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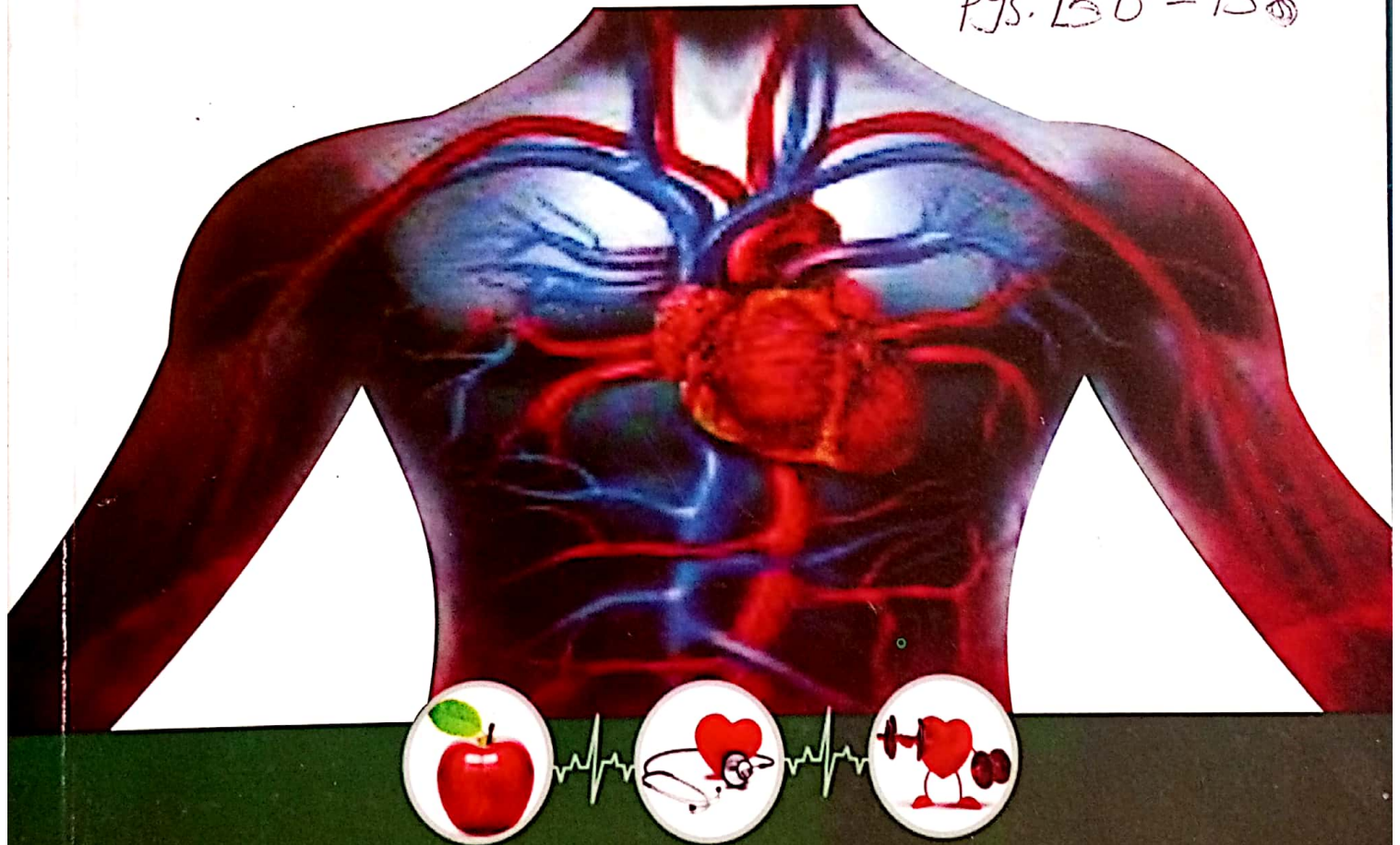
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INFLUENCE OF SPORTS BETTING ON THE INTEGRITY OF SPORTS AMONG PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL CLUBS IN KWARA STATE

