

ASSESSMENT OF THE STRUCTURE OF NIGERIA PREMIER FOOTBALL LEAGUE CLUBS IN CONFEDERATION OF AFRICA FOOTBALL COMPETITIONS

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Abstract

The Purpose Of The Study Was To Assess The Structure Of Nigeria Premier Football League Clubs In Confederation Of Africa Football Competitions. Ex-post Facto Research Design Was Used To Carry Out The Study. The Sample Size For This Study Was All Npfl Players, Coaches And Management. Stratified, Purposive And Simple Random Sampling Techniques Were Used To Select 360 Respondents Used In The Study. A Self-structured Questionnaire Was Used To Collect Data For This Study. The Instrument Was Pilot Tested Usingacronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient And The Results Obtained Was 0.889. The Descriptive Statistic Of Frequency Counts And Percentage Were Used To Analyse The Bio-data, Mean And Standard Deviation Were Used To Answer The Research Questions, While Inferential Statistics Of Kruskal-wallis Was Used To Test The Hypothesis At 0.05 Alpha Level Of Significance. The Findings Revealed That There Is Influence Of The Structure Of Nigeria Premier Football League Clubs In Confederation Of Africa Football Competitions (**$h = 12.06$, $P = .003 < 0.05$**). The Study However, Recommends That For The Interim Management Committee (imc) To Truly Improve The Performance Of Npfl Clubs In Caf Competitions, They Must Improve The Quality Of The League And Create An Enabling Business Environment.

Key Words: Assessment, Performance, Influence, Structure, Nigeria Premier Football League, Confederation Of Africa Football.

Introduction

According To Nigeria National League, The Historical Antecedents Of Football In Nigeria Are Traceable To The Early Days Of The Twentieth Century, And Were Introduced By Baron Mulford, A Briton, Who Organized Weekly Matches Between European And Nigerian Youths In Lagos. Regional Football Associations Existed In Calabar, Port Harcourt, And Other Coastal Cities Before 1945. It Was Highly Remarkable When Pa Mulford Emerged As The First Chairman Of The Then League Regulator Nigeria Football Association (nfa) In 1945. However, Professional League Was Introduced In 1990 When Air Vice Marshal Bayolawal, Who Was The Honorable Minister Of Social Development, Youth And Sports At That Time, Appointed Some Experts On 8 February 1989 To Work Out Modalities For The Introduction Of Professional Soccer In The Country (national Sports Policy Of Nigeria, 2019).

Nigerian Clubs Will Continue To Struggle On The Continents Until The Right Things Are Done And Things Are Done Right. How Do You Expect A League Where Champions Emerged Through Crook Ways To Represent Nigeria Very Well At Caf Football Competitions? In The Last Four Or Five Years, The Nigeria Professional Football League (npfl) Has Become The Laughing Stock Of The Global Community. We Have Not Had True Champions As The League Either Stops Abruptly Due To The Indecision On The Part Of The League Organizers, The League Management Company (lmc) Or The League Did Not Resume After A Normal Break. The Most Ridiculous Was When The League Went On Recess In 2018 Because Of The World Cup That Was Not Staged In Nigeria. This Was When All Top Leagues In The World And Some African Countries Even Concluded Their Own Seasons. In The True Sense Of It, How Do We Expect Nigeria Representatives In Caf-organized Competitions To Make Any Impact When They Emerge Through The Back Door?

According To Eguma (2020), Administrators Need To Do Better In The Area Of Motivation And Proper Welfare Of The Team If They Want The Players And The Coaches To Give Their Best. The Former U-23 Assistant Coach Also Admonished Club Administrators To Be Patient With The Coaches While Lamenting The Incessant Sacking Of Coaches. “some Clubs Do Not Respect Contractual Agreements Which Put Them At Loggerheads With Players And When Players Are Playing With Divided Minds, They Are Psychologically Down And Won't Prepare Well For Such A Tournament. Some Teams Owe A Backlog Of Salaries And Bonuses And So Forth”. “the Coaches Too Are Not Given The Opportunity To Plan And When They Don't Plan It Will Affect The Teams' Performance. Coaches Need Consistency In Their Planning To Get Expected Results. Players' Movement From One Club To Another With Reckless Abandon And Coaches Without Job Security Also Disrupt Plans Made By Them Because It Is The Coaches That Bear The Brunt Of Most Bad Decisions Made By The Clubs.

