

FACTORS INFLUENCING STAKEHOLDERS' KNOWLEDGE OF THE 17 FOOTBALL LAWS ON FOOTBALL VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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Abstract

Football violence has been reported to have caused the death of several stakeholders, especially the spectators and fans all over the globe. Many have sustained injuries while some have been maimed during football matches as evidenced in Nigeria Leagues. Several factors have been adduced for the ugly phenomenon and it has been perceived that if all stakeholders are having adequate knowledge of the laws of the game, probably the incidence of football violence would be reduced. Hence this study was carried out to investigate the place of the stakeholders' knowledge of the 17 football laws as panacea to football violence. Descriptive survey research design of case study type was adopted in the study and two research questions were answered. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to glean (n=129). Knowledge of Football Laws Questionnaire (KFLQ, r=0.78) was the instrument used for data collection. Findings revealed that updating of knowledge, training familiarity with the laws of the game were factors influencing players and club officials knowledge of the 17 football laws on football prevention.

Keywords: *Football game, Football laws, Stakeholders, Football violence.*

Introduction

Football has become a massive industry with its producers and consumers in every corner of the world today. It has become a sector with a financial frame that is drawn by billions of people all over the world. Most people around the world are closely concerned with its production and consumption. Football is widely regarded as the most popular sport with the highest spectators and participation. Football sometimes referred to as Soccer; The game of Football has been associated with violence since its beginnings in the 13th century England. The term from which soccer is thought to have emerged, has been used to differentiate football from other sporting codes, such as rugby union and rugby league Rookwood (2014). With millions of Fans annually watching professional Football on their television or at public viewing spaces such as fan zones, or attending matches in person. For example, the Federation of International Football Association World Cup, held in 2014 in Brazil, had a cumulative attendance of nearly 3.5 million across the 64 matches that took place (FIFA, 2014).

Murad (2017) opined that one of the causes of violence in football is alcoholic beverages consumption, its consumption increases aggressiveness and violence among Football Fans. Consumption of alcoholic beverages is not related

with hooliganism and argues that not all hooligans drink and not all those who drink will fight, considers that relating all violence in Football to alcohol consumption, but admitted that hooliganism must be approached from a multifactorial perspective that examines several converging causes and alcoholic beverages are undoubtedly one of them. Earle (2011) reported that young persons in a group are more aggressive and prone to provoking disorder and violence compared to their peers who are not organized members of such groups. These groups are exceptionally active in criminal terms because they are surrounded by friends with thick criminal records. Spending time in such an environment, great opportunities and chances are opened to new members to commit new criminal offences (Bouchard & Spindler, 2010).

Rookwood, (2014) described football hooligan as an individual who attends Football matches with the intention of becoming involved in violence with rival supporters whether or not they achieve that aim or a fan who becomes involved in violence but no other disorder or criminal activities even if this was not their initial aim. Spaaij (2014) distinguished between spontaneous, relatively isolated incidents of fan violence and the behavior of institutionalized or socially organized hooligan firms who engage in competitive violence, primarily against other hooligan groups. Instances of violence in professional football during the past half-century have often proven more common between supporters, with variations in the targets of fan violence, ranging from fellow fans to players, police, bystanders, coaches, and officials. Related media coverage, popular representations, academic research, police response, and evolving legal positions have both reflected and shaped this view. Indeed, the term “football violence” has often been employed as a synonym for Football hooliganism (Goldblatt, 2014).

Ostrowsky (2014) postulated that there are many factors that may potentially influence violence behaviour, includes alcohol consumption, rivalries, situational and atmosphere-related conditions, socio-political considerations and fan reaction to play on the pitch, among others. Violence in football emerged at most English clubs from the 1960s, many of these socially organized or institutionalized groups which became known as firms began to engage in vandalism and competitive violence, primarily against other football gangs. Some Liverpool and Manchester United supporters were early English examples, with sections of a changing media labeling the respective groups the Merseyside Maniacs and the Red Army as a consequence (Dunning, 1988). Firms of violent supporters have often adopted names to describe connections to given identities or practices or to confuse perceived enemies, namely rival firms, the media, the police, and even academics (Davis & Redhead, 2015).