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Abstract

It is beyond doubt that sports eminently thrive by the grace of its integrity. The mere semblance of dishonesty, manipulation or corruption and unethical behaviour among football clubs often leads to pure loathing of sports authority with all its potentials. This study examined the influence of sports betting on sports integrity among professional football clubs in Kwara state. The objectives of the study were to: (i) determine if sports betting leads to unethical behaviour (match-fixing) (ii) investigate the influence of sports betting on football players' attitude and (iii). Investigate if sports betting influences bias officiating. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of three hundred and fifteen (315) athletes and club managers in professional football clubs in Kwara State. All the 315 respondents representing 100% of the population were purposively selected and used for this study. Researcher designed structured questionnaire validated by three experts in related disciplines was used for data collection. Reliability co-efficient of $r=.86$ was obtained through test re-test method using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). Three null hypotheses were tested using Chi-square (χ^2) at 0.05 alpha level. The findings revealed that: Sports betting though unethical behaviour, players' behaviour and bias officiating have significant influence on sports integrity among professional football clubs in Kwara State. The study concluded that Sports betting leads to unethical behavior, Football players' poor attitude and bias officiating among professional football clubs in Kwara State. It was therefore, recommended that Sports administrators and football governing body should create more awareness programmes to check the participation in sports betting and protect sports integrity among professional football clubs in Kwara State. Sports administrators should develop and implement programmes that will restrain both players and sports lovers from influencing the outcome of football competition because of financial gain through sports betting.

Keywords: Sports betting, unethical behaviour, sports integrity, athletes behaviour

Introduction

It is beyond doubt that sports eminently thrive by the grace of its integrity. The mere semblance of dishonesty, manipulation or corruption and unethical behaviour in sports often leads to pure loathing of sports authority with all its potentials. Sports administrators, therefore, have a great responsibility in protecting sports integrity. In an attempt to protect the sports affair and ethics, sports governing bodies faces numerous challenges, both from within and outside world.

Sports betting currently is a noteworthy type of business ventures among sports lovers in Kwara State. Whenever any professional football event is organized, especially, major football leagues/competitions, fans apart from watching the match also placed a bet on the results with the aim of making a financial gain. Nower and Blaszczyński (2014) asserted that sport betting is the umbrella term used for the betting action involving the prediction of a sporting event and placing a wager on the outcome of football event in order to win price/ money, as one of the most popular forms of entrepreneurial ventures in the state and world at large. Ikeagwu, (2012) asserted that sports' betting typically involves wager being placed on sports such as football, basketball, baseball, hockey, rugby, boxing, horse racing, car races, tennis, and more.

Betting is largely expressive economic and social activities in history like football betting in Nigeria where it is now highly practised and fast becoming a popular space for resources exchange within the capitalist remit. Usually, sports is aimed at entertainment and leisure, Olayinka and Fageyinbo (2015) reported that sports serve both social and therapeutic purposes across social contexts, this shows that sport, for instance, football, has diverse appeals and are multi-contextual in purposes and manifestations. According to Nower and Blaszczyński (2014) fans take their "being a fan" further through the expressive economy for gains and loss with regards to Marxian survival of the fittest in the capitalist' directed settings. Football wagering takes usually the form of games' results predictions made by fans. Fans that predict correctly are rewarded and those whose predictions were wrong lost and are financially punished by losing their money and this may affect their original intention for sports as entertaining and recreational activities. Sports betting is quickly turning into the order of the day among sports lovers and the general public in Kwara State as sports fans go beyond a fan and stake a higher amount of money on football matches.

