Channels Television and Development of Football in Nigeria: A Study of National Kids Cup

Unwana Samuel Akpan, Ph.D.
- Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Department of Communication, Culture and Media Studies, Howard University, Washington DC, USA
- Lecturer, Department of Mass Communication, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT
This study focused on Channels Television National Kids Cup as a vehicle in blazing the trail in grassroots youth and football development in Nigeria right from its inception in 2008 up to 2019. The purpose of this study was to find out the impact grassroots involvement of primary school pupils has on youth and football development in Nigeria via Channels National Kids Cup. There are loads of academic writings on the impact of kids/students' involvement in football on national and youth development, but there has not been a study on the grassroots effect of media houses involvement, such as the one trailed by Channels TV, Lagos, Nigeria (Channels National Kids Cup) on youth and football development especially in Africa. Agenda Setting and Framing theories were used as the theoretical framework. This study was qualitative and descriptive, and used interview as an instrument to achieve its purpose. This study found out that the vision and values of the Channels Kids Competition could help in reviving the game of football at the grassroots level. This gesture would help blaze the trail in promoting youth and sport social development in the country if other organizations can organize similar kids' tournaments.

Keywords*:Youth, Football Development, Football, Media.*

Introduction

This research endeavour sits and fits firmly within a new field of study in Nigeria that is comparative, global, cross-disciplinary, and multi-paradigmatic, and that construes and arouses global interest regardless of ethnicity, race, religion and nationhood as a single integrated family of forms of sportsmanship or cultural understanding, social organization and political contestation. Though sport communication is a nascent and an emerging field of enquiry in communication in Nigeria, studies in this infant field seek to improve upon the parochialism, fragmentation, and non-

interdisciplinary approaches taken by previous studies on sport communication, ethnicity, race, religion, nations, and nationalism in relation to sports contributing to global peace and harmony. No wonder a Finnish professor, Osmo Anterior Wiio (2009), while penning the general definition of communication, believes that one cannot not communicate. In essence, what he was trying to pass across is the fact that in whatever way, be it in sport, cultural affairs, or nation building, the communicativeness of what is intended or not intended cannot be overlooked. That is why communication is a fundamental factor in any sporting,socio-economic, socio-political, and socio-cultural activities because diversity in communication is key to achieving global peace and harmony.

Though sports communication is a new area of scholarly attention in Nigeria, (Onwumechili, 2014), it is common knowledge that virtually everybody in the country loves the game of football and would love to see Nigerian football rise again to command its respect in the league of football nations. Therefore, this study focused on Channels Television National Kids Cup as a vehicle in blazing the trail in grassroots youth and football development in Nigeria right from its inception in 2008 up to 2019. The purpose of this study was to find out the impact grassroots involvement of primary school pupils has on youth and football development in Nigeria via Channels National Kids Cup. The Competition is the brain child of the Chairman of Channels Media Group and owner of Channels Television, Mr. John Momoh.The championship was designed to offer the means to practise football as a sport in schools, to help young players from the ages of 10 to 13 learn the game of football.

In Nigeria and globally, television has always been the biggest promoter of the game of football in the way it covers the image of matches. For instance in 2007 in Nigeria, Globacom Communication Network, Super Sports, and Nigerian Television Authority signed a major contract sealing the broadcast deal for the broadcasting of major Nigerian Football League matches (Akindes, 2011). Furthermore,

> In 2006 the National Football League (NFL) began televising its games under the contractual parameters of broadcast agreements with CBS, Fox, NBC, ESPN, and DirecTV. These networks pay the NFL revenue totaling over $3.75 billion per season. (The previous contract from 1998-2005 had generated an average of $2.2 billion annually for the NFL.) In addition to being the NFL's greatest revenue source, television networks are the league's greatest source of exposure. Once a broadcast contract is signed a partnership is formed with the objective of creating a television programming schedule that attracts the most viewers for NFL games. The creation of the television programming schedule includes the strategic placement of games and the selection of the teams playing in those games (Fortunato, 2008, p.).

In addition to being their greatest revenue source, television networks provide sports leagues with their greatest source of exposure thereby making the game of football popular across the globe (Fortunato, 2001). Exposure is ascertained through the league's placement in the television programming schedule (day and time that the game is played). The signing of a broadcast contract creates a partnership between a sports league and a television network where both now have a vested interest in increasing the audience watching the games (Fortunato, 2008).