When Compared To The South African League, The Npfl Is Perceived As Below-par In Many Aspects. Issues Such As Player Remuneration Challenges, Fan Attitude, Playing Environment, Organization, Poor Coaching And Refereeing Contribute To The Failure Of The League To Live Up To Its Potential. “all These Things Make It Hard For Fans To Forge A Connection With The Local Teams And Get Sponsorship,” According To The Chairman Of A North-west Top Tier Club.

Although Some Football Players Are Paid Monthly Allowances As Much As N800, 000, The Payment Does Not Come As Promptly As Expected. Most Clubs Tend To Owe Players For Long Periods Of Time. In 2011, Kaduna United Players Were Not Paid For 9 Months Despite Having A Record-breaking Goal Scorer Like Jude Aneke In Their Team At The Time (**ifetoye 2020**).

Maikaba (2020) Cited In Taofeeklawal (2021), Opined That Nigerian Football Calendar Has For Long Hindered The Performance Of Clubs On The Continent, Most Clubs Are Usually Ill-prepared Since The Domestic League Is Most Often On Break At The Start Of Continental Competitions. He Said: “most Of The Time Caf Competitions Start Before Our League Season Commences Which Is Not Good. Late Commencement Of The League Season Affects Nigerian Clubs. If We Start Our Season Earlier, It Means You Will Play Some Games And Your Teams Will Be In A Very Good Shape Going Into The Caf Competitions. “but In A Situation Where You Are Not Involved In Competitive Games And You Start Caf Competitions Directly, It Will Be Difficult For Your Team Because You Will Face Teams That Are Already In A Competitive Period So It Is Going To Be Difficult.”

In Npfl 2018/19 Season Which Had 264 Games, There Were Only 28 Away Victories – Which Represents A 10.6% Away Victory Ratio. The Away Win Ratio Of The English Premier League In 2017/2018 Was 31%. Since The Epl Was Founded In The 1992/1993 Season, The Lowest Away Win Ratio Has Been 24% Which Was Obtainable In Two Back-to-back Seasons; 2019/2016

And 2016/2011. The Administration Of The League By The Lmc Leaves A Lot To Be Desired As It Seems To Take Its Cue From The Nff. Whenever There Is A Crisis At The Nff, The Lmc Would By Effect Become Unstable; Case In Point Is The Leadership Tussle Between Chris Giwa And Amajupinnick In 2018 Which Led To The Suspension Of The Npfl After 24 Games. During That Season, There Was No Champion And No Relegation. A Player Who Chose To Remain Anonymous Described It As A “wasted Season”.

Kayode (2021), A Fan Of The League Who Supports Mfm Fc Of Lagos, Adds Another Dimension To The Riddle As He Believes The League Management Company (lmc) Rigs The League And The Winner Is The Highest Bidder, Which Means There Is No Fair Competition. The Question You Should Ask; Do The Best Teams Represent Nigeria In All Competitions? No! We Can't Say They Are The Best. Let Me Tell You What Happened In The Last League (2020/2021), Nasarawa United Were Second On The Log Until Two Or Three Games To The End Of The League When They Lost Two Matches, Drew One And Lost One Of The Important Matches. The Lmc Knows Who They Want To Represent The Continent. They Prefer The Big Ones, The Ones Who Can Sponsor Them, Who Can Spend Money, Who Can Send Large Delegations To This Competition And The One That Can Dance To Their Tunes, At The Expense Of The Teams Who Can Prepare Very Well.

The Npfl Is Like A Primary School Pupil Who Is Five Foot Five Inches Tall And The Parents Believe He Is Ready To Do Jamb. That Child Will Continue To Fail Until He Is Taken Through The Stages And Properly Schooled. The Nigerian League Is Still In The Primary Stage But The Administrators, Because Of Short Sightedness And Greed, Are Pushing It For Entry Into The University. It Cannot Work!