Violence against referees also occurs at Football events. In such situations, sports persons and dissatisfied Fans are often the agents of violence, while the referee is the victim. The causes are often incorrect referee decisions or decisions perceived as such by sportspersons. Verbal violence by Fans is

practically an everyday phenomenon and almost no one pays attention to it any longer and sometimes they result to beating match officials as reported by (Busybody news, 2017). Referees may be agents of violence when their biased refereeing results in violation of the rules of game and fairness. Such bias takes various forms from systemic support of one team or an individual to choosing opportune moments during the event when the referee comes in and decides on the winner with one move, reasons for referee violence over the rules of game and fairness may be material (bribery), but also an expression of political, religious or cultural bias. Šljukić (2001) asserted that the consequences of such action are sometimes very serious. Fans provoked by a referee's incorrect decision start to demonstrate violence, players start explaining to the referee that he was wrong sometimes the entire chain of violent behavior is triggered, culminating in police intervention against spectators.

Football violence or destructive behaviour perpetrated by spectators during football events. Certain clubs have long-standing rivalries with other clubs and violence associated in Nigeria leagues with matches between them sometimes called local derbies such as Kastina United Football Club (FC) vs Kano Pillars Football Club (FC) Heartland FC vs Eyimba FC Shooting Stars FC vs Sunshine Starts FC (Pulse ng.sport.com 2021). Conflict may take place before; during or after matches and participants often select locations away from stadia to avoid arrest by the police, but conflict can also erupt spontaneously inside the stadia or in the surrounding streets. Alcohol, irregular tickets sales, religion, ethnicity, political factors and the "cowardly ineptitude" of the police can lead to the violence. In 2013, Shooting Stars FC fans descended on Kwara United FC players because they drew at 1-1. It was reported that the home Fans accused the center referee, Cristanus Okoro from Imo State of denying them a penalty. In April 2017, Kano Pillars FC Fans descended on Akwa United FC players after they lost 1-0 to their visitors, similarly, in 2018 Enyimba FC players tasted the bitter pills of violence when Kastina United FC fans beat them up for daring to win a 2-1 on their home ground (Vangurd.com 2016).

The Official Football rules are called the "Laws of the Game" which are revised annually by International Football Association Board (IFAB) and published by Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) which is the World Football governing body. The Laws are administered by the International Football Association Board (IFAB). Football rules and regulations are maintained and updated annually by the same Board. The board consists of eight (8) members, four of which come from FIFA, and the other four are representatives from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales. They meet at least once a year to debate and decide any change to the text of its existence at the time(IFAB, 2020).

The Laws of the Game (LOFG) are the codified rules that help define Football Association. Over time, the Laws have been amended, and since 1886 it

is being maintained by the International Football Association Board (IFAB). It is the only rules of Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) which permits its members to use. The Laws mention the number of players a team should have, the game duration, the size of the field and ball, the type and nature of fouls that Referees may penalize, the frequently misinterpreted offside law, and many other Laws that define football. During a match, it is the task of the Referee to interpret and enforce the Laws of the Game. The current Laws of the Game (LOTG) consist of Laws, each law containing several rules and directions. Football Laws have 17 “rules” by which the game is played. The Laws are designed to make Football safe, fun and fair for all participants. A Referee is in charge of the Football game, the Referee’s main objective is to enforces the Laws of the game and ensure the safety of the players. Understanding the laws guiding human endeavors, will assist tremendously every practitioner and stakeholders in abiding with the principles guiding actions and in actions of members. Therefore, having adequate knowledge of the laws of football games will promote and improve the understanding of all the stakeholders about the rules and regulations guiding the games of football.

The 17 Laws of Football Game

Law 1: The Field of play: This is the basic layout of football field. The field surface (Natural and Artificial) field markings the field must be rectangular and marked with continuous lines which must not be dangerous. The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line, which joins the midpoints of the two touchlines. Dimensions for international matches Length (touchline): minimum 100 m (110 yards) maximum 110 m (120 yards) Length (goal line): minimum 64 m (70 yards) maximum 75 m (80 yards) Competitions may determine the length of the goal line and touchline within the above dimensions.

