



**THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
INSTITUTE FOR AREA STUDIES**

DUAL ROLE OF FOOTBALL IN AFRICAN SOCIETIES

MASTER'S THESIS

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DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN STUDIES

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February 2025

DEDICATION AND AKNOWLEGMENT

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ABSTRACT

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Master's Thesis / Department of African Studies

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This thesis aims at understanding the role of football in African societies at several levels, such as a social, cultural and economic symbol. Through the analysis of interviews and theoretical concepts, this study aims to understand how football enhances social cohesion, cultural identity and economic growth while identifying challenges of corruption, mismanagement and political interference. The study also reveals how football can create a sense of unity, motivate the youth and promote local development through heroes and facilities. The research also points out that the sport has adapted to the African culture, meaning that it embraces concepts of togetherness and groupism.

However, problems such as the volatility of unity and the focus on the development of football at the expense of other important sectors are some of the challenges that affect its growth. Through the process of addressing issues of governance and the proper placement of resources football can be a sustainable way of bringing about change in the society and in the process define Africa's place and potential across the globe. This work will also go to help in the understanding of the changing role of football as well as provide useful recommendations for its effective utilization in the African environment.

Keywords: Africa, football, social cohesion, economic development, political manipulation

ÖZET

FUTBOLUN AFRIKA TOPLUMLARINDAKİ İKİLİ ROLÜ

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Özet

Bu tez, futbolun Afrika toplumlarında sosyal, kültürel ve ekonomik bir sembol olarak oynadığı rolü anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Mülakatların ve teorik kavramların analizi yoluyla bu çalışma, yolsuzluk, kötü yönetim ve siyasi müdahale gibi zorlukları tespit ederken futbolun sosyal uyumu, kültürel kimliği ve ekonomik büyümeyi nasıl geliştirdiğini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma ayrıca futbolun nasıl birlik duygusu yaratabileceğini, gençleri nasıl motive edebileceğini ve kahramanlar ve tesisler aracılığıyla yerel kalkınmayı nasıl destekleyebileceğini ortaya koymaktadır. Araştırma ayrıca sporun Afrika kültürüne uyum sağladığına, yani birliktelik ve grupçuluk kavramlarını benimsediğine işaret ediyor.

Ancak, birliğin istikrarsızlığı ve diğer önemli sektörler pahasına futbolun gelişimine odaklanması gibi sorunlar, futbolun büyümesini etkileyen zorluklardan bazılarıdır. Yönetişim sorunlarının ele alınması ve kaynakların doğru şekilde yerleştirilmesi sürecinde futbol, toplumda değişim yaratmanın sürdürülebilir bir yolu olabilir ve bu süreçte Afrika'nın dünya genelindeki yerini ve potansiyelini tanımlayabilir. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda futbolun değişen rolünün anlaşılmasına yardımcı olacak ve Afrika ortamında etkin kullanımı için faydalı öneriler sunacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afrika, Futbol, toplumsal uyum, ekonomik kalkınma, siyasi

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Football or soccer is a sport which is very popular in Africa and has an important place in the society. It is not a simple way of dividing people into teams, and using these teams as an excuse for violence; it is a way to unite people, regardless of language, race or ethnicity. Football is perhaps the only thing that has the ability to set the pace, and give a rhythm to the life of the community, it defines the people and the passion is not limited to any specific age group. But football has a dual nature, it has its positive and negative effects in the African societies. However, it is crucial not to forget that together with the excitement of the match-day and the joy of the cheering crowds, there is the need to remain balanced and not make value judgments.

Football has become very popular in Africa because it has the potential of unifying people irrespective of the terrain and social-economic status of the region. It plays a significant role in the process of social integration as it creates the spirit of togetherness and unity which cuts across language, ethnicity and regions that are frequently affected by social as well as political issues. In the numerous communities across the continent, football is not just a game but a tool for galvanizing the people, resolving conflict, and constructing a nation. It is an icon of dreams and dreams of millions of people, providing an opportunity to voice individual potential and contribute to the development of society.

Moreover, football occupies a prominent position within the cultural milieu of African societies and constitutes a significant catalyst for the economic development of the continent. Football industry which includes the grassroots football, domestic leagues, and continental federations provide jobs, boost economies and encourage business acumen. It also helps in identifying talents especially for those young athletes who have a chance to make a career and get out of poverty. This sport sector represents a social and

economic phenomenon with the potential to engender more problems than it resolves. This has the effect of intensifying the effects of other social divisions such as those based on gender and class and reproducing patterns of power within communities. Football has become a global business that is characterized by excessive spending, bribery issues, and injustice against people who are in need, due to commercialization and globalization of the game.