According To Ojoye (2018), Mr. Bolajiojo-oba Once Described Nigerian Football As “cash And Carry” During A Football Seminar In Lagos In 2016, Due To The Activities Of Referees. He Said, “teams Want To Win, The Managers Know That If They Don't Win, They Are Gone; The Coach Knows That If He Doesn't Do Well, He Is Gone Too. So, What Is Happening Now (in Nigerian Football) Is Cash And Carry. And It Is Due To The Level Of Poverty Among Referees, Because Most Of Them Don't Have Any Other Means Of Livelihood.

Statement Of The Problem

Football Is One Of The Most And Perhaps One Of The Most Popular Sport And Agent For The Promotion And Propagation Of Economic And Social-political Values Of A Nation. Football Serves As A Pedestal On Which Greater Economic, Social And Political Attainments Are Built. The Strength Of A Football League Is Reflected In How Well Its Representatives Do In Continental Competitions. Based On That Simple Yardstick, How Has The Lmc Impacted The League Since Assumed Its Control? According To Irabor (2019), Plethora Of Challenges Are Facing The Nigeria Professional Football League. The Challenges Rage From Inadequate Funding Occasioned By Lack Of Sponsorship, Bad Club Organisation, Descript Facilities, Poor Players Welfare Which Is Responsible For The Exodus And Lack Of Cooperate Interest In The League Among Others.

The Immediate Past Season Was Played Without A Title Sponsor And Home Teams Were Forced To Foot The Indemnities Of The Match Officials. This Situation Led To Many Away Teams Accusing Their Hosts Of Bribing Referees To Secure Home Victories. Also, There Is Need To Organize Sensitization Seminar For Club Owners And Their Fans In Order To Discourage Them From The Win-at-all Cost Syndrome Of The Clubs. This Situation That Has Seen Opposing Fans And Match Officials Under Attack At Match Venues In Previous Seasons. Starting The League After Several Postponement Is A Welcome Development But There Is A Need To Ensure That All The Loose Ends Are Fixed.

The Record Does Not Look Good. In The Last Ten Years (2011-2021), No Nigerian Football Club Has Made It To The Final Of Either The Caf Champions League Or The Confederation Cup.

Table 1.1 Npfl Clubs Performance In Caf Competitions (2011 - 2021)

YEAR	CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE	CAF CONFEDERATION CUP
2011	Enyimba eliminated in group stage	Sunshine was eliminated in semi final
2012	Sunshine eliminated in group stage	No Nigerian side made it to group stage
2013	No Nigerian side made it into group stage	No Nigerian side made it into group stage
2014	No Nigerian side made it into group stage	No Nigerian side made it into group stage
2015	No Nigerian side made it into group stage	No Nigerian side made it into group stage
2016	Enyimba came 3 rd in group B	No Nigerian side made it into group stage
2017	No Nigeria side made it to group stages	Rivers UnitedS came last in group A
2018	No Nigeria side made it to group stages	Enyimba got eliminated in the semi - final. 3-1 on aggregate by Raja
2019	Lobi Stars finished 3 rd in Group A	Rangers 3 rd in Group A. Enymiba eliminated in ¼ final.
2020	No Nigeria side made it to group stage	Enymiba was eliminated in the ¼ final.
2021	No Nigeria side made it to group stages	

Source:<https://africanfootball.com>

Lack Of Security And Poor Officiating Has Been Major Problems For The League. A Lame Man On The Street Believes That Every Home Team Must Win Their Games, Which Is Not Correct.

The Researcher Observed That There Has Been A Steady Decline Of Team Performance Among Nigeria Premier Footballer League Clubs In Caf Interclub Footballer Competitions. This Can Be Observed In The Poor Results Produced By Nigeria Football Clubs From (2011-2012). A Little Background Will Help Us Understand Our Club Football Plight In Nigeria. For A Competition That Started In 1964 (caf Champions League), Nigerian Teams Have Been To The Finals Seven Times. Two Wins By Enyimba Football Club (2003 And 2004), Runner Up By Shooting Stars (1984 And 1996), Heartland (1988 And 2009) And Rangers (1975). But This Is Not Our Only Failure On The African Continent, We Also Failed In Caf Confederation Cup (former Known As Africa Cup Winners). No Nigerian Club Has Won The Caf Confederation Cup Since It Was Merged With Abiola Caf Cup In 1994/ 1995 Season (<https://africanfootball.com>).

