

Incentives and Compensation in Ethiopian Football

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ABSTRACT

The Ethiopian Football Federation has faced challenges in improving the quality of football in Ethiopia due to a need for more resources and infrastructure. In Ethiopian football, incentives play an important role by providing financial support for players, attracting talented players to clubs, and motivating players to perform at their best. However, there are also some challenges associated with incentives. Fourteen Ethiopian Higher League Football clubs and league committees participated in the study. A semi-structured interview guideline was used to collect qualitative data from all fourteen football clubs. The qualitative data obtained from field notes and recorded semi-structured interviews were entered into Nvivo, version # 12, for better data management and coding of the themes and subthemes. The findings of this study revealed that incentives are an important aspect of motivating footballers to perform well and achieve success. In addition, there have been efforts to improve payment and compensation in Ethiopian soccer.

Keywords: bonus, football, incentives, compensation

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INTRODUCTION

The Footballer's Association in Ethiopia is the governing body responsible for administrating and regulating football in Ethiopia. It was founded in 1943 and is also known as the Ethiopian Football Federation (EFF). The EFF is a member of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) and FIFA. The EFF is responsible for organizing and overseeing all football competitions in Ethiopia, including the Ethiopian Premier League, Ethiopian Cup, and national team matches. It also works to promote and develop football at all levels across the country (EFF, 2018). Ethiopian football club fan associations are organizations formed by supporters of Ethiopian football clubs to support and promote their respective teams. These associations are an integral part of Ethiopian football culture and play a significant role in the development and success of the sport in the country (Tsegaye, 2020).

Footballers' incentives in Ethiopia refer to the rewards or bonuses given to players for their performance on the field (Beyene, 2018). In Ethiopian football, incentives are important in motivating players to perform well and succeed. The incentives can be in



the form of cash, cars, houses, or other valuable items. Incentives motivate players to work hard and improve their skills (Alemu, 2019).

One of the main reasons why incentives are important in Ethiopian football is that most players come from poor backgrounds and need financial support. Football allows these players to earn a living and support their families. Incentives help players make a decent living from playing football (Gebre, 2017). Another reason incentives are important is that they help to attract talented players to clubs. In a highly competitive environment, clubs must offer attractive incentives to sign the best players. This helps to raise the level of competition and improve the overall quality of football in Ethiopia (Tadesse & Fekadu, 2016).

In addition, incentives help to motivate players to perform at their best. When players know they will be rewarded for their efforts, they are likelier to work hard and give their best on the field. This helps improve football quality and makes it more exciting for fans (Yimer & Teshome, 2020).

However, there are also some challenges associated with incentives in Ethiopian football. One challenge is that some clubs may need more financial resources to offer attractive incentives. This can make it difficult for them to compete with wealthier clubs for talented players (Gebre, 2017). Another challenge is that some players may become too focused on earning incentives rather than playing as part of a team. This can lead to individualistic play and a lack of cohesion within the team (Yimer & Teshome, 2020).

Ethiopian football's low payment and compensation can be attributed to several factors, including the need for more financial resources and infrastructure. Many football clubs in Ethiopia need help to generate revenue and rely heavily on government funding and sponsorships. As a result, they are unable to pay high salaries to their players and staff (Gebremedhin & Tadesse, 2017)

Moreover, corruption and mismanagement within the EFF have also contributed to the low payment and compensation in Ethiopian football. In 2018, the EFF was suspended by FIFA due to a leadership crisis and allegations of corruption. This suspension significantly impacted the development of football in Ethiopia and further exacerbated the financial struggles faced by many clubs (Kassahun & Yimer, 2019). Despite these challenges, there have been efforts to improve payment and compensation in Ethiopian football. For instance, some clubs have started providing additional benefits to their players, such as housing and transportation allowances. Additionally, the EFF has introduced new regulations aimed at improving financial transparency within the sport (EFF, 2021). This study spotlights to investigate the incentives and compensation in Ethiopian soccer.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Jimma is the largest city in the southwestern Oromia Region, Ethiopia. It is a special zone of the Oromia Region and is surrounded by the Jimma Zone. It has a latitude and longitude of 7°40'N 36°50'E. Before the 2007 census, Jimma was reorganized administratively as a special Zone. The study was conducted in Jimma Town, Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Football Higher League Club's "Group B" football competition was held in Jimma Town from January to February 2023.