Ikeagwu, (2012) further buttressed that betting on football matches has raised serious concern as it is affecting the integrity of sports in the 21st century. A huge number of sports personnel, athletes, sports officials and spectators in Kwara State play the football pools each week are involved in sports betting activities solemnly for financial gain. In sports wagering, sports integrity saw the broadest prominence influence through the 19th century and into the mid-20th century. From the 20th century, sports betting started influencing individuals to free enthusiasm as football started gaining popularity up notoriety in the 21st century. Such a significant number of methodologies were utilized to pull in more bettors (Ikeagwu, 2012). In rare cases will one find people especially sports fans not talking about a particular sports betting activity or the other such that it is now becoming a household issue (Samuel & Kelly, 2017).

Following the integrity of sports, many of the concerns raised that the saturation marketing of sports betting related has highlighted within sports extend to wider concerns with issues of corruption and integrity among professional football clubs. A football official on the field negotiation is a sort of petty (as distinct from heavily criminal) corruption that distorts a football

outcome which could endanger peoples' lives or creating a huge societal issue. For instance, the player(s) in some circumstances winning a match happens to be bargaining between two teams to win or draw a match, eventually with one team bribing the other (Andreff, 2016). Gorse and Chadwick, (2013) evidenced spontaneous cooperation between rivals in sports contests. In a football match, players from the two teams speak to each other or simply signal to the opponents, by kicking the ball aimlessly and lazily, their willingness to exert less effort and fix the result. Such corruption usually involves illegal financial gain (Wladimir, 2016). This kind of corruption emerges between sports insiders (athletes/players, coaches, referees, umpires and sports managers from the club level up to international sport governing bodies).

Rigging football match plays a crucial role in its outcome, the assignment of a professional football referee is extremely complex and highly discretionary. Matches were classified on different levels depending on their importance for the championship final outcome. Corruption in sport is an illegal, immoral or unethical activity that attempts to deliberately distort the outcome of a sporting contest for the personal material gain of one or more parties involved in the activity (Gorse & Chadwick, 2013). From an economic standpoint, corruption in the sport was initially meant to refer to any action that aims at and succeeds in earning money by distorting the outcome of sports contests by means of bribery/throwing a game for money or non-monetary compensation. Nowadays, corruption in sport has extended to other unethical behaviours such as match-fixing, bias officiating, doping, athletes deliberately underperforming among others.

Sports corruption may be engineered by an athlete(s) or official(s) to make a make financial gain through betting or in response to a bribe offered by bettors/spectators. In all cases, the athlete is confronted by an opportunity which can be represented as considering the expected benefits and costs of choosing to commit the crime. As a result of such growth, it is clear that sport betting markets is leading (Forrest, Mchale & McAuley, 2019). Match-fixing may also be regarded as a special arrangement among club governing body in the form of insider trading before the match is been staged.

Research by Hume (2013) on match-fixing and illegal sports betting discusses the relationship between professional sports and sports betting, noting that in recent years the relationship between the two sectors has become closer and more complex; that betting agencies are now major sponsors of a number of professional sport clubs and individual athletes and the wagering industry is a major financial contributor to grassroots sporting clubs in the state. Hume (2013); Kelly; (2011), Rodenberg and Kaburakis (2013), make several key points about the vulnerability of professional sports to the infiltration of organized unethical sports behaviour in relation to sports betting. This study discusses the susceptibility of sports to match-fixing and/or organized corruption which is affecting sports integrity. The global nature of sport is that sports are no longer protected thus exposing sports, athletes, officials and the public to potential ethical breaches that take place during sports competitions. In terms of sports betting specifically, a

principal threat to the integrity of professional sports is the use of inside information, where an individual might have knowledge of whether a team's star player is injured, and placing a large wager on the team losing the match before the injury is made public (Lord, 2013).

Beyond concerns with corruption in sport, issues related to probity more broadly have been documented by Gleeson (2011) in the review of *sports betting regulation*. The review examined the regulation of sports betting as a way of assessing the need to strengthen public confidence in the integrity of the sport. The review specifically looked at the need to protect the integrity of the betting that takes place on sports (no match-fixing), protecting betting consumers (avoiding scams), and providing sporting bodies with a fair share of the revenues from betting that takes place in their sports. However, sports integrity may also be affected through any form of practices by the football players leading to the use of specific drugs with an objective to improve performance or stamina in sports such as doping. This is considered as unethical behaviour in sports as it is affecting and damaging the true image of sports in Kwara state.