Why Is It That We Are Not Living Up To Expectations In Caf Clubs Football Competitions? Many Questions Have Been Asked In The Wake Of Our Team Crashing Out In Caf Competitions? Who Is To Be Blamed? Is It The Lmc, Nff, Clubs, Player, Coaches, Or Is It The Football Culture? The Researcher In Light Of These Observations Is Prompted To Investigate Assessment Of The Structure Of Nigeria Premier League Clubs In Confederation Of African Football Competition.

Purpose Of The Study

The Purpose Of This Study Is To Assess The Structure Of Nigeria Premier Football League Clubs In Confederation Of African Football Competitions. Specifically, This Study Will Assess:

1. The Structure Of Nigeria Premier Football League Clubs.

Research Question

This Research Question Was Raised For This Study:

1. Would The Structure Of Nigeria Premier Football League Clubs Influence The Performance Of Nigeria Football Clubs In Confederation Of African Football Competitions?

Research Hypotheses

In Order To Carry Out This Research, This Hypothesis Was Formulated:

There Is No Significant Influence Of The Structure Of Nigeria Premier Football League Clubs On The Performance Of Nigerian Football Clubs In Confederation Of African Football Competitions.

Methodology

The Study Adopted Ex-post Facto Research Method. The Population Of The Study Comprised All Npfl Licenced Players, Coaches And Management. Based On Field Survey, It Was Estimated That The Population Of Players, Coaches And Management Were About One Thousand (1000) And Above.

The Sample Size For This Study Was All Npfl Players, Coaches And Management. Stratified Sampling Technique Was Used To Classify All The Npfl Clubs Into Geo-political Zone Of Nigeria. Purposive Sampling Technique Was Used To Choose Two (2) Clubs Each From The Six (6) Geo-political Zone Of Nigeria. A Simple Random Sampling Technique Was Used To Pick Twenty (20) Players Each From The Twelve (12) Clubs Chosen From The Six (6) Geo-political Zone. For The Coaches And Management Staff, Purposive Sampling Techniques Was Used To Select Five (5) Coaching Crew (chief Coach, Head Coach, Assistant Coach, Goal Keeper Trainer And Fitness Coach) And Five (5) Management (chairman, Vice Chairman, Pro, Secretary And Media Officer). In All, Three Hundred And Fifty Eight (358) Respondents Were Used For The Study.

The Descriptive Statistic Of Frequency Counts And Percentage Was Used To Analyse The Bio-data, Mean And Standard Deviation Was Used To Answer The Research Questions, While Inferential Statistics Of Kruskal – Wallis Was Used To Test All The Hypotheses At 0.05 Alpha Level Of Significance. the Bio-data Of The Respondents (players, Coaches And Management) Was Analysed Using Frequencies And Percentages.

Table 1 Presents This Analysis Using Frequencies And Percentages.

Table 1: Classification Of Respondents By Clubs

Clubs	Frequency	Percentage (%)
El Kanemi Warriors	30	8.4
Gombe United	29	8.0
Kano Pillars	30	8.4
Katsina United	29	8.0
Plateau United	30	8.4
Lobi Stars	30	8.4
Enugu Rangers	30	8.4
Enyimba	30	8.4
Shooting Stars	30	8.4
Remo Stars	30	8.4
Bendel Insurance	30	8.4
Akwa United	30	8.4
	358	100

Hypothesis One: There Is No Significant Influence Of The Structure Of Nigeria Premier Football League Clubs On The Performance Of Nigerian Football Clubs In Confederation Of African Football Competitions.