A cross-sectional study is a type of research design in which you collect data from many individuals at a single time. In cross-sectional research, you observe variables

without influencing them. In this study, the researcher was used for a cross-sectional research design conducted within a limited time interval.

Ethiopian Higher League 2022/23 has three divisions. These divisions were classified into Group A, played in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia; Group B, played in Jimma Town; and Group C, played in Hossana Town. The Group B division was selected based on the convenient sampling technique. The study involved fourteen (N = 14) football clubs and league committees, which were also participants. These clubs include Debre-Brahan FC, Yirga Chefe FC, Kaffa Coffe FC, Boditi Town FC, Ambo Town FC, Nekemte Town FC, Kambata Shenshicho Town FC, Addis Ababa City Administration FC, Kirkos Sub-city FC, Gulele Sub-city FC, Injibara Town FC, Shashemanne Town FC, Jinka Town FC, NIB FC and Ethiopian Football higher league committee. The football clubs, either team leaders or coaches, were participants in the study based on available sampling techniques.

Ethiopian higher group-B division football club team leaders and coaches participated in the study. To this effect, all fourteen football clubs were interviewed based on semi-structured interview guidelines. Before the interview, the researcher trained five data collectors who collected data from the football club members. The researcher checks the recording equipment beforehand and ensures everything works properly once the interview starts. Choose a place where the expected interviewee feels comfortable, relaxed and free to speak. When arranging the interview, choose the time which suits the interviewee so other appointments or obligations do not press them. Ensure you have permission from interviewees to record the interview and use the material you obtained for academic purposes. Then, the interview was conducted for 30 minutes to 2 hours. The interview theme was focused on the Ethiopian Higher League Footballers' Association, Footballers Fan Association, footballers' agents and the shortage of finance.

The Dependent variable of the study was football club performance. Individual and group performance of football players. Then, the cumulative effect of both individual and team performance can be seen in the Ethiopian Higher League results. The independent variable was the Ethiopian Higher League Footballers' Association, footballers' fan association, footballers' agents, and shortage of finance. These could vary whether the football team wins, withdraws, or loses a match.

The qualitative data obtained from field notes and recorded semi-structured interviews were entered into Nvivo, version # 12, for better data management and coding of the themes and subthemes. The software enables the researchers to code notes and data, which can be re-organized, searched, and re-linked at any time. Also, proponents of software systems discuss how they can enhance the validity and rigour of the data analysis process. The software states that larger data collections can be searched systematically and that such capabilities reduce human error and make more "visible" choices and strategies in the data analysis. Finally, some data analysis software packages have theory-building and complex relationship-analyzing capabilities, which can transform unstructured data into structured codes and analytic themes. Accordingly, the data was transcribed immediately after data collection to give a clear picture and meaning to the data collected without missing its original flavour. Then, after the data was nodded and thematized accordingly.

Addis Ababa University's research and postgraduate coordinating office obtained a letter of permission. Then, the Ethiopian Football Federation was communicated, and respondents were kept confidential. Accordingly, data were collected from Ethiopian

Higher League coaches, team leaders and the competition committee after participants signed informed consent.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Footballer's Association

The study's finding shows that the players' association was considered to be the father of football players. This indicates that the footballer's association facilitates the platform for Ethiopian footballers. Primarily, the association works on the overall player performance improvement. This objective was achieved through providing social services; facilitating training and competition; providing favourable conditions for retired players, coaches and officials; providing income generation for capacity development; Strengthening relationships and collaboration with in-country and abroad stakeholders such as football projects and clubs; mobilizing footballers when national emergency issues happened such drought and famine for generating income. The major issue was establishing players' insurance in Ethiopia when working on footballers' facilities and equipment, such as stadiums, playing fields and sports suits. The fact on the ground was different, such as the activities mentioned above being done by this association. As an infant association, many activities remain to be done shortly. The Players Association office has a structure and job description. The office has a president, vice-president, secretary, cashier and other members.

