

INFLUENCE OF SUPPORTIVE SPECTATORS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF CLUBS AT NIGERIA PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of supportive spectators' on the performance of clubs at Nigeria professional football league. The research questions and hypotheses were formulated in line with the research objectives. Descriptive survey research design was used and the population of the study comprised of ninety thousand, two hundred and thirty-seven (90,237) spectators at professional football league matches in Nigeria. Sample sizes of 675 respondents were selected using multistage sampling technique. A self-developed questionnaire on the influence of supportive spectators on the performance of Nigeria professional football league clubs was used. The instrument was pilot tested using Pearson's Product Moment correlation (PPMC) statistical analysis that yielded 0.824 which showed that the instrument was reliable. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the demographic characteristics of the respondents, mean and Standard Deviation was used to answer the research questions, while one sample t-test was used to test the research hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings of the study revealed that Supportive spectators significantly and positively had influence on performance of Nigeria Professional Football League clubs. The study recommended among others that Football players should always be given orientation on the need to adopt all necessary strategies during competitions at the Nigeria Professional Football League and finally Club managers are recommended to engage the services of trained stewards to organize and maintain orderliness of supportive spectators during football matches.

Keywords: *Clubs, Influence, Performance, Supportive spectators, Professional football league*

Introduction

Football is one of the most popular sports in the world as well as in Nigeria, (Fallan, 2011). In addition to sponsorship fund, the popularity and high yielding in football revenue is dependent on spectators' attendance at stadia. It could be noted that in a match of national and international standard, only some thousands of spectators watch the match live in a stadium but millions of spectators must have viewed it via television, read it on the pages of newspapers and sport magazines all over the world. All these people that pay directly or indirectly by purchasing ticket to be physically present at the stadia and those who view or read it constitute the sport audience or spectators. Fallan (2011) posited that the presence of spectators at the stadia is essential for each sport to survive. Football spectators who are from a wide age range and age group may have different motivations for social facilitation

The nature of spectator's effect upon performance in football is not well understood in natural environments although progress has been made in this regard which is evident in the dependence of home advantage in football match. When the crowd gives it to players (spectators display of positive support to the team), the players give it back to the spectators (players improves on their performance to impress the spectators) (Fallan, 2011). Schwart and Barsky (2011) found that the magnitude of home advantage significantly increases in crowd density. Dohmen (2008) noted that spectators may directly influence a competitive outcome by affecting player performance. This is supported by Cratty (2018) that the presence of an audience helps to raise the tension level of the performer.

There is a stepping up of the arousal level and an increase in performance. This is the result of the need to be well thought of by audience. The audience becomes more ego-involved and can tolerate less frustration in the competition. Supportive spectators may enhance a player's performance through social support, inadvertently harm a (home) player's performance through social pressure or intentionally harm a

(visiting) player's performance through conscious techniques of distraction (Applebaum, 2013). Furthermore, Sutter and Kocher (2004) found that referees are, on average, partial to the home team in making discretionary decisions. They explained that this may be an unintentional reaction to processes of positive and negative reinforcement undertaken by the home crowd. If the counterproductive social pressure effect dominates the sum of all other productive crowd then sympathetic crowds will exert a negative influence upon relative home performance (Applebaum, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

The need for excellent performance of any football club especially in the league matches accounts for the presence of spectators which helps raise the tension level of the performer (Ajisafe, 2009). The athlete becomes more ego involved and can tolerate less frustration in the competition (Cratty 2018). It is expected that each club strives hard to win its league matches regardless of where it plays. Evidence shows that the outcome of league matches of the clubs has not always been favourable especially in away matches. The power of others to influence an individual's behaviour is readily apparent in problems of imitation, conformity, competition, helping and aggression (Broughton, 2014). Most organized sports are carried out in the presence of others. These others may be spectators, fellow competitors, coaches, Teachers and team-mates or officials. However, it is perceived that there are some hindrances as some clubs may suffer high tension due to influence of supportive spectators, potential distraction caused by hostile spectators which can affect the performance of a club. Furthermore, stage fright may be suffered by clubs appearing in a stadium with very large crowd, as well as inability of clubs to cope with the potential negative effect of spectators. Based on the premier league records, clubs in the Professional league record more wins at their home matches than their away matches prompted the researcher to investigate what influence the spectators have on the performance of clubs in the Nigeria professional League. The study will bridge the gap between the impacts of supportive spectators behaviour on performance in team sports.

Objective of the Study

The purpose of this research work is to:

Examine the influence of supportive spectators on the performance of clubs at Nigeria professional Football league.

Hypothesis

There is no significant influence of supportive spectators on the performance of Nigeria professional football league clubs.