The Data Collected From The Management, Coaches And Players Were Summarized And Tested Using Non-parametric Statistics (kruskal-wallis) At 0.05% Level Of Significance. The Summary Of The Hypothesis Tested Is Presented In Table 2:

Table 2: Summary Of Kruskal-wallis Test On Structure Of Nigeria Premier

Group	N	Mean Rank	HCal	HCrt	df	P-value	Decision
Management	24	733.41					
Coaches	77	682.57	12.06	5.991	2	.003	Rejected
Players	257	583.78					
	358						

(h Cal.= 12.06, H Crt.=5.991 P=.003<0.05)

Table 2 Shows The Kruskal-wallis Statistics Calculated To Ascertain If There Is No Significant Influence Of The Structure Of Nigeria Premier Football League Clubs On The Performance Of Nigerian Football Clubs. The Table Shows That **H = 12.06, P = .003 < 0.05 At 2 Degrees Of Freedom**. The Result However Indicates That Npfl Clubs Will Perform Better In Continental Competitions If Npfl League Calendar, **Stable And Non-interrupted League Season**, And Synergy Between League Management Company Is Done In Line With Caf Calendars. Therefore, There Is No Significant Influence Of The Structure Of Nigeria Premier Football League Clubs On The Performance Of Nigerian Football Clubs In Confederation Of African Football Competitions **Is Hereby Rejected**. This Result Implies That There Is Significant Influence Of The Structure Of Nigeria Premier Football League Clubs On The Performance Of Nigerian Football Clubs In Confederation Of African Football Competitions

Discussion Of The Findings

Hypothesis One Shows That $H = 12.06$, $P = .003 < 0.05$ At 2 Degrees Of Freedom. The Result However Indicates That Npfl Clubs Will Perform Better In Continental Competitions If Npfl League Calendar, Stable And Non-interrupted League Season, And Synergy Between League Management Company Is Done In Line With Caf Calendars. Therefore, There Is No Significant Influence Of The Structure Of Nigeria Premier Football League Clubs On The Performance Of Nigerian Football Clubs In Confederation Of African Football Competitions Is Hereby Rejected. This Result Implies That There Is Significant Influence Of The Structure Of Nigeria Premier Football League Clubs On The Performance Of Nigerian Football Clubs In Confederation Of African Football Competitions.

The Findings Corroborate The Study Of Ajadi, (2022) On Influence Of Management Structure On Performance Of Kwara United Football Club In Nigeria Premier League, The Findings Revealed That Internal Crisis, Leadership Style, And Appointments Of People Into The Board Have Significant Influence On Performance Of Clubs In Nigeria Premier League And That Management Should Not Give Room For Internal Crisis And Should Appoint People With The Right Skills And Experience To The Board. The Study Also Agree With The Findings Of Ogunsanwo, And Akinyemi (2021) Whose Findings Also Reveals That The League Structure, Which Is Based On A Promotion And Relegation System, Is A Major Factor In The Low Level Of Competitive Balance Which Means No Team Has An Unfair Advantage Over The Others. Furthermore, The League Could Improve

Competitive Balance By Introducing A More Balanced System, Such As A Salary Cap Or Luxury Tax. The Study's Findings Suggest That The Npfl Could Improve Team Performance By Strengthening Its Leadership And Rewards Systems. This Could Be Done By Providing More Training And Development Opportunities For Coaches And Managers, And By Increasing The Financial Rewards For Players. Another Study Byonagbiye, (2009) Found That The Development Of Administrative And Management Structure That Can Promote The Game Of Soccer Has Not Been Put In Place In Nigeria.the Paper Also Found That The Nigerian Football Association (nfa), Now The Nigeria Football Federation (nff), Has Been Judged To Perform Below Expectation Due To The Lack Of Qualified Hands Which Do Not Possess The Administrative Elements And Often Leads To The Administrative Mistakes And Mismanagement. It Was Concluded That For The Effective Administration And Management Of Football (soccer) To Function Effectively Well, It Calls For Adequate Administrative And Management Machineries And Expert Personnel.

Conclusion

The Researcher Drew His Conclusions From The Findings Of The Study, As Follows:

1. There Is Influence Of The Structure Of Nigeria Premier League Clubs In Confederation Of Africa Football Competitions.

Recommendations

Based On The Findings Of This Study, This Recommendation Was Made:

1. For The Lmc To Truly Improve The Performance If Npfl Clubs In Caf Competitions, They Must Improve The Quality Of The League As Well As Everything That Surrounds It Such As Stable Football Calendar, Enhancing The Quality If Facilities, Upgrading The Level Of Coaching And Training And Implementing Strict Licensing Criteria For Clubs.
2. Npfl Clubs Should Be Exposed To Standard Facilities And Equipment Before A Major Competition To Improve Their Performance.

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