Football has a close relationship with socio-political factors and influences. It can be a mirror of the society and be a stage for different interests and ideologies. It shows the political significance of national teams, the role of football clubs in the process of social transformation, and how the country presents itself on the international arena, highlighting the relationship between politics, governance and sport and identity.

Therefore, since football has the potential of being both a bond that unites and a factor that divides as well as a force for advancement and a force for stability, it is crucial to examine the hybrid nature of football in the African societies. This thesis seeks to analyse the effects of football in various aspects of life such as social, economic, cultural, and political. It is to identify the complex processes in action and to discuss the role of this type of sport in the African setting.

This thesis aims at discussing the complex impact of football in the African societies. It is characterized by scientific preoccupation with details, rich differentiation, and cross-disciplinary approach. This research reviews the evolution of the sport in Africa, the events that have defined its development on the continent, and the current state of the sport. It assesses the positive effects of football, such as its function in integration and development of society, as well as its influence on economy and young people.

The thesis focuses on the political aspect of football, namely corruption, exploitation and inequality. The objective is to determine how the political power structure exploits people's love for football to sideline other important needs of the people. Also, the question of gender in football is discussed; the problems that women and girls encounter in pursuing the opportunities that are provided by the sport, as well as the attempt to break through the stereotypes and prejudices which are still widespread in this field.

Finally, this study examines the limitations and highlights the need for those in academia, policy makers and civil society to capitalise on the opportunities offered by

football, as well as address the challenges that arise. Through the engagement of dialogue, cooperation, and collaboration, the research is intended to contribute to the formation of socially responsible and inclusive football culture in Africa. Such culture should be diverse, community enriching and aimed at improving the health of African societies.

Statement of the Problem

Football is regarded as the most popular game across the globe and has played a crucial role in the African culture and societies in many ways creating both a positive and negative impact on the social, economic and cultural aspects of life. However, despite the role of football as a unifying, empowering and developmental tool, it has its own problems and paradoxes. Corruption, political interference and inequality are some of the issues that football has to deal with.

There is a huge gap in the literature concerning the function of football in African societies, specifically the need for more research that will look at the phenomenon from various angles. From the current literature, it is seen that football is represented as both an icon of culture and an economic asset. However, more specific studies that seek to disentangle the various aspects of its impact are missing. There is still much to be known about how far and in what ways football has helped to promote social integration, economic growth and local participation. Also, the ways by which these processes of inequality, marginalization and exploitation are sustained in this sporting context need to be explored as well.

Moreover, the interweaving of football with African societies has been shown to have profound socio-political ramifications. The intricate relationship between football and governance, the exploration of identity and the impact of nationalism have been identified as particularly challenging factors, particularly with regard to membership, citizenship and collective identity. Furthermore, the commercialisation and commodification of football has given rise to a number of ethical issues, including the exploitation of young talents, the perversion of sporting principles and the propagation of negative images.

Aim of the Study

Given the above, there is the need to look at the dual role of football in the African societies with both the advantages and disadvantages. This study therefore seeks to enhance the understanding of the concept of sport in the African context with a view of identifying ways of reducing the disadvantage that comes with football while increasing its advantage. Football's effects are broken down in this study to reveal the complexities of the influence. It is to lay down the groundwork for the more ethical, inclusive, and socially responsible footballing industry.

The objective of this research is to explore how football acts as a glue that brings people together, a tool for development, and an agent that shapes identities in the African context. The ways in which football fosters inclusion, empowerment and cultural exchange is explored with the help of examples and theories. This will help to better appreciate its future for transformation.

This research also aims to discuss the economic role of football in Africa, its role as an engine for growth, employment and enterprise development. The economic effects of football clubs, leagues and tournaments are evaluated in order to determine how the positive economic impacts of football can be enhanced and the negative aspects such as inequality and exploitation can be reduced.

On the other hand, this thesis tries to understand the relationship between football and politics, governance and identity politics in the African context. From nationalist discourse, political activity and collective identity, it is crucial to disentangle the relationship between football and other socio-political processes.

Last but not the least, this study also aims to give recommendations on how football in Africa should be made ethical, inclusive, and socially responsible. It also seeks to come up with measures that can be taken in order to capture the positive aspect of football while at the same time navigating the many challenges that come with the sport.

Significance of the Study

This thesis carries significant implications for academia and policymakers. It provides valuable insights into the role of football in African societies and its potential to engender positive change. This study has significantly enriched the in existing sociology, knowledge anthropology, economics, cultural studies and sport management through compilation of synthesis of literature, the conduct existing of empirical research and application of inter-disciplinary approach. This thesis' analysis of the impacts of football on African societies will be of interest to academics, researchers and students who want to about know the more relationships between sport, culture and society.

