

## INFLUENCE OF SIZE OF SPECTATORS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF NIGERIA PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE (NPFL) CLUBS

BY

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### Abstract

*The study examined the influence of size of spectators on the performance of clubs of Nigeria professional football league. The hypothesis was formulated in line with the research objective. Descriptive survey research design was used and the population for the study comprised of 90,237 spectators at professional football league matches in Nigeria. A sample size of 675 respondents was selected using multistage sampling technique. A self-developed questionnaire on the influence of size of 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. One sample t-test was used to test the research hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Findings of the study revealed that Size of 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 coping 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 size of spectators during football matches.*

**Keywords:** *Influence, Performance, Professional football league, Spectators, Size*

### Introduction

Football revenue is dependent on spectators' attendance at stadia and 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.

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 (Clarke and Norman, 2008).

**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). 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 (Sportslink, 2019). 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.

**Objective of the Study**

Specifically, the objective of this research work is to:

Ascertain the influence of size of spectators on the performance of clubs at Nigeria professional Football league.

**Hypothesis**

The following hypothesis was formulated:

There is no significant influence of size of 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. 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 was 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 was added to make the sample size to be six hundred and seventy-five (675). For the purpose of this study, a self-developed questionnaire on the influence of size of spectators on the performance of Nigeria professional football league was used. The data collected was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The statistical techniques used include one sample t-test to test the research hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

**Results**

**Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of size of spectators on the performance of Nigeria professional football league clubs**

**Table 1: One sample t-test on the influence of size of spectators on the performance of Nigeria professional football league clubs**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t-value	df	p-value
Size of spectators	675	3.23	0.520	0.020	36.284	675	.000
Test mean	675	2.50	0.000	0.000			

**P = 0.000 (< 0.05).**

Table 1 revealed a calculated value of 36.284 while the critical value is 1.96. The mean score of 3.23 in the table shows that the respondents were of the view that size of spectators had significant influence on performance of Nigeria professional football league clubs. The indications in the table included an observed t-value of 36.284 obtained at 675 degree of Freedom. The level of significance observed in the test is  $P = 0.000 (< 0.05)$ . With these observations, there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis that there is no significant influence of size of 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 size of spectators has influence on the performance of Nigeria professional football league clubs.

**Discussion of Findings**

In the test of hypothesis 1, the influence of spectators' size in football arena on performance of Nigeria professional football league clubs was tested. The result revealed that respondents were of the view that it has significant influence on performances of the clubs. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The finding is in consonance with the report of Hosseini, Namazizade and VaezMusavi (2011), who conducted a study on "The Effect of Active and Inactive Male and Female Spectator on Performing Service and Spick Skills in Volleyball" and reported that highest scores was obtained by presence of active male and female spectators and reported that lowest score was obtained in the situation in which no spectator participated. The report stated that in accurate tasks presence of separators, especially active ones, results in better performance and vice versa and that powerful skills performance of player increased through presence of spectators. Key research has noted that bigger home crowd generally led to a higher percentage of home wins. When investigating crowd advantage in sports Agnew and Carron (2019) saw a clear relationship between crowd size and distinct home team advantage in sports. These findings were subsequently backed up by Schwarz and Barsky (2011) who saw increases in crowd size correlating to increased home team win percentages in baseball against second division ranked away teams.

In English Association Football (soccer) Nevill & Gate (2017) observed significant home advantage when larger crowds were present, surprisingly they noted that the most significant higher level premier of teams such as Man U and Chelsea. The statistics also noted that beyond a certain crowd density no significant further advantage was exhibited. Arguably more important than crowd size is the crowd density and intimacy levels. High crowd density and intimacy relate to factors such as how close the crowd is to the pitch in many soccer stadium where a running track goes round the edge of the field it is noted that a lower level of general crowd noise and atmosphere is created, thus inhibiting the home advantage

**Conclusion**

On the basis of the results obtained from this study along with the limitations the size of spectators in a football arena can positively or negatively influence performance of clubs at Nigeria professional football league.

**Recommendations**

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

1. Mass media orientation on positive spectatorship could be a step in the right direction by Clubs managements of Nigeria Professional Football League.
2. There is a need to improve incentives for attracting spectators to football stadium in view of the role they could play in club's performance at the Nigeria Professional Football League.

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