Ethiopian footballers have introversive characteristics and face difficulty in protecting their rights. Most footballers are victims of various administrative problems. Beyond that, without a footballers' association, there was nobody to speak on behalf of the players. For these reasons, the footballers established the Ethiopian Footballers' Association to produce skilled and well-trained footballers (Abiy, 2020). The association was created to raise basic questions about footballers' salaries, problems with contractual agreements, medical treatment, insurance, and incentives-related issues. Many seriously injured athletes have suffered silently because they don't know how to deal with administrative issues (Abiy, 2020).

Ethiopian Football Club Fan Associations

The Ethiopian Football Club Fan Associations have the vision to support Ethiopian football clubs financially. The Ethiopian Football Federation cascaded the guidelines to achieve this mission, including the fan structure from the national football federation, regional state, woreda, and Kebele levels. Based on the guidelines, the clubs can easily establish the football club's Association, which includes the president, vice-president, secretary and members. Their ultimate goal is to support football clubs by mobilising income-generating ideas and financial support through buying players and covering transport costs and players' accommodation.

Ethiopian Football Club Fan Associations are the board members of Ethiopian Football Clubs. The Association has the right to raise an idea, discuss an idea, and suggest a solution to the discussed idea. However, the Association needed help deciding on the idea because the fans' football association was a voiceless member of Ethiopian football club board members. Both the Ethiopian Football Clubs and the Ethiopian Fans Association are working parallel. Moreover, one is the input for the other and important for the other. Both of them have been working to improve Ethiopia's football performance.

Ethiopian football clubs were enjoying the benefit of the football club fan association. For instance, the Ethiopian Coffee Football Club and St. the George football club have Ethiopian Coffee football club fan association and St. George football club fan association. These associations have members, and the members generate income for the football club. These responsible and loyal football fans funded the clubs in different modalities: accommodation, sports nutrition, transport, and player transfer expense coverage.

There is a green light; the Ethiopian Higher League has been given to the company. The company disseminates the Ethiopian higher league football competition through international media worldwide through FIFA Pro TV. The income generated from these media will be distributed to the clubs that participated in the Ethiopian Higher League. This income will cover football-related expenses, such as accommodation, sports nutrition, transport, and player transfer expense coverage. These will share the responsibility given to the Ethiopian Football Club fan association. Football match media dissemination will be expected to improve the performance of footballers and football officials and reduce the sabotage that frequently happens during football matches.

It is the usual activity that there have been started jobs about Ethiopian football fan associations in the Ethiopian Higher League. Some football fans were offering their moral support during football matches. Few loyal and retired football players supported the clubs in kind and in-cashes. In a rare case, retired football players voluntarily purchased and provided football materials such as clothes, shoes, shin guards, and socks. Some of them cover food expenses. There was an eye witness when the football fan association developed a proposal for the club's fundraising committee to seek donors such as government and non-government institutions.

In the scenario before the Coronavirus outbreak, Ethiopian football clubs were engaged in football matches in their home town and away. When the football club plays at home, the football club association mobilises the fans, and then the fans buy a ticket to attend the match. This was one way of generating income for the football clubs so that this income could be used for different purposes. Directly, the football club fans support the club and provide moral support to their football club.

Right after the Covid-19 outbreak, the paradigm of Ethiopian football matches was completely changed. The football competition hosting cities or towns was based on merit. The criteria for selecting hosting sites are the availability of stadium facilities, accommodations, transportation, and stable security of the cities, which will be considered. To this effect, Bahir-Dar Stadium, Hawassa Stadium, Adama Stadium, Dire-Dawa Stadium, Batu Stadium, Jimma Stadium, Hosanna Stadium and Bishoftu Stadium were selected stadiums where the football matches undertaken. Most of the football clubs were playing without physical football fans. The fans could not purchase football tickets for income generating the clubs and physically present and provide moral support to the football team.