The present thesis will prove of use to policymakers, development formulators and implementers, particularly in the fields of football and social development in Africa. The findings of this study offer a plethora of insights that can be utilised to formulate interventions aimed at enhancing the positive impacts of football while concurrently mitigating its potential negative effects. The study suggests that by emphasising the multifaceted nature of football, it is possible to enhance the communities, stakeholders, and grassroots organisations involved in football activities. The identification of best practices and inclusive approaches to football development and governance will be of use to community builders, coaches and civil society organisations that wish to utilise football for positive social change and youth empowerment.

Football represents a highly effective instrument of intercultural communication, which has been demonstrated to develop and strengthen connections and mutual understanding between people from different cultures. A substantial body of research has validated the impact of football on African societies, thereby promoting cross-cultural communication, cultural appreciation, the deconstruction of stereotypes, and the cultivation of respect and unity within the global football community. This thesis puts forward the notion that the identification of measures to combat issues of exploitation, corruption, and inequality within the football industry is of paramount importance. Furthermore, the encouragement of policies and practices that promote equity, integrity, and respect for human rights is also advocated. It is asserted that these efforts will assist in the creation of a more balanced and sustainable football industry.

Methodology

Research Design

The current study dwells on the role of football in general and spectatorship in order to shape a community. There is a high focus on the role that football plays in developing an African community and creating some social values and cultural interchange within communities. To investigate the multiple interactions influenced by being a football spectator or a footballer, the qualitative and descriptive research design was used. This approach is well suited to exploring the nuanced impacts of football, as it provides an in-depth understanding of individual and collective football-related experiences, perceptions and behaviours in the community context.

The participants will be both active football players and keen spectators. In order to ensure that the sample is representative of the population, demographic variables such as age and socio-economic status will be taken into account.

The participants will be between 18 – 50+ years old, people who have interest in playing football and watching football when necessary. As convenient random sampling will be implemented in the study anyone willing to contribute within the context of the study is eligible to take part.

In most of the African communities, it could be seen that almost 90% of the football spectators are more likely to be of the male gender. Thus, the role of female gender in the study will be more likely to be limited or rather a little less than males.

The demographic information of the participants of the study will include everything that could help in obtaining sound and more valid data for the study. Furthermore, the educational and linguistics background will be considered as per the perspectives change based on the background of the participants.

Data Collection Methods

In order to get the comprehensive and accurate data the following data collection methods were used:

- The semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method that allows for the collection of data in a flexible manner. It is a form of interviewing that allows the

researcher to follow a set of predetermined questions, while also allowing for the emergence of new topics and themes. The semi-structured format has been employed in the interviews with participants, allowing for flexibility in responses while ensuring that all relevant topics were covered. The questions were concentrated on the perceived effects of football on community cohesion, identity, and social relationships.

With regard to the interviews, a total of eight individuals were interviewed, all of whom were citizens of Liberia, Egypt, Senegal, South Africa, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, and Côte d'Ivoire.

- The observations checklist has been conducted during football matches and related community events. This process aimed to document the behaviours, interactions, and reactions of individuals and groups, with particular attention to the social dynamics influenced by football activities. In addition to the aforementioned observations, specific incidents and the general ambiance were recorded, thereby providing contextual data that supports the findings of the subsequent interviews. A random convenient sampling strategy has been employed to select participants. This method allows for the efficient gathering of data from a population that is readily accessible, thereby facilitating the inclusion of a broad range of participant experiences. The sample size has been determined based on the saturation point in data collection, which is defined as the point at which no new information is observed in the data.

Prior to data collection, ethical approval has been obtained from the relevant institutional review boards. The participants were given all the necessary information about the research objectives, what they are expected to do in the study, and their rights such as the confidentiality of the data and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. Informed consent has been obtained from all participants.

Limitation

While this study provides valuable insights into the dual role of football in African societies, it is not without limitations, which also present opportunities for further exploration. Firstly, the sample of participants, though diverse, was constrained by some participants, limiting the geographical scope of the research. While the study included perspectives from countries such as Liberia, Egypt, Senegal, South Africa, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, and Côte d'Ivoire, certain sub-regions - such as Southern Africa, Eastern Africa and smaller nations (e.g., Benin, Eswatini, Eritrea) - were underrepresented. Additionally, the study primarily focused on urban areas, potentially overlooking the unique dynamics of football in rural communities, where the sport may play a different but equally significant role in fostering social cohesion and economic development. Future studies could address this by expanding the sample to include participants from underrepresented regions and demographics, such as women and rural communities, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of football's impact across the continent.

Secondly, while the focus on the African context allows for an in-depth analysis, the role of international sponsorships, FIFA regulations, and global media in shaping African football was not thoroughly examined. Future research could adopt a more global perspective by analysing the relationship between African football and international systems. Comparative studies between African and non-African football systems (e.g., South America, Asia) could also provide valuable insights into best practices for addressing challenges like corruption, financial mismanagement, and talent retention.