Moreover, Onwumechili (2018) points out that "A large number of the sport audience watch games over the air through broadcast television or through cable television and satellite, especially the game of football" (p. 83). In Africa, the game of football is largely followed as a result of the frills and thrills of the game on television. The audience love watching their favourite football star or club play live on television. Therefore, television helps to recruit fans and the faithful for the game of soccer in the way it promotes it. Television as a medium is the biggest promoter of the game of football in terms of cash and airtime. For instance, television frequently pays the largest amount to secure rights to sporting events such as football events. In 2013, BT Group paid 900 million pounds (about $1.33billion) for exclusive three-year British rights for the European Champions League and Europa League (Panja, 2013). Other numerous studies have also indicated that television is a major promoter of the game of football worldwide (Lasorsa,

1997; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001; McCombs & Reynolds, 2002; Shaw & Martin, 1992.) Also, television media coverage for the 2010 World Cup soccer tournament in South Africa included US-based sports television network ESPN, which paid $100 million for the coverage rights to beam the global football tournament as well as the next World Cup that was held in 2014 (Gershon, 2010). ESPN featured all 64 games live as the championship's broadcast partner, spanning through the coverage of ESPN's television networks. All these go together to show the role television plays in promoting the game of football not just in Nigeria, but globally.

Football is not only played within clubs but also in schools which are also an important breeding ground for potential football stars. There are loads of academic writings on the impact of kids/students' involvement in football on national and youth development, like the ones done by Maese (2017); Athletic administration, Ohio University (2018); but no study has been carried out on the grassroots effect of media houses involvementin discovering football talents at thegrassroots level among children in Nigeria, such as the one trailed by Channels Television, Lagos, Nigeria (Channels National Kids Cup) on youth and football development especially in Africa. Before now, it has always been football academies in the country organizing these tournaments for talent hunt, but a different dimension has been added where a media house is now involved in not just beaming the matches, but organizing the tournament. Numerous studies have been carried out to show how television is a major mobilizer and promoter of the game of football in Africa (Bond, 2015; Chalaby, 2005; Akindes, 2011; Horne, 2005) but a new pace has been set by Channels Television which is rare in sports communication research where media houses are the one setting up football tournaments to spot and nurture future football talents. Ordinarily, television houses just beam the game as it is played live and do no go beyond that. But here, Channels Television is not just beaming the matches of championships butis organizing its own tournaments yearly for primary school pupils in a bid to hunt for new football talents in the country. This means the media houses have gone beyond just beaming the reports and the images of the

game of soccer to instituting tournaments for grassroots football development.

The contents of media houses are very powerful instruments for social change and social development (Maltby, Thornham, & Bennett, 2015;Couldry, 2012).Therefore any sports initiative from this sector might have a tremendous impact on youth and sports development.Also, as Harrison (2000) suggests, "media users maybe affected by what they view, but they also selectively expose themselves to mediacontent that is congruent with their existing worldview" (p.138). Media contents are seen as very powerful 'societal projectors' (Seymour-Ure,1974;Tambini & Cowling, 2004; Jenkings, Winter, & Woodward, 2008;Wurff, 2011;Ceron &Splendore, 2016), hence the need for media houses to be at the forefrontof grassroots football development in Nigeria.

Though van der Meij and Darby's (2015) did a study that focuses on youth player's relationships with their families, it is likely different from its impact on grassroots developmentof football.Football game is arguably the world's most popular, viewed, ritualized and globalized sport. Football is a game loved by Africans. Numerous studies (Baker & Mangan, 1987; Deville-Danthu, 1997; Sugden & Tomlinson, 1998; Darby, 2002; Akindes, 2010) reveal that European colonial institutions such as the army, schools, and churches introduced the game of football to Africa in the late 19th century. Right from the colonial introduction of the game, football has remained a domineering force and instrument of nation-building from decolonization to independence (Alegi, 2010). Akindes (2010) also postulates that national teams remain an important means for expressing national identities. Alegi argues that by 1960, football was an established component of African urban culture and, up till now, the thirst and hunger for European leagues by Africans have not declined; rather it has taken an upsurge dimension. Africans, over the years, have developed an undying and unwavering devotion to the game of football. Africa has been considered a breeding and recruiting ground for football labour/talent in Europe (Bale & Maguire, 1994;Darby, 2000;Bale, 2001; Darby, 2001; Poli, 2007; Darby, 2007). As football talents in Africa rise and fall due to age factor, there is need to first spot,