Sylvan, (2018) asserted that corruption and unethical behaviours especially among professional football clubs may have negative consequences which may dilute the 100% competitive and suspense nature of sport, athletes deliberately underperforming, poor officiating and even doping for optimal performance, lying, poor psychosocial adjustment, poor spirit of sportsmanship, higher rates of irritation among others (Delfabbro, Winefield, & Anderson, 2009).

It is observed by the researcher that over the years in Kwara State and in Nigeria at large there had been changes in the attitudes and approach of people most especially sports lovers towards sports most especially, football matches. In 2010, a clear example was the introduction of sports betting outlets and online betting which has now gained ground among football clubs' managers, officials, players and spectators in Kwara state. It is on this premise and among other reasons that this study is designed to investigate the influence of sports betting on the integrity of sports among professional sports clubs in Kwara State.

Statement of the Problem

The researcher observed that for decades, many football lovers/fans have been speculating about corruption among football clubs in Kwara State. Much of the speculation has centred on biases of football officials, match-fixing among club managers, poor officiating, players' behaviour among others. Despite the cacophony of societal rumours booster clamouring, and message board fodder about sports integrity, there has been virtually no empirical examination of these factors influencing the integrity of sports among football clubs in Kwara State. Sports betting influenced football matches greatly to the extent that it's diluting the unpredictability nature of a football match, the true and genuine spirit of fairness, equality and sportsmanship.

The implication of corruption and unethical behaviours is that sports are no longer protected thus exposing sports, athletes, officials and the public to potential ethical breaches that take place during sports competitions. As a consequence, attention has been directed towards professional football clubs in Kwara state; football players, officials, and even spectators have embraced sports wagering, with the rapid development of sports betting in the state. The researcher observes that there are many incidences of match-fixing, doping, bias and football players deliberately underperforming have shown to have far-reaching negative implications on sports image. It is in the light of these identified research gaps that this study titled "Influence of sports betting on the integrity of sports Among professional football clubs in Kwara State" was carried out.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study;

1. Does unethical behaviours in sports' betting influence the integrity of sports among professional football clubs in Kwara State?
2. Does players' behaviour through sports bet influence sports integrity among professional football clubs in Kwara State?
3. Does bias officiate influence sports integrity among professional football clubs in Kwara State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses was tested in the study.

1. Unethical behaviour in sports' betting will not have a significant influence on sports integrity among professional football clubs in Kwara State.
2. players' behaviour will not have a significant influence on sports integrity among professional football clubs in Kwara State.
3. Bias officiating in will not have any significant influence on sports integrity among professional football clubs in Kwara State.

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, descriptive research design of survey type was used for this study. The population of the study comprised of three hundred and fifteen (315) athletes and club managers in professional football clubs in Kwara State. All the 315 respondents representing 100% of the population were sampled for this study. The researcher designed structured questionnaire validated by three experts in related disciplines was used for data collection. For the reliability of the instrument, forty (40) of the questionnaires were administered on the respondents during club training section until the required number of copies was obtained. The reliability coefficient of $r=.86$ was obtained through test re-test method using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). In order to draw the desired respondents, purposive sampling technique was employed to select all the recognized football clubs in Kwara state for the study. The researcher administers the copies of the questionnaire to both player and manager in each

football clubs in Kwara state with the help of 4 research assistants in the study until the required copies of the questionnaire had been distributed. Descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentage were used to analyze and answer the research questions while inferential statistics of Chi-Square at 0.05 alpha level was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

Result

The results of the three hypotheses tested in the study are presented below;

Table 1: Chi-square analysis result showing the influence of unethical behaviour, Players behaviour and Bias Officiating on sports integrity among professional football clubs in Kwara State.