Additionally, comparing African and non-African ways of running football could shed light on why certain challenges persist in Africa but are less prevalent in other regions. For example, South American countries like Brazil and Argentina have successfully managed to retain and develop local talent while maintaining strong domestic leagues, offering potential lessons for African football.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background of Football

Introduction to Football in Africa

Football has withstood time as a culture for as long as man has been around. Collins (2018) has pointed out that football has its roots back in the ancient civilizations where ball games which are similar to the modern football were practiced in different societies. Nevertheless, it was in the 19th century in England that the football changed dramatically with the definition of the rules and creation of the competitive structures that led to the popularization of the sport all over the world (Stebbins & Giulianotti, 2000). This has made football one of the most popular games across the world and is played by millions of people across the globe.

The Football Association (FA) was founded in the year 1863 and can be considered as a significant development as it set some rules and regulations which helped the game to develop outside England (Guttmann, 1994). This is because through the provisions of the FA, the sport was able to spread across the British colonies with ease, it became a cultural asset and a mean of imperialism as Britain expanded its empire. Football is now played in the remotest parts of the world such as Africa and Asia which are evidence of its cross-cultural adaptation.

The twentieth century marked the further integration of football into the international society with the establishment of competitive events including the FIFA World Cup which began in 1930. This marked the beginning of a new phase in which football was watched by millions of people and became popular on the global level. The second half of the century saw the emergence of television broadcasting as a means of spreading the coverage of football games and thus the sport became almost inseparable from households all over the world. Soccer is now a profit-making enterprise as are other disciplines that it has the privilege of being associated with culturally and socially aspects. Clubs, players and governing bodies are active in a system that is characterized by

commercialism and financial viability (Maguire, 2023). Movements of players between continents and ownership of clubs across the borders have made it difficult to distinguish between the local and the global dimensions of soccer – an example of how the game is changing its identity and values (Darby, 2013).

The history of football in Africa is the same as the history of colonial expansion of Europe to the African continent in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At first, it was embraced by the colonial administrators and missionaries as a form of entertainment. Nevertheless, it became popular in the African society and served as a way of having fun, standing up to the colonial rulers, and showing the African culture.

Football became very popular in Africa after the post-colonial period as various new nations adopted the sport as a way of creating a national culture and unity. The formation of football federations and governing bodies such as the African Football Confederation in the year 1957 provided a platform for the establishment of competitions and also foster the spirit of regionalism.

Some challenges which include; scarcity of resources, poor infrastructure, and poor governance in the development of African football can be identified. Despite these challenges, African football has evolved tremendously, and has a huge market and many great players all across Africa and the rest of the world. African football has evolved as a rich and dynamic force that attracts adoring fans and produces quality players throughout the continent as well as internationally. The significance of African Cup football competitions in the social, cultural and political development of the continent is indisputable. This assertion is supported by the achievements of national teams at the global level and the development of strong clubs on the continent.

Notwithstanding, the African football landscape remains grappling with pervasive challenges, including corruption, inadequate financial administration, and the excessive acquisition of players. While the commercialisation of the sport has augmented revenue and audience reach, it has concomitantly exacerbated disparities and engendered a greater reliance on the importation of players and funding.

History of Football and its Influence

History of Football

Football can be traced back to the ancient ball games which were practiced in different cultures and civilizations including the cuju in China and the harpastum in Ancient Rome according to Goldblatt (2014)). In the 19th century, England saw the formation of standardized rules of the game through organizations such as the Football Association formed in 1863 which led to formation of competitions as well as football clubs (Holt, 2011). It met with great enthusiasm and rapidly adopted across the globe, the sport became an integral part of the social, cultural and economic life of societies around the globe.

Throughout the course of its development, football has been one of the most effective tools of populating, which helps people to unite the society (Alegi & Bolsmann, 2013). Football part has been a way for people to come together, share and discuss ideas and work as a team; it has crossed the barriers of language, race and country. According to Giulianotti & Robertson (2004)), the attraction of the sport is because it is able to localise while at the same time being universal.

The colonial period can be defined as the period in the development of mankind when European powers sought to explore and occupy other parts of the world including Africa, Asia, the Americas and other parts of the world. Modern colonialism was established and intensified all over the world for four centuries from the 15th century to the mid-20th century, with European colonial empires covering 35% of the world's land in 1800 and reaching up to 84% at the onset of the First World War (Abernethy, 2000). During the era of imperialism, the colonial powers wanted to acquire large portion of land, exploit natural resources and impose their culture, politics and economy systems on the native inhabitants (Hobsbawm, 1987).