train and manage these talents in order to fill the vacuum left behind by the older players, hence the numerous football academies springing up in Africa (Saavedra, 2003; Darby, 2009; Schokkaert & Swinnen, 2012; Schokkaert, 2016). Though there have been numerous studies onthe role of football academies in grassroots football development in Africa (Alegi, 2007; Brown & Potrac, 2009; O'Gorman, 2016), no study has delved into assessing what would be the impact on grassroots football development when media houses organize kids' championship to introduce children to the game of soccer at the early stage, hence this paper.

Research Objective

The purpose of this study is to find out the impact grassroots involvement of primary school pupils has on youth and football development in Nigeria via Channels National Kids Cup Championship.

Research Question

RQ1. Why is Channels Television as a media house interested in organizing kids' championship in Nigeria?

RQ2. How does this impact grassroots football development in Nigeria?

Football and Society

Football is not only played within clubs but also in schools which are also an important breeding ground for potential football stars (Flintoff, 2003; Kirk, 2005; Bailey, 2006; Cassidy, Jones,& Potrac, 2009; Parnell, Cope, Bailey, & Widdop, 2017). Moreover, sport plays a natural and vital part of governmental health and social development programmes (Gruneau, 1983; Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity & Payne, 2013; Findlay & Coplan, 2008; Bailey, 2005). No government can neglect sport and the unpredictable benefits that it can bring to the population (Breitbarth & Harris, 2008;Dobson & Goddard, 2001). According to Müller, Lammert and Gregor (2012), football is a vehicle for the promotion of health, education, team spirit and fair play. These concepts are also central to national development and government objectives, and are values upheld by modern societies. Channels TV in articulating

its Channels National Kids Cup's vision has created access to national sports youth development structures and has promoted local youth football tournaments.

Football and Media

Several research studies have pointed to the fact that it is the lenses of the media that have popularized the game of soccer and its players globally (Whannel, 1991; Whannel, 1992; Williams, 1994a; Williams, 1994b; Giulianotti, 2000; Hills, 2002; Sandvoss, 2003). Therefore, the game of soccer owes its popularity and massive acceptability to the media, especially in Africa. It is common knowledge that when major tournaments are beamed on television, the sensational and dramatic display of the players' drills, dribbling, frills and thrills electrifies and excites the audience. Unavoidable scenes of Africans lurking themselves in viewing centers to catch a glimpse of their football star on television as well as kids and youths playing amateur football on streets in Africa are a testament to their love and passion for football. Anytime there is an international tournament beamed on the media involving African countries, the interest of the citizens of the respective African countries becomes heightened obviously for national interest. Akindes (2011, 2014) demonstrates the interest of African fans in watching European games. He conducted a study in both Burkina Faso and Senegal where he found bars and restaurants showing European football. Maybe, what informs this are the thrills, the drills and the dribbling displayed by the players. It could also be the dazzling and attractive style of media montage, reportage and display of football actions by the television programme producers. All these woven together have endeared new recruits and fans to the game of football all over the world.Also, Buraimo and Simmon (2009) have posited that the media portrayals/reportage of the fat amount of signing fees earned by these players who play in foreign leagues away from Africa inspires and recruits new entrants into the game of football.

Though already stated, it should be noted that the contents of media houses are very powerful instruments for social change and

social development; therefore, any sports initiative from this sector might have a tremendous impact on youth and sports development. The level of youth and football development that would be recorded in the country when the media in Nigeria becomes the initiator and host of such endeavors could be immeasurable. The Competition is designed to offer the means to practice football as a sport at schools, to help young players from the ages of 10 to 13 learn the game of football.

