win at all cost ignoring the good character development aspect of sports.

It is obvious that the problem of quality of coaches as identified in this present study is greatly influencing the Nigeria Premier League. The success of any sports engagement is influenced by the quality of coaches handling the game. Quality coaching is a product of quality play. The result of the findings in this study has further revealed that quality of coaches plays a vital role in the growth and development of sports talents.

The result from the study revealed that sport administrators, coaches and players perceptions on fans/spectators attitude (as a social variable) influencing the Nigeria Premier League were significantly different. The mean perception as indicated in the study revealed that fan show negative attitude toward the Nigeria Premier League.

The study further revealed that there is poor attendance to matches by fans and to corroborate the findings it was found out that lack of excitement affects attendance of fans to the Nigerian Premier League matches. The findings from the study is in line with studies and theories by Sloan (1979); Wann, Schrande, and Wilson (1999) that described the benefits of sports fan role including self-worth, escape from work and tedious aspect of life, excitement, entertainment, a sense of achievement, positive stress, group membership and

socialization. Anything short of the above will lead to lack of interest and involvement. The popularity of the European League is traceable to the high level of involvement and interest of sports fans (Lieberman, 1991). The findings from this study is further corroborated by Musa (2007) who asserted that despite the love for soccer by Nigerians there is still poor attitude, interest and attention towards the Nigeria football League, especially the Premier League.

The result of the study also shows that lack of identification affects attendance. This is further corroborated by Money, Boye and Eboh (2006) that stated that there is lack of club identity by Nigerians with the Nigeria Premier League clubs as noticeable in the foreign leagues where many Nigerians fans are identified by club names. The study however revealed that there are different views expressed by sports administrators players and coaches on the various dimensions of the variables being studied as commonality of opinions could not be identified.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study revealed that Nigeria premier league as was perceived by sports administrators, coaches and players is influenced with sociological problems like corrupt practices, poor quality coaches and poor fan attitude towards attendance and involvement. It is pertinent to state that the low level of interest by Nigerians in the football premier league is traceable to these sociological variables studied. These prevailing situations have affected the standard of the league, spectatorialism and followership. That is why most Nigerians appear to be more interested in the English premier league without support to the Nigerian premier league. The English premier league has attracted more followership and support among Nigerians than the Nigerian premier league. The success of any national football team is strongly rooted around a strong and formidable national premier league hence, the board of Nigerian premier league need to rise up to tackling these sociological problems influencing the league.

The following recommendations are suggested so as to improve the standard of the Nigeria premier league

- i. It is recommended that any corrupt practices identified within the Nigeria premier league be tried by a disciplinary committee and any erring person be brought to book.
- ii. Only tested and proven technocrats who are physical education experts and sports related professionals should be saddled with running of the board of the Nigeria premier league. They should however be members from the twenty clubs that make up the league
- iii. The services of quality coaches should be engaged to handle clubs. This will help bring quality play in the Nigeria premier league. The much watched European premier league is as a result of the quality of play.

- iv. With improved quality of play fans' negative attitude toward the Nigeria premier league will be addressed.
- v. Nigerians should cultivate a more positive attitude towards the improvement of the league by way of sponsorship and aggressive marketing.

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