Football was brought into the colonies by the Europeans and it became one of the most important cultural products that was spread throughout the regions that were under the European domination (Darby, 2013). Football was not just a game to the colonial authorities; it was a mean of propagating the imperial spirit, of demonstrating the dominance of one culture over another and of regulating native populations (Mangan, 1998). In African situations for example, football was employed to instil values such as

discipline and obedience which are western in origin at the same time being a way of supporting racism (Alegi & Bolsmann, 2013). Moreover, the sport was associated with the colonial administration measures where only certain groups of people were allowed to participate.

It is necessary to note the example of British colonialism in India, for instance, the sport of football was introduced in India by the British troops and administrators and gained huge popularity among people. The creation of clubs and leagues in cities such as Kolkata laid the foundations for the development of Indian football. Iconic teams such as Mohun Bagan became symbols of resistance to colonial oppression.

In Africa, the colonial masters who saw football as an effective way of social engineering and the promotion of the colonial agenda propagated the sport as a tool of cultural imperialism according to Alegi & Bolsmann, (2013). Nevertheless, the locals embraced football and used it to express their identity and to fight against colonial order (Darby, 2013). For example, in South Africa football was very important in the formation of black identity and unity. Some teams for example Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs became an opposition to apartheid, where people could express themselves and act as one nation (Bolsmann & Parker, 2006).

In the same manner, football became a popular culture and a way of expressing defiance to colonial masters in the Caribbean (C. L. R., 2003). In Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago football was one of the ways through which these countries expressed their desire for independence and pride against the British colonial masters. The appearance of Cyrille Regis and Laurie Cunningham in the English professional leagues is an example of the quality and determination of Caribbean footballers who had to struggle through racial barriers and discrimination according to Maguire (2023). They broke the stereotypes and remade the image of black athletes in the international context.

During the colonial period in Asia football had two functions: It was a tool of cultural integration and it was a tool of nationalist agitation. In Indonesia, football became a symbol of resistance to Dutch colonial rule. Clubs such as Persija Jakarta and Persib Bandung embodied the spirit of Indonesian nationalism. In the Middle East, football has been a catalyst for social change. Teams such as Al-Ahly in Egypt and Al-Hilal in Saudi Arabia remain symbols of national pride and unity.

Overall, during the colonial period, football spread globally and transcended its European origins to become a universal language of identity, resistance, and solidarity. Despite its association with colonial power dynamics, football proved to be a powerful force for social change and cultural expression, leaving an indelible mark on the societies it touched.

The colonial masters encouraged the practice of football as a way of making the native Africans more civilized and less likely to revolt. It was meant to teach people discipline and team spirit as well as the European culture (Guttmann, 1994). Football games and tournaments were held in the colonial regions with the Europeans taking most, if not all the wins. But the African people loved the sport and adopted it, and adapted it to the culture and played it for fun (Alegi & Bolsmann, 2013)

During the colonial period, African football pioneers emerged and became emblematic figures in the sport's history. For instance, Arthur Wharton, the first black professional footballer in England, and Steve Mokone, known as the 'Black Meteor' for paving the way for African players in Europe, gained fame during this period. They defied racial obstacles and paved the way for future generations of African footballers.

Football has its roots in colonial times, but it became a tool in the hands of the African people to claim their identity, show unity and even defy the colonial power. Native players and teams appeared on the football fields to demonstrate not only their physical abilities, but also to break through the stereotypes of the inferiority of the black people. The creation of football clubs and leagues in the urban as well as the rural areas provided platforms for people to come together and organize themselves hence providing a strong base for football's role in African freedom fights and post-colonial identity (Bale & Sang, 2013).

Influence of Football

In addition, football has played a very important role in formation of the nation and nationalism and nationhood, it has become a symbol of nation's pride and unity around the globe (Hobsbawm, 1987). This is because besides displaying the athletic ability of countries, international competitions like the FIFA World Cup also enable diplomatic relations, cultural interchange and international fellowship (Tomlinson &

Young, 2006). These events demonstrate how football serves as a means of linking people of different cultures and bring them closer in the international level.

Football is now a big money-making industry which creates a huge revenue every year and also creates employment for millions of people across the globe. Football has become a commercial product due to television rights, sponsorships and merchandising thus making the sport a global business. Top teams and players are valued in billions and are backed by international corporations, which can be seen with the help of sponsorship deals from companies such as Nike, Adidas and Emirates (Dobson & Goddard, 2001).

However, there are many issues and controversies which affect football in a negative way including corruption, match fixing and exploitation of players. The FIFA corruption cases that occurred in 2015 and cases of match fixing in various leagues across the world exposed the system's weaknesses in the governance of the sport (Jennings, 2011). It is evident that as the magnitude of victory and the magnitude of financial reward increase, there is a corresponding tendency for the ethical and moral dimensions of the game to be marginalised. This phenomenon has given rise to a multitude of cases of unethical behaviour and controversy within the footballing community. (Tomlinson, 2014).