Football Development in Nigeria

A lot of factors are responsible for the development of the game of football in any country. Parts of it are early stage spotting of talents, government support, private sector development, league development, etc. (Agbodeka, 1992; Alegi, 2004;Eisenberg, 2006;Poli, 2006;Darby & Solberg,2010). In the case of Nigeria, numerous studies have shown that some of the major problems stunting the development of football in Nigeria are the ongoing politicking in the sector and the inability to develop the Nigerian Football League, NFL (Diamond, 1991; Ajayi, 2007;Onwumechili, 2009; Onwumechili, 2014).

Poli (2010) and Esson (2015) argue that African footballers have begun to see their future in football as residing in Asia and Europe. After all, staying at home in Africa would mean being unappreciated as demonstrated in empty stadiums and being unpaid by severely financially-starved African football clubs whose sources of revenues have hemorrhaged with meager gate takings as spectators desert the stadiums. The issue of poorly financed clubs and skipping of wages were reported by local African footballers interviewed by Akpan and Onwumechili (2019) as well as by Aiyejina (2017). Esson's research is central to understanding what migrating to play professional football has become for young Africans. After all, watching European football on television and learning about Europe-based footballers has created a sense of wealthy footballers and world-famed athletes. Thus, it is not surprising that African footballers seek to enjoy similar status via migration.

Early Introduction of Football to Children

Early introduction of children to the game of soccer would aid children to play football together thereby facilitating communication with one another (Faude, Kerper, Multhaupt, Winter, Beziel, Junge, &Meyer, 2010). Also, according to Alegi (2004), football can be used as a tool for education by teaching observance of the rules of the game, the practice of exercises and codified play, respect for opponents and partners, the desire to be the best, the joy of winning, and coping with the distress of losing, etc.

Theoretical Framework

For this study, the agenda-setting and framing models provide a theoretical explanation for the initiative of Channels Television as a media house flying the kite of Kids Cup Football Tournament in the country. This is viewed from the standpoint of the media fulfilling its Agenda Setting role and responsibility as an arm of the media in using same to promote and foster grassroots development of the game of football.

The Agenda-setting theory postulates that media exposure of a topic amplifies the public salience, interest and curiosity inthat topic such as the novel idea of a media house organizing football tournaments for primary school pupils in order to foster grassroots development in football. The theory also suggests that the emphasis on certain activities beamed on the media can make such topical and increase the salience of those activities in the public sphere. Therefore agenda-setting researchers theorize that the media can influence what topics the public will think about and how they will think about those topics (McCombs, 2004).

Although for some reasons mostly used in theorizing concepts in fields such as sociology and religion, the agenda-setting theoretical model has been over the years applied to many topics, including sports (Fortunato, 2001; McCombs, 2004). Though applied in many disciplines, regardless of the topic being studied, the fulcrum of agenda-setting studies is always the transportof salience in media discussions from the media agenda to the public agenda (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001; McCombs & Shaw, 1993; McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 1997).

The agenda-setting enquiry by McCombs and Shaw (1972) found that the amount of media exposure of a topic and activities influence the public salience of that topic. It is the repeated, frequent media coverage and representation that causes the audience to deem a topic important just as the yearly Channels Television Kids Cup Tournaments. This football tournament is repetitively hosted by the media and it is capable of acquiring salience in the media discussions to set an agenda of what the public can consider important. In the study by McCombs and Shaw (1972) this transfer of topic salience from the media agenda to the public agenda was based on media exposure alone. Because the mass media can influence the public agenda through the exposure they provide a topic, researchers have pointed out that topics and activities if continuously exposed to the public can gain public consideration and acceptance.Here, Channels Television, being fully aware of the enormous power of its contents, believes that if it uses its platform and focuses itssearchlight on kids' tournament, it will help football coaches and talents managers to spot these football talents at a very tender age where they can be nurtured for the game. It is the topics that obtain coverage that are transferred from the media agenda to the public agenda (Lasorsa, 1997; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001; McCombs & Reynolds, 2002; Shaw & Martin, 1992). Subsequently, the theory implies that the lack of attention given to a topic by the mass media hinders the opportunity for that topic to become an item on the public agenda (Hunt & Ruben, 1993; Wanta & Wu, 1992). Extending from the original agenda-setting idea of media exposure alone influencing the public salience of topics, agenda-setting researchers also claim that through the selection of certain attributes of the topic the mass media may be successful in influencing the public on how to think about that topic (McCombs, 1992; McCombs & Shaw, 1993; McCombs et al., 1997; Takeshita, 1997). Agenda-setting researchers explain that all topics have attributes, characteristics or qualities that can be presented in the media coverage (McCombs et al., 1997; Kiousis, Mitrook, Wu, & Seltzer, 2006; Takeshita, 1997) such as the one presented during the Channels Television Kids Cup Championship, where The Best Player in the Tournament TBPT

emerges. This young player can then be harvested, nurtured and trained for national football duties in football.