The online platform for supporting football matches radically changed football club fans' old tradition of attending football matches in the stadium. Now a day, football fans support the football club matches live online. Ethiopian Football Federation, the company, and football clubs have different dissemination mechanisms for football matches through social media such as Facebook, Telegram, and Twitter. These social media and print media could be private or government media. Therefore, the inclusion

of technology in Ethiopian football flourishes the effectiveness of our football performance.

The football supporters' associations are providing support for materials and money. The sponsoring Association is in good condition with the board. The result in the three games we have played so far is that we have seen all three types of results: winning, drawing and losing. So, I hope we continue the winning spirit we have started now. A previous similar study suggested that supporters are identified as possessing a variety of loyalty behaviours and attitudes, some of which exhibit loyalty patterns (Tapp, 2004). Most studies of fan loyalty in sports marketing only focus on spectator attachment and athlete brand equity. The study findings show that attributes and benefits are key factors in influencing fan attitudes and behavioural loyalties (Dwi & Dwi, 2020).

The study's other findings revealed that brand image affects fan loyalty through the facets of brand image, non-product related attributes and brand benefits. It has been shown that non-product attributes and brand benefits have the greatest perceived impact on fan loyalty (Filip, Vilmer, & Jonathan, 2021). Another similar study revealed that identification with the team did not moderate the satisfaction with football team performance–effect relationship. The findings illustrate the pivotal role of football fans' reactions in determining their effect, attitudes, and behaviours in the work domain (Gkorezis, Bellou, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, & Tsiftsis, 2016). Key findings relate to the impact of family and community influences on loyalty, initial experiences of developing associations with the club, socialisation, and the lived experience of being a supporter. A Support Matrix is constructed as a portrait of the loyalty found at the club (Fillis & Mackay, 2014).

A recent study shows that football clubs' most interesting posts and actions during the coronavirus pandemic allow them to develop good practices for building and maintaining relationships with fans using social media in difficult times (Jakub, 2021). Perceptions of value among football fans and how it may be disrupted relate to several factors, for example, when actors are considered to be "locked out" of physical platforms within joint value co-creation spheres (e.g. Stadiums). Fans show they can compensate for dealing with disturbances and regain value for themselves and other fan actors on different platforms. Importantly, this study allows us to understand why fans are not always consistent in their role as actors (Tinson et al., 2023)

Armenia has also arisen in the context of the institutionalisation of political culture fans, but once again, Armenia responds with culturally based groups with no institution. In addition, this study aims to know how Armenian supporters represent sportsmanship to athletes (Rumi & Slamet, 2016). In addition, this study aims to find out how Armenian fans represent the sportsmanship of athletes (Rumi & Slamet, 2016). Another study identified that football clubs seek to stimulate emotional and mediated connections with fans, creating a strong community. Finally, the media stations belonging to the clubs have a poetic function. For interaction purposes, these channels train and support a community of fans (Vannier Borges, 2018). A similar study suggested that fans and supporters are not only crucial actors in implementing the sports service but also play an important role in influencing the choices and behaviours of the football club and other stakeholders (Zagnoli & Radicchi, 2010).

Football agents

The finding of this study shows that during player window transfer, sometimes football agents mediate between football players and football managers; sometimes football agents mediate between football players and football coaches; in rare cases, the agents mediate between a focal person of the football executive committee and football clubs. In these three circumstances, the football agent commissioned the players. According to this study, only some individuals worked as a football agent.

Sports agents, legal representatives of sportsmen, facilitate contracts, consult players and serve as intermediaries in the management of clubs. Worldwide, these players would like to enjoy the growth of a large amount of money circulating in Ethiopian football. Yet, the reluctance of players and club management has made their situation easier. Once properly performed, soccer intermediation could lift all boats in the area (Abiy, 2021).

After FIFA decided to let national associations issue agent licenses in 2015, EFF made the registration call to those interested in providing professional services in football intermediary; 193 people responded by covering the ETB100 registration fee, and 70 successfully passed the exam. Ultimately, 50 agents were licensed after paying ETB20000-half for professional liability insurance and an ETB10,000 registration fee (Abiy, 2021).