Furthermore, football has often been used by political powers in certain countries as a tool for manipulating the masses. As Armstrong & Giulianotti (2004) note, performances in high-profile matches or tournaments are frequently highlighted to divert attention from more pressing socio-economic issues. This phenomenon, which they term the "politics of distraction," has been evident in regimes where governments use football to consolidate power and foster a sense of national pride while neglecting broader developmental concerns.

Football in Africa during the colonial period evolved from a recreational activity to a culture that was widely embraced across the African societies after being introduced by the European colonizers. The game was taken into the country by the European colonial masters together with other aspects of their culture (Alegi & Bolsmann, 2013). Football was used in different ways during this period: It was a way of entertaining the colonial administrators and missionaries, a way of creating bonds between the European expatriates and a way of social control and acculturation (Darby, 2013).

Africa has had a great development in the field of football over the years. Despite all the challenges that the teams from the African continent have had to go through, they have produced excellent results in the AFCON and other international competitions. Egypt's early dominance of the African Cup of Nations which started with the victories in the first two tournaments held in 1957 and 1959 paved way for Africa's football greatness (Darby, 2013). Other great achievements include Nigeria's Olympic gold medal win in 1996, Cameroon's Olympic gold in 2000 and Morocco's performance of reaching the semi-finals of the 2022 FIFA World Cup which demonstrates the improvement of African football teams (FIFA, 2022).

Nevertheless, African football has a long way to go in order to overcome the challenges that affect its growth especially in the area of governance, infrastructure and financial base. These include corruption, mismanagement and political interference which has a long way of undermining the sport's progress. Issues such as embezzlement of funds at football federations, underdeveloped grassroots leagues, and poor infrastructure impedes the development of athletes and growth of the sport. Furthermore, FIFA, (2022) and Darby (2013) point the fact that the lack of proper investment and proper governance have not allowed football in Africa to become the vehicle it should have been for social change and economic empowerment.

However, football remains an important source of hope for millions of young people throughout the continent despite these challenges. African players like Didier Drogba, Samuel Eto'o, and Mohamed Salah have achieved great accomplishments in the international level, which has inspired the youth and proved the potential of the African continent in football (Alegi & Bolsmann, 2013).

Football in Africa has created unity, national identity and an African pride, and an international platform within the African context. Cameroon's performance at the 1990 FIFA World Cup can be said to be one of the most important events in the history of African football. It was not only the performance of the Indomitable Lions to the quarter finals of the tournament but the 1-0 victory over the then world champions Argentina in the opening game of the tournament which was a message to the world about the potential that was lying within African football. Darby (2013) said that the event had an effect on the perceptions across the world and put African football in the international spotlight which encouraged many football players all over Africa.

The encouraging results of the Senegalese male team in the 2002 FIFA World Cup can be considered as one of the most important events in the history of African football. They got to the quarter finals which made them the second African team to achieve so. They started the tournament strongly by defeating the former world champions France in the opening match which came as a great surprise to the footballing world and other African nations. This victory showed the competitive attitude and ability of African football at the global level. The success of Senegal has had a great effect in the economy, including development of sports complexes, increase in sports talent at the grassroots level and the overall development of the sports infrastructure in the country and the neighbouring areas (FIFA, 2002).

In addition, Morocco has had a successful run at the FIFA World Cup in Qatar in 2022, where they reached the semi-finals - a first for an African team. This achievement has been used as a diplomatic tool by the Moroccan authorities, highlighting the growing role of sport in international relations (YTB, 2023)

The Olympic victory of Nigeria at the 1996 Atlanta Games is one of the most important achievements that prove the importance of football victories in African societies. Nigeria displayed the talent that the continent has through winning the gold medal in football. The victory of the Dream Team was a source of immense national pride and a unifying factor for Nigeria as a country of different tribes and social classes that has suffered political instability, coups d'état, and the Biafra war. The success of the Super Eagles has created interest in football especially at the grassroots football in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. The Cameroon team was able to do this in the year 2000 during the Sydney Olympics in Australia, thus making it Africa's second Olympic gold medal in football (Alegi, 2010).

Egypt's supremacy in the African Cup of Nations, which the country has won seven times, reflects the strength of the country in the African football arena. The enhancement of the tournament's status and the elevated level of competition within it are indisputable consequences of Egypt's triumphs. Not only has the Pharaohs' successes created a sense of national unity and pride but it has also helped in the growth of football development and talents across the African nations. Also, their performances have enhanced the competition to a high level since many teams are seeking to have similar results. For example, Cameroon has won five continental titles while Ghana has won four.