How topics and activities that are generated by the media are presented by the channels of the mass media through the emphasis of certain attributes connects agenda-setting theory with the concept of framing (Kiousis et al., 2006; McCombs, 1997; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001; Yioutas & Segvic, 2003). McCombs (1997) theorizes framing as "the selection of a restricted number of thematically related attributes for inclusion of the media agenda" (p. 6). Entman (1993) posits that "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (p. 52).

The relevance of framing to this study is that through the selection of certain attributes, such as selecting football out of other games to be hosted at the primary school level to the exclusion of other potentially relevant attributes, Channels Television presents an opportunity to influence how the game of football at the grassroots level should be considered or perceived by the public (Entman, 1993; Gandy, 2001; Reese, Gandy, & Grant, 2001; Shen, 2004).Also, Channels TV, being a a highly respected news channel in Nigeria, knows that its media contents are respected globally, hence their choice to showcase 'The Best Player in the Tournament' (TBPT), in which the selection is madeby respectable coaches from different football clubs in Nigeria. The idea is to use the award of TBPT to market the awardee for onward football mentorship. This corroborates Terrion and Leonard's (2007) assertion on the role of framing theory in sports/career mentorship where the best young player in the tournament TBPT is spotted and zeroed in for showcasing to prospective football mentorship.

Method

15 coaches from the Nigerian club sides in the Nigerian Premier Football League (NPFL)and the Channels Television Assistant General Manager, Corporate Communication and Operations, Mr. Kingsley Uranta, were interviewed. These coaches were part of the tournament and their roles were to help observe best kid players in

the tournament and help give professional advice to the organizers. The researcher was able to interview them on the importance of a media organized kids football tournament on football development in the country.

The names of the coaches included in Table 1 are fictitious in order to protect their identitybecause they requested for anonymity.

Table 1. Interview participants and related demographic data

Name	Career	Years in the Industry
Kingsley	Broadcast media manager	25
Ejike	Football coach	20
Chidi	Football coach	26
Anosike	Football coach	19
Festus	Football coach	31
Olusegun	Football coach	38
Tony	Football coach	32
Yinka	Football coach	28
Aloysius	Football coach	27
Lucky	Football coach	32
Dele	Football coach	29
Ben	Football coach	26

Henry	Football coach	32
Emeka	Football coach	25
Ambrose	Football coach	23

The coaches were personally interviewed at the spot of the tournament via a recorder over a four-week period, using a 13-item Interview Protocol. The interviews were electronically recorded using questions that are semi-structured. Mr. Uranta, the AGM Corporate Communication and Training, gave insights into the tournament. The interviewer did ask further questions, where necessary, in order to get additional and relevant information that would aid the study. For this article, the researcher extracted only responses to questions on the importance of media houses involvement in hosting kids' football tournaments in Nigeria. The application of thematic analysis of the interview data was carefully adhered to. Repetitious listening to the audio recordings of the interviews was done after collecting the interviews. This enabled the researcher to discover frequently repetitive responses by the respondents. At this point the researcher looked out for collective and common shared views in order to use it to form opinion. After listening over and over again to the audio interviews, and there was nothing new to say that was different from what has already been said, then the researcher was satisfied with the views. Lichtman (2014) likens this to '… process of sorting and sifting' (p.324).Responses from the recorded focus group discussion were transcribed by the researcher.

Results

The in-depth interviews with the 15 coaches is revealing in many ways because three (3) major discourses emerged from the analysis of the interview audio transcripts. These discourses are the reinventing of the game of football in Nigeria, talent haunt and nurturing, and making the Nigerian league more appealing. Each of these discourses would be discussed separately.