Law 2: The Ball: A regulation size soccer ball is a No. 5 ball. Youth leagues may use different size balls, such as a No. 3 ball or a No. 4 ball, depending on the age of the children. Qualities and measurement All balls must be spherical in shape and made of suitable material of a circumference of between 70cm (28 ins) and 68cm (27 ins)

Law 3: Number of Players: There must be no more than 11 players on the field of play for each team. One player from each team must be designated as a goalkeeper. The goalkeeper must wear a different color shirt from his teammates so that everyone can easily distinguish the goalie from the other players,

Law 4: Player’s Equipment: Compulsory equipment, the compulsory equipment of a player comprises of the following separate items: a shirt with sleeves, short socks, shin guards and footwear colour. All items of jewelry (necklaces, rings,

bracelets, earrings, leather bands, rubber bands, etc.) are forbidden and must be removed.

Law 5: Referees: The referee enforces the 17 Laws. Each match is controlled by a referee who has full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game in connection with other match Officials. Decisions of the referee will be made to the best of the referee's ability according to the Laws of the Game and the 'spirit of the game' and will be based on the opinion of the referee who has the discretion to make appropriate action within the framework of the Laws of the Game. The decision of the Referee, and all other match Officials, must always be respected.

Law 6: Other match Officials: Includes (two assistant Referees, fourth official, two additional assistant Referees, reserve assistant Referee, video assistant Referee (VAR) and at least one assistant VAR (AVAR)) may be appointed to matches. They will assist the Referee in controlling the match in accordance with the Laws of the Game but the final decision will always be taken by the Referee (Center), Law 7: Duration of the Game: Period of play A match lasts for two equal halves of 45 minutes which may only be reduced if agreed between the referee and the two teams before the start of the match and is in accordance with competition rules. Half-time interval players are entitled to an interval at half-time, not exceeding 15 minutes,

Law 8: Start and Restart of Play – Kick Off and Drop Ball: A kick off is taken to start a game, to restart play after a goal has been scored or to start the second half or new quarter. A drop ball is played when the referee stops play for a reason other than a rule infraction. An injury is good example. A dropped ball may not be played until it touches the ground.

Law 9: Ball In and Out of Play: The ball is out of play whenever it is completely outside the outside edge of the touchline or the goal line either on the ground or in the air. The ball is in play in any part of the ball is inside or touching the touchline or goal line.

Law 10: Method of Scoring: A goal can only be scored if the entire ball goes completely over the outside edge of the goal line, under the cross bar and between the goal posts while it is in play. Any player may score goals, including the goalie.

Law 11: Offside: A player is in the offside position if he is: ahead of the ball and in the opponent's half of the field and there are fewer than two opponents even with or ahead of him. Offside is determined when the ball is passed to the player, not when the player receives the ball. A player in an offside position is not to be

called offside if he receives the ball directly from: a throw-in or a corner kick or goal kick,

Law 12: Fouls and Misconduct: there are two kinds of fouls in Football: Penal and Non-Penal. The penal offenses must be committed intentionally and may result in a Red Card. The non-penal offenses if committed by a player he may receive a Yellow Card from the referee,

Law 13: Free Kick: There are two types of free kicks: Direct and Indirect. **Direct Free Kick:** On a direct free kick, that ball may be kicked directly into the goal for a score by the player taking the kick. **Indirect Free Kick:** A goal can be scored only if the ball is touched by one or more players from either team, after it is kicked into play and before it enters the goal. The referee will signal an indirect free kick by putting one arm straight up into the air.

Law 14: Penalty Kick: A penalty kick is awarded when a defender commits a penal or major foul with the penalty area. The team that was fouled is given a penalty kick from the penalty mark. All players except the goalkeeper must remain outside the penalty area and the penalty arc until the kick is taken. The penalty kick must go forward and cannot be played again by the kicker until another player has touched the ball.

Law 15: Throw-in: A throw-in is taken to restart a game after the ball goes out of play over the touchline. A throw-in is taken by a player from the team, which did not touch the ball last. The player throwing the ball in must have both feet on the ground and both hands on the ball over his head. Both feet must remain on or behind the touchline. The thrower must throw the ball with equal strength from hands from the back of the head and over the top of the head. The thrower must not play the ball again until another player from either team has touched the ball. A player can score a goal directly from a throw-in is not offside.