These successes have also underlined the role of football as a social and economic force in Africa (Ionescu, 2010)

The performances of the African teams have also had a great effect off the field, the provision of a sense of belonging, unity and pride among the Africans. Football has thus become one of the most effective tools of social and political discourse where achievements of teams are, more often, associated with and seen as embodiments of larger social and political goals and dreams (Darby, 2013). Furthermore, these victories have significant economic benefits such as increased investment in sports facilities, talent development and a positive impact on tourism and the country's image (Alegi, 2010). These examples show how important football is in African societies and how it goes beyond the sport to affect the social, cultural and economic life.

The performances of African teams in the global competitions are not only sporting victories; they are milestones which define Africa's story, offer inspiration, and remind the world what Africa can offer. The great performances of black footballers from Africa and other parts of the world in international competitions also speak to the global recognition and contribution of African players to football. These successes are not just individual recognition, they depict the role of African players in the sport, their respective societies and the continent (FIFA, 2022).

In this context, one of the most notable examples is George Weah of Liberia. Weah was elected as the president of Liberia in 2006 after having retired from football in 1997. Weah was the first, and so far, the only, African player who was awarded the FIFA World Player of the Year title (Ballon d'Or) in 1995. Weah's historic victory went a long way to inspire a whole generation of young Africans to work hard in order to achieve their dreams in football. The story of Weah from the slums of Monrovia to the world is a great example of how the continent and particularly the African players can succeed on the global stage. (Alegi, 2010). In the same vein, in 2019, the International Benevolence Award (International Benevolence Award – İyilik Ödülleri) was presented to Oumar Kanouté by the Türkiye Diyanet Foundation in Ankara, Turkey. This prestigious accolade was bestowed upon him in recognition of his exceptional contributions to society, exemplified by his unwavering dedication and selfless benevolence towards others.

The journey that African athletes take from the local football fields to the highest level is the story of dedication, determination and overcoming social and economic

challenges. These narratives are particularly useful as they reveal the skills and abilities that the African continent can bring to the international sporting events.

The story of Didier Drogba, the Ivorian striker, is not only about a successful football player. Drogba is also a man who stood for peace in Côte d'Ivoire, a country that was through a lot of crises for many years now. He played a critical role in the process of the reconciliation and the stability of the country during the conflict. Drogba has also been very active in the social development of the African continent especially in the health, education and the general improvement of the community (Darby, 2013). It shows how black footballers can use their position to make positive changes in the society. Likewise, George Weah, Liberia's football great and ex-FIFA Player of the Year don't just help in peace processes of Liberia's war. His passion for serving the people made him venture into politics and up to 2018 to 2024, he remained in office to support various social causes (Alegi, 2010).

Mohamed Salah does not only perform well in the football field and brings home many titles like the UEFA Champions League and the Premier League with Liverpool FC but also is famous for his humble character and charity work. Additionally, Salah has demonstrated a commitment to social causes, notably through the provision of financial support to the education and healthcare sectors in Egypt. He goes beyond the football field to inspire the nation and improve the quality of life of people (FIFA, 2022)

The economic contributions of other successful African footballers, for example, Samuel Eto'o, Yaya Touré, and Sadio Mané, have been remarkable. Their success has put the focus on the African players, and has led to investments in football academies, infrastructure and recruitment networks on the continent. The performance of the African players in the major European leagues has also boosted the commercialization of football in Africa since it creates new markets for merchandise, broadcasting and sponsorship (Darby, 2013).

In addition, the success of African players in the international level is a great motivator for the youth on the continent. It also shows football's role as an anti-poverty tool and a way of achieving fame across the globe. The stories of these players are very inspiring for millions of people around the world, showing that it is possible to achieve success in football at the highest level of the world football league if one is determined and dedicated. The performances that are put up by the black players on the football field

in itself highlights two things. First of all, it underlines the fact that there is a lot of talent in the African continent. Secondly, it demonstrates how the African continent has contributed immensely to the growth of football worldwide. These athletes have not only been awarded individually but also had an impact on their respective countries and the African continent in the social, economic and cultural aspects as well (FIFA, 2022).

African Society and Athleticism

The relationship between African society and athletics is extensive and has played a significant role in the social, cultural and economic development of the African continent. Disciplines in athletics include soccer, track and field and basketball among others and have been a part of the African societies. It is not only a way of having fun and being active but also a way of bringing people together, a way of expressing culture and a way of improving one's social-economic status. This is especially so for sports like soccer, track and field, and basketball (Sage & Eitzen, 2015).

In African societies, athleticism has never been limited to the physical skills only. It also involved the cultural beliefs, community ethos and the structures in place. Sports especially the traditional ones are usually associated with rituals and ceremonies whereby information is passed from one generation to another. For example, the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania incorporate athletic games into their initiation ceremonies. These competitions are for the young warriors where they display their strength, speed, and agility in throwing spears and high jumping (Dyck, 2000). These games have a lot of cultural importance and these are aspects which are deemed to promote courage, expertise and unity of the society.