Reinventing the game of football in Nigeria

When the AGM of Channels Television, Mr. Kingsley Uranta, was asked why Channels Television as a media house is interested in organizing kids' championship in Nigeria, his response was:

> Apart from this being corporate social responsibility for us, for us at Channels Television, we believe so much in the game of football and the benefits it can draw to us as a country, especially in putting Nigeria on the global map. So discovering these young ones at the early stage of their formative life is key to the survival of the sport not only in Nigeria, but in Africa. When these kids are discovered at an early stage the lenses of the media should help project these talents and this is what motivates us to do this and the reason we are gathered here today.

Channels Kids Cup and its Impact on Grassroots Football Development for Talent Haunt and Nurturing

When Mr. Chidi Dike, a coach of one of the football clubs in Lagos was asked how this tournament would impact on grassroots football development, he said:

> Honestly, this is the first of its kind in Nigeria and I feel Channels Television should be lauded and commended for it. This is because this would help the various football academies in the country to fish out these young stars, nurse, train and nurture them to replace the football stars reigning now when they are old. Don't forget that the game of football pushes you out as one grows old. In fact, no club would hire you if they know that you are advanced in age. That's what explains football age. So, in essence, when a media house decides to dedicate its air time to promoting the newly discovered stars in football, then you know that there is hope for the game in the country. For me, I think it is a good move and if every media house should join them in doing this, the better it would be for the game of football in Nigeria.

Mr. Anosike who is a football coach in Aba, Abia State believes:

> When this kind of tournaments are beamed out to other parts of the country, it would encourage other schools to bring out their teams and talents in remote areas to be spotted and groomed. I tell you, there are lots of children with such amazing football skills in most Nigerian villages, but lack people to bring their

> talents to limelight like this so they could be spotted, rewarded and groomed. I strongly believe this would help in grassroots football development in Nigeria.

For Ambrose, he pointed to the fact that:

> "This gesture is a pure grassroots mobilizer for the game of football. Catching them young is what makes all the difference."

Football Rebirth in Nigeria

Mr. Festus who coaches a football club in Aba was asked the impact of the initiative on grassroots football in Nigeria and he responded:

> See, what is happening here today gladdens my heart because in our days there was no one who encouraged and exposed us right from the cradle. For me, it is a rebirth of a new era in our football history because you might never can tell whether these young kids are the ones that would bring the first worldcup back to Nigeria and Africa as a whole. So it is a rebirth of football in the country.

In the same vein, Mr. Olusegun, a football coach in Kano said:

> With what is happening, Channels has helped to midwife what would come to be a media recruiting hub for future football stars in the country. Look at a country like Brazil, their government discover and groom their football stars right from infant. And Channels has made this happen for us.

Henry,a football coach in Warri, Delta State believes:

> If you look at it closely, what you will see here is that that is a rebirth of football consciousness in the country. When we screen the number of schools filling for the competition, it will beat your imagination the interest primary schools have for football. I think a rebirth has been brought about which would aid in grassroots football development.

National Commitment and Interest

Mr. Tony, a football coach in Port Harcourt, said:

> You see my brother, when you spot talents this way and they are shown on national TV, tomorrow if you ask them to go and play for the national team, they will do it irrespective of the big club

> they are in Europe, even if the country is not paying them their entitlement immediately. Do you know why? Because they will know that they owe the country a sense of duty and gratitude who exposed them to be where they are today. This is the kind of gesture that helps build such sense of patriotism and a call to national duty.

Mr. Yinka, whois equally a coach with one of the club sides in Akure, Ondo State of Nigeria, lends his voice:

> When you see the Brazilian players so committed, please check out, this is how they were spotted and groomed and even rewarded and celebrated. That's why they play with so much patriotism on the pitch because they were indoctrinated from the youth. Check out, that explains the commitment.

Dele, a football coach at Uyo, said:

> When you look at the amount of exposure and reward given to these young football talents today, you would agree with me that we are molding and grooming dedicated national team players. This is the kind of gesture that instills and births patriotism in young players. I strongly feel this is good for our football development, especially at the grassroots level. Because we have players playing for the national team who are not committed, who don't want to have injury because of their clubs.