Law 16: Goal Kick: The box located directly in front of the goal is called the goal area. When the attacking team last touches the ball before it crosses over the goal line, the defending team is awarded a goal kick. A goal is taken by any player on defending team. The ball must be played from within the half of the goal area on the side of the field where the ball went out of play. The opposing team must remain outside the penalty area until the ball completely leaves the goal area. The goal kick is played again if the ball does not leave the penalty area, if the ball crosses the goal line before leaving the penalty area or if the ball is played again by a player from either team before it leaves the penalty area. The kicker may not play the ball again until another player from either team touches

the ball. A player in the offside position receiving the ball directly from goal kick is not offside,

Law 17: Corner Kick: If a ball goes over the goal line and is last touched by the defending team, the attacking teams are awarded a corner kick. The corner kick is taken from within the corner arc on the side of the field where the ball went out of play. The corner kick may be taken by any player on the attacking team. The kicker is allowed to score a goal by kicking the ball directly into the goal. The opponents must be 10 yards back from the ball on a corner kick. The kicker is not allowed to play the ball again until a player from either team touches the ball. A player in the offside position receiving the ball directly from a corner kick is not offside. Source: IFAB LAWS OF THE GAME 2020

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What are the issues characterising knowledge of players about the laws guiding football game?
2. What is the level of knowledge of club officials (coaches, physiotherapy, trainers and physician) about football laws?
3. What is the level of knowledge of match officials (referees, referees assessors and match commissioner) about football laws?
4. What is the level of knowledge of spectators about the laws guiding football game?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study, the population consisted of football stakeholders: players and club officials and match officials in Southwest Nigeria. 129 participants were gleaned for the study using multistage sampling procedure; Purposive sampling techniques were adopted to select five States out of the existing six states in Southwest Nigeria because the 6th-Ondo State has no football club participating in Nigeria National League for the 2020/2021 season. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the participating clubs, simple random sampling technique was used to select the spectators for the study, stratified simple random sampling technique was adopted to select the match officials at the last stage, while simple random sampling technique was used to select the club officials. The reliability of the instrument was determined through test-re-test method and was used while Cronbach Alpha statistics was employed with the reliability of 0.83.

Knowledge of Football Laws Questionnaire (KFLQ, $r=0.78$) was the instrument used to elicit information from the respondents on stakeholders knowledge on Football Laws (FL) in Nigeria league. To determine the face and content validity of the instruments, copies of questionnaire were given to

researchers in the field of sport science and other experts, on the game of football from Olabisi Onabanjo University Nigeria. Three weeks was set aside for data collection with visit to all the selected stakeholders. Data collection involved the training of four research assistants who assisted in administering the instrument at the various locations, frequency count, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions at 0.05 level of significance.

Ethical consideration

Informed consent form was signed by the participants. The informed consent form spelt out the title of the study, purpose of the study, justification for carrying out the study as well as the benefits that will be derived from the study. Participation was considered voluntary and participants' status and other bio-data written on the questionnaire were not disclosed in order to keep their data confidential.

Result and findings

Research Question 1: What are the factors influencing knowledge of players about the laws guiding football game.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the level of knowledge of players about the laws guiding football game

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1	Players always update their knowledge before playing matches	11 (12.4%)	28 (31.5%)	34 (38.2%)	16 (18.0%)	2.38	0.92
2	Changes in Football Laws sometimes confuse the Footballers	24 (27.0%)	43 (48.3%)	15 (16.9%)	7 (7.9%)	2.94	0.87
3	Footballers are not adequately familiar with the Laws of the game	17 (19.1%)	47 (52.8%)	17 (19.1%)	8 (9.0%)	2.82	0.85
4	Footballers are always knowledgeable about the Football Laws	13 (14.6%)	24 (27.0%)	35 (39.3%)	17 (19.1%)	2.37	0.96
5	Players are sufficiently trained and updated on the Laws guiding the game of Football	18 (20.2%)	28 (31.5%)	29 (32.6%)	14 (15.7%)	2.56	0.99
Criteria Mean = 2.50; Average Mean =						2.60	

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics factors influencing knowledge of players about the 17 Laws of Football game. On the statements that says, players always update their knowledge before playing matches, 11(12.4%) strongly agreed, 28(31.5%) agreed and 34(38.2%) disagreed while 16(18.0%) strongly disagreed. Similarly, on the statements that says changes in Football Laws sometimes confuse the Footballers, 24(27.0%) strongly agreed, 43(48.3%) agreed and 15(16.9%) disagreed while 7(7.9%) strongly disagreed. In addition, based on the statements that says Footballers are not adequately familiar with the Laws of the game, 17(19.1%) strongly agreed, 47(52.8%) agreed and 17(19.1%) disagreed while 8(9.0%) strongly disagreed.