SN	Row Total	Cal.V. (χ^2)	Sig	Remark
1	315	162.52	0.001	Ho ₁ Rejected
2	315	187.13	0.000	Ho ₂ Rejected
3	315	252.65	0.003	Ho ₃ Rejected

The results of hypothesis one to three on Table 1 shows that calculated Chi-square value of 162.52, 187.13 and 252.65 with 9 degrees of freedom respectively are greater than 0.05 alpha level. Since the significant levels of 0.001, 0.000 and 0.003 respectively are less than 0.05 alpha level the null hypotheses one, two and three are rejected. This means that sports betting leads to unethical behaviour, players' behaviours and bias officiating among professional football clubs in Kwara State which has a significant influence on sports integrity.

Discussion

The findings discussed are based on the influence of sports betting (unethical behaviour, players behaviour and bias officiating) on sports integrity among professional football clubs in Kwara State.

The finding on hypothesis one revealed that sports betting promote unethical behaviour among professional football clubs in Kwara State. The needs to make financial gain led most sports managers to get involved in unethical activities during the football competition. Such behaviours include match-fixing, bribery, disruption of games, selling of games among others. The finding corroborates the study of Ikeagwu, (2012) which reported that betting on football matches has raised serious concern as it is affecting the integrity of sports in the 21st century. A huge number of sports personnel, athletes, sports officials and spectators in Kwara State play the football pools each week are involved in sports betting activities solemnly for financial gain. In sports wagering, sports integrity saw the broadest prominence influence through the 19th century and into the mid-20th century. However, contradicts that of Olayinka and Fageyinbo (2015)

reported that sports serve both social and therapeutic purposes across social contexts, this shows that sport, for instance, football, has diverse appeals and are multi-contextual in purposes and manifestations. The finding of the present study could be attributed to a lack of exposure to the aims and purpose of sports in society. The finding of this study thus indicates the need to grow awareness about sports betting involvement that is beneficial to the individuals with a special goal of protecting football development in Kwara State.

The findings on hypothesis two revealed that sports betting influences players behaviour which affect sports integrity among professional football clubs in Kwara States. Most football players put up bad behaviour by deliberately underperform during football competitions for financial gain. This finding is similar to that of Forrest, Mchale and McAuley, (2019) who showed that sports corruption may be engineered by an athlete (s) or footballer (s) to make a make financial gain through betting or in response to a bribe offered by bettors/spectators. In all cases, the athlete is confronted by an opportunity which can be represented as considering the expected benefits and costs of choosing to commit the crime. As a result of such growth, it is clear that sport betting markets is leading (Forrest, Mchale & McAuley, 2019).

The findings on hypothesis three revealed that sports betting motivates bias officiating among officials which affect sports integrity in football clubs in Kwara State. Most football officials deliberately misapplication of the rules of the football game and disrupts the play for financial gain. This finding is in line with that of Sylvan, (2018) discovered that corruption and unethical behaviours especially among professional football clubs may have negative consequences which may dilute the 100% competitive and suspense nature of sport, athletes deliberately underperforming, poor officiating and even doping for optimal performance, lying, poor psychosocial adjustment, poor spirit of sportsmanship, higher rates of irritation among others (Delfabbro, Winefield, & Anderson, 2009).

Conclusion

1. Sports betting leads to unethical behaviour such as match-fixing among professional football clubs in Kwara State.
2. Football players' poor attitude is influenced by sports betting which affects sports integrity among professional football clubs in Kwara State.
3. There is a high record of bias officiating influenced by sports betting.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made, based on the findings of the study

1. Sports administrators and football governing body should create more awareness programmes to check the participation in sports betting and protect sports integrity among professional football clubs in Kwara State.
2. Sports administrators should develop and implement programmes that will restrain both players and sports lovers from influencing the outcome of football competition because of financial gain through sports betting.

3. The football governing body should improve on the officiating standard and discourage bias officiating through sports betting among officials.

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