Ben, a football coach in Ilorin, believes:

> The amount of indiscipline exhibited by some of our national team players would point to the fact that they were not groomed, nurtured and managed. Looking at these kids today at this stage of their lives, when you get them at this point and train them not only with additional skills but with character, it would produce responsible and committed football players for our national team.

Rekindling of Interest in Nigeria's National Team and Nigeria's National League

For Mr. Aloysius, he asked:

> Have you not noticed that for the past years Nigeria is not doing well in most global, continental and intercontinental tournaments, and as a result Nigerians are not interested in our national football team? In fact, if you sample the views of football lovers on the street on our national team, some of them would tell you that we don't have a national team. Have you not heard that Nigeria ranks 41 in football world ranking by FIFA? Is that good for the game in Nigeria? So for me I strongly believe that this kind of gesture by the media would help spot talents and showcase them to Nigerians that there is still hope for Nigeria's football. It saddens my heart that Nigerians now follow foreign clubs religiously to the detriment of the local clubs or the national team. It's fashionable to see youths now wearing the jerseys of other countries' national team and foreign clubs. When last did you see a Nigerian wearing the jersey of Enyimba football club of Aba, or Super Eagles' jersey? Of course, you might not find it. It's because they are not proud of their national team's performance. But what you find are fans wearing Chelsea, Man U, Barcelona, Liverpool jerseys".

MobilizingSupport for the National Team

For Mr. Ejike, a football coach in Benue State, he believes:

> Tournament like this has a way of reawakening national consciousness in the area of football grassroots mobilization for the national team. The country's national team whether you agree or not is in a state of coma. People have lost faith in the national team obviously, but if government can follow up on this gesture of picking up these young football talents discovered by Channels Kids Club today, football fans would begin to use them as a test tube for the national team. If these kids that I am seeing here today would be allowed to train together in the Super Eagles' camp, and also beamed on the national TV, people would start drummingup support for our national team at the grassroots level.

Mr. Lucky, a football coach in Enugu, added:

> This is a veritable tool for mobilizing for Super Eagles; I mean this tournament from the grassroots level. You might ask me how? See, look at the crowd here today; it shows that Nigerians still believe in Nigerian football. And listening to this children say they want to be Amunike, Peter Rufai, Musa, and the rest shows that if we use what is going on here today to mobilize support for our national team at the grassroots level.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is the lens of the media that popularized the game of soccer and its players; therefore, the early exposure of children to the game can help use the power of football and the media to promote peace and equality, thereby making the world better through football.Since it is the screen of the media that promotes the game of football, using it to mobilize support and recruit new talents for the game is also crucial as demonstrated by Channels Television with the media strategy of using the agenda setting theory and framing to drum up support for grassroots development of football in the country. No wonder Akindes (2011), Onwumechili (2018),and Panja (2013) are all of the view that television as a medium of mass communication has a pivotal role to play in further popularizing the game of football in any given society. These same views were expressed by the coaches who were the facilitators in the Channels Television Kids National Cup when they notedthat the involvement of media houses in organizing tournaments such as this would go a long way in reinventing the game of football in Nigeria.Responses from the interview revealed thatwhen talented kids are discovered at an early stage the lenses of the media could help project these talents for football mentoring.. This in turn would help the various football academies in the country to fish out these young stars, nurse, train and nurture them to replace the football stars reigning currently when they grow old.

Thus, Channels Television has provided a veritable platform for grassroots sport for development which is somewhat of a growth industry with a plethora of potential for transnational, national, regional and local government and non-government agencies that would be interested in developing and reviving the game of football in Nigeria.

Given that the championship is much of an intervention endeavour to help football grow and glow again in the country,other sectors should borrow a leaf from Channels Kids Cup Championship. This kind of tournament such as the Channels Kids Cup can increase the number of children involved in the nationwide U13 football competition and eliminate age cheating. It can offer an alternative to the everyday lives of children from disadvantaged areas. It can as well boast government's desire to improve and develop the game at all levels. The study also recommends that football competitions if hosted by media outfits can be a veritable tool for nation building and youth development because when children are exposed to the game of soccer at the early stage of their lives, they will get to learn some very important life lessons associated with football that would help them later in life (Giulianotti, 2000; Alegi, 2004; Clavio, 2011). For example, they will learn that in the game of soccer, winning is not fun if achieved unfairly and playing fair makes others respect you.

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