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, a descriptive survey research design was used. The population for this study comprised of ninety thousands, two hundred and thirty-seven (90,237) spectators at professional football league matches in Nigeria. This was based on the record collected from the Match Commissioners reports (2018/2019 season). For the purpose of this study, a multistage sampling procedure was used in this study. This included stratified, cluster, simple random and proportionate sampling procedures. First, the population was stratified into six sports zones which are North East, North Central, North West, South West, South East and South using cluster-sampling technique, each sports zone was considered as cluster and three professional club was selected in each zone, using simple random sampling technique (fish box method). Furthermore, based on variation of spectators' attendance at the various state/clubs selected, a proportionate sampling technique was used to select from the total population which was the respondents' for the study. A total number of six hundred and seventy-five (675) respondents were formed. The sample of the study was guided by research Advisors, (2006) which opined that for a population of ninety thousand two hundred and thirty-seven (90237), six-hundred and seventy-five (675) is an adequate sample.

Based on the confidence level of 99% with a marginal error of 5.0%, the sample gotten for the study from the population of ninety thousand two hundred and thirty- seven (90.237), a sample size of six hundred and fifty-nine (659) using research Advisor (2006) was used. Attrition of 16 questionnaires were added to make the sample size to be six hundred and seventy-five (675). The purpose of this study, a self-developed questionnaire on the influence of spectators on the performance of Nigeria professional football league was used. The questionnaire was a close ended likert's modified four (4) -point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA)= 4, Agree (A)=3, Disagree (D)=2, and Strongly Disagree (SD)=1. The data collected was analyzed using one sample t-test to test the research hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The influence of supportive spectators on the performance of Nigeria professional football league clubs as examined in Table 1 was isolated for this test. The one sample t-test was used for the test because of the need to establish whether the respondents agreed that the supportive spectators influence performance of the clubs or not.

Table 1: One sample t-test on supportive spectators' influence on the performance of Nigeria professional football league clubs

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t-value	df	p-value
Supportive spectators	675	3.44	0.418	0.016	58.204	675	.000
Test mean	675	2.50	0.000	0.000			

P =0.000 (< 0.05).

Table 1 revealed a calculated value of 58.204 while the critical value is 1.96. The respondents as indicated in the table were of the opinion that supportive spectators have significant influence on performance of Nigeria professional football league clubs. This is indicated with observed t-value of 58.204 obtained at 675 degree of freedom and an observed level of significance of $P=0.000 (< 0.05)$. The mean score of 3.44 is significantly higher than the midpoint average of 2.50. These observations provide sufficient evidence for the rejection of the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis that there is no significant influence of supportive spectators on the performance of Nigeria professional football league clubs is therefore rejected. The result showed clearly that the respondents were of the view that supportive spectators have influence on the performance of Nigeria professional football league clubs.

Discussion of Findings

The result revealed that supportive spectators significantly influence the performance of Nigeria professional football league clubs. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This finding agrees with Alex Vatinis (2012) from Dan O' Brian Social Facilitation research where it was reported that the presence of spectators can facilitate performance. The model proposed that the presence of a spectator has the effect of increasing arousal (drive) in performance and will enhance the performance of a skilled individual. The finding here agrees with Sanders and Applebaum (2013) who conducted a study entitled The Supportive Crowd Effect upon Performance Production: they found that home advantage is attributes to learning factors, travel factors, and crowd bias and found that a team designated as "home team" in a contest enjoys a largely sympathetic crowd due primarily to extensive advanced season ticket sales along with crowd sympathy as significant source of home advantage.

Ajisafe (2009) stressed that the presence of others has also influence on performance. This performance effect is attributed mainly to increased arousal and activation. Empirical evidence has shown that the presence of audience might prove to be detrimental during the acquisition of skill stage. However, a skill well learned could be executed in a consistent and stable manner. Highly developed skills are less prone to distractions of the audience (Singer, 2015). Ganzer (2016) stated that audience presence is found to be

detrimental to the learning of new responses but facilitates the performance of previously acquired skills. The type of personality present has influence on sports performance. Ajisafe (2009) noted that anytime the former Governor of Borno, Abdulmumini Aminu was present, the players of El-Kanemi Warriors football club were inspired to perform better. He further argued that his presence during matches has contributed to the success of the club at home matches.

Similarly, study was conducted by Edwards (2017) on the influence of home-field on the performance of professional and college football. Using newspapers, sporting news and the press guides provided by the professional league, the results of 349 professional and 577 college football games played during 1974, 1975 and 1976 seasons were gathered. The results showed that 190 or 54.4% of the professional games were won at home. The average number of points scored by home teams was 21-08, while the average number of points scored by the visitors was 18-29.

Conclusion

On the basis of the results obtained from this study along with the limitations, the following conclusions were drawn: Supportive activities of spectators motivate better performances of clubs at Nigeria professional football league.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. There is a need to encourage the spectators - pulls incentives introduced by the League Management Company (Organizer of Nigeria Professional Football League) in the country by all Clubs in the professional league.
- ii. Mass media orientation on positive spectatorship could be a step in the right direction by Clubs managements of Nigeria Professional Football League.

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