The number of officers who have renewed their licenses at the Ethiopian Football Federation shows that nearly 80% of officers have decided to leave the company (Abiy, 2021). The number of officers who have renewed their licence with the Ethiopian Football Federation shows that almost 80% of officers have decided to leave the society (Abiy, 2021).

At the international level, every player has one sports agent negotiating the contract. A sports agent is the representative of an athlete who negotiates on his behalf with the club to negotiate the best possible agreement (Derks, 2009).

Shortage of finance

The finding of this study shows that almost all Ethiopian football clubs were owned by the Ethiopian government. To this effect, every club has a budget problem. Several Ethiopian football clubs suddenly entered an Ethiopian football premier league and fell after a year. The reason was a need for more appropriate leadership in planning and budgeting for players; the team generally needs to be managed with a plan. All these can be processed properly. All these can be processed properly in our team. That is why our football team rose to success and reached new heights.

For example, St. George and Ethiopia Coffee is a community-supported club. They are also clubs with leadership. The government needs more budget to run these clubs. Tailored according to our club's essential human resources. For example, our club has a club board, a team leader, a club manager, two coaches, and technical directors. Our club has fulfilled human resource needs.

Another reason for the Ethiopian football club's budget scarcity was more lucid leadership. Leadership in our football team needed to be more flexible. For instance, exercising poor leadership was manifested in the absence of football team results. You have spent on human resources and infrastructure that has yet to be given to the club. The team was under pressure to ask the players. Now, if we don't get results, we will be upset because if I ask for something, such as if I ask for finance, the response is that we have a scarcity of budget. Nowadays, requiring the coaches to win every

football match is unthinkable because the coach faces psychological problems without infrastructure and better incentives, and things are unachievable for our football team.

Football payments hurt the financial outlook of the clubs. Salaries paid to footballers account for over 90% of the clubs' budgets. This, coupled with the mismatch between revenue growth and club salary expenses, had affected their performance and, of course, their existence (Abiy, 2018).

Past similar studies show that the need for more finance is a common problem faced by Ethiopian football clubs, largely because of the hefty salaries paid to footballers and declining ticket revenues (Abiy, 2020).

Previous research showed that football clubs spend a minimum of ETB 20 million annually to compete in the premier league, which requires clubs to travel thousands of kilometres to different regions. Players' salaries alone account for 90% of the total budget, leaving club officials unable to cover transportation and hotel expenses with the remaining money (Abiy, 2018).

Ethiopian football clubs around the country are slowly suffering from financial distress. Hearing salary complaints is common when wages are unpaid for 2 to 5 months. There are records of Wolkite City FC, Addis Ababa City FC, Jimma Aba Jifar and others. In rare cases, Ethiopia's national football team withdrew from the Regional Council of the East and Central African Football Association (Abiy, 2020).

This directly impacts the financial scarcity of football clubs. Allegations by corrupt club officials maintain high salaries to line their pockets (Abiy, 2018). This directly impacts the financial scarcity of football clubs.

The only country where tens of thousands of graduates are jobless, there has been some outcry regarding footballers' growing salaries compared to what teachers, public servants and even physicians earn (Abiy, 2018).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, incentives play an important role in Ethiopian Higher League Football clubs by providing financial support for players, attracting talented players to clubs, and motivating players to perform at their best. However, there are also challenges associated with incentives that need to be addressed to ensure they are used effectively. In recent years, the Ethiopian Football Federation has faced challenges in improving the quality of football in Ethiopia due to a need for more resources and infrastructure. However, it continues to work towards its mission of promoting and developing football in the country. In conclusion, Ethiopian football club fan associations are important in promoting and supporting their respective teams. They provide a platform for fans to come together, engage in various activities, and contribute to the development of their communities; however, the fan associations needed more capacity and financial problems to help their club's expenses.

The Ethiopian Higher League Club's technical committee was advised to propose incentives and bonus schemes based on subjective and objective performance improvement. The Ethiopian Superior League Football Club Association was better to work on the income-generating program by mobilizing football supporters and the football-loving community. The Ethiopian Football Association was advised to exercise its role in facilitating favourable conditions for the overall development of football player performance.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All authors declare that this manuscript has no conflict of interest with any party.

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