Furthermore, based on the statements that says footballers are always knowledgeable about the laws football, 13(14.6%) strongly agreed, 24(27.0%) agreed and 35(39.3%) disagreed while 17(19.1%) strongly disagreed. Lastly when asked that players are sufficiently trained and updated on the laws guiding the game of football 18(20.2%) strongly agreed, 28(31.5%) agreed and 29(32.6%) disagreed while 14(15.07%) strongly disagreed. Based on the above it can thus be inferred that players within the Southwest Nigeria have many issues characterising knowledge of the laws of football game.

Research Question 2: What are factors influencing knowledge of club officials (Coaches, physiotherapy, trainers and physician) about the 17 football laws

Table 2: Descriptive statistics the level of knowledge of club officials on football laws

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1	Club Officials always update their knowledge before officiating matches	10 (25.0%)	18 (45.0%)	6 (15.0%)	6 (15.0%)	2.80	0.99
2	Changes in Football Laws sometimes confuse the club Officials	8 (20.0%)	25 (62.5%)	5 (12.5%)	2 (5.0%)	2.98	0.73
3	Club Officials are not adequately familiar with the Laws of the game	3 (7.5%)	5 (12.5%)	19 (47.5%)	13 (32.5%)	1.95	0.88
4	Club Officials are always knowledgeable about the Football Laws	4 (10.0%)	9 (22.5%)	15 (37.5%)	12 (30.0%)	2.13	0.97
5	Club Officials are sufficiently trained and updated on the	12 (30.0%)	20 (50.0%)	5 (12.5%)	3 (7.5%)	3.03	0.86

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
	Laws guiding the game of Football						
Criteria Mean = 2.50; Average Mean = 2.58							

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics showing the factors influencing knowledge of club officials about the 17 Football Laws. The above revealed that there the tendency of high level of knowledge on football laws games among the club officials in Southwest, Nigeria. In terms of individual items/statement, it can be deduced that 10(25.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed that club officials always update their knowledge before officiating matches, 18(45.0%) agreed and 6(15.0%) disagreed while 6(15.0%) strongly disagreed. Also, 8(20.0%) strongly agreed that changes in football laws sometimes confuse the club officials, 25(62.5%) agreed and 5(12.5%) disagreed while 2(5.0%) strongly disagreed. In addition, 3(7.5%) strongly agreed with the fact that club officials are not adequately familiar with the laws of the game, 5(12.5%) agreed and 19(47.5%) disagreed while 13(32.5%) strongly disagreed.

In addition, 4(10.0%) strongly agreed that Club Officials are always knowledgeable about the laws football, 9(22.5%) agreed and 15(37.5%) disagreed while 12(30.0%) strongly disagreed. Consequently, 12(30.0%) strongly agreed that club officials are sufficiently trained and updated on the laws guiding the game of Football, 20(50.0%) agreed and 5(12.5%) disagreed while 3(7.5%) strongly disagreed.

Discussion of Findings

The findings in the study revealed that footballers were not appreciably updating their knowledge of the laws guiding football games but they had the knowledge of the laws and also familiar with it and absence of knowledge of the updated laws can pose problem which may predispose to violence. This finding agreed with the position of Trute(2020) that reported the relationship between knowledge of the law on behavioural adjustment. Football violence reduction relates with knowledge of the 17 laws guiding the game which is in consonance with the position of Rookwood (2014) which reported that violence during the game occur when fans, are ill equipped of the knowledge of the laws.

Also, the club officials significantly update their knowledge of the laws of football games and also familiar with the laws. clubs' officials remarkably agreed that changes in the laws causes confusion but they are were trained on the laws of the game which is expected to enable them behave appropriately to promote the spirit of fair play during matches.

Conclusion

It is therefore concluded that the knowledge of the rules of the laws of the football game is understood significantly by most of the stakeholders: players, club officials. However, some of these stakeholders failed to update their knowledge of the laws hence got confused about the interpretation of the laws. It is therefore important for them to update their knowledge for improved performance at all levels: field of play, during training for a seamless performance and with reduced incidences of football violence. In line with the findings of this study, it is hereby recommended that:

1. The Managers of the football game should train all stakeholders on the knowledge of the law and periodically update their knowledge for better understanding of the game.
2. There is the need for prohibition of sales of alcohol within and around the stadium.

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