The development of the modern-day sports especially football, athletics and basketball has revolutionized the sporting arena across the African continent. Football is the most popular sport on the continent and is an important part of African culture. It is a way through which people express their national identity, a bond that brings people together during international competitions, and a tool for social mobilization. The African Cup of Nations and the performances of the African teams in the FIFA World Cup create a sense of national identity and togetherness. Studies have also showed that such

important football events may increase the level of social cohesion, and decrease ethno-regional tensions while promoting the feeling of being part of one nation (Darby, 2013)

Sprinting, hurdling and throwing events are some of the aspects of athletics that are popular across the globe and have their origin in Africa. African people are famous for their long-distance running abilities and specialties and such great runners hailing from Kenya and Ethiopia. This is not only because of the physical endowment of these athletes but also because of the high-altitude training, diet, and social environment that is seen in these nations. The achievements of these African athletes globally have important social consequences and are a source of motivation for many youths in Africa. This helps a lot in disproving certain myths and at the same time is evidence of the capacity to get the best out of people thus enhancing the positive perception of the African continent (Onywera et al., 2007).

The economy of African societies is also influenced by athletics. Olympic athletes and footballers from Africa have brought great success to sports and made it a profitable profession that helps people improve their social and economic status. For instance, the movement of African football players to the European leagues does not only benefit the players and their families financially but also advance the development of the local economy through remittances (Darby, 2002)

Furthermore, the disclosure of the African talent in the global market has also led to the development of sports infrastructure, academies, and grassroots development programs across the continent (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2009). This economic aspect shows how athletics is a motor for change and fighting against poverty. However, athletics has a great importance in African societies as a means of supporting education and health. Sports projects in schools and within the society have been efficient in enhancing physical fitness, character development and avoiding social vices. These programs provide youth with positive activities, directing them in a right manner and keeping them away from negative activities including drug use and criminal activities. The functions of sport in education have been well explored in the existing academic database with teamwork, discipline and perseverance as some of the values that are usually emphasized (Coakley, 2012).

Contemporary Relevance of Football

The image of football in Africa is very complex; it shows the role of culture in football on the continent. Football is not simply a competition, it is a complex social institution that has the social, political and economic ramifications within the society. This passion for soccer in Africa is as a result of the devotion people show for football across the world as well as the local cultures and social conditions.

Football has no rival in Africa as the most popular game among other sports that are practiced on the continent. It has deeply penetrated the cultures of the African societies and it is not just a way of having fun. Football matches whether local or international are always welcomed events which create a lot of enthusiasm among the people and unite them across the social and economic strata (Cornelissen, 2004). This is evidence by the full attendance in stadia, the fan zones and many people walking around with football shirts on to show their support for local as well as international teams. The author Alegi (2010) also agrees with this view that football is an important part of the African cultural identity as it is a way of expressing the hopes, visions and unity of the African nations.

Football has also greatly influenced the shaping of national identity across the African continent. This thesis considers such competitions as the FIFA World Cup and the African Cup of Nations as chances for nations to exhibit themselves to the rest of the world. Winning these tournaments creates national pride and may help to unite populations that would otherwise be split along ethno-political lines. According to Darby (2013), Cameroon, Nigeria, and Ghana among other countries have employed football as means of constructing and strengthening the notion of nationhood where people come together to support their national teams.

Nevertheless, football culture in Africa is not black and white. Football is a source of happiness and pride, but it also illustrates the social and economic materialities of many African nations. The love for football has been seen as a negative aspect since it has masked other important aspects such as education, health, and economic development. Detractors say that the amount of money spent on football could be more effectively spent on social problems (Bale, 2002). Others have claimed that political powers use people's passion for football to divert their attention from other important matters.

In addition, the movement of African players to other European and foreign leagues has its advantages and disadvantages. Firstly, it is evident that the event in question serves to highlight the considerable talent that is present on the continent. Moreover, it facilitates the enhancement of career prospects and the augmentation of financial status for the participating players. At the same time, it poses a question on the loss of talent to the African leagues which may in turn weaken the national football development and the overall quality of local competitions. In their article, J. Maguire & Bale (1994) capture the ambivalences associated with the success of the African players in foreign leagues while trying to address the question of how to nurture talent in the continent. The authors stress on the need to nurture talent within Africa and to enhance the footballing infrastructure in the region. They contend that it is right to rejoice for the African players' success but this should not be at the expense of investing in the locals.

Despite the problems, football in Africa is viewed in a positive light. It is believed that the sport has the capacity to bring positive change in the society, to motivate young people, to promote peace and to foster unity of the society. This shows how the sport has the capacity to unite people especially in times of crisis which proves the potential of football as a tool for rehabilitation and social integration, according to Levermore (2011). The author discusses the use of football in peacebuilding projects and how the sport has the possibility to unite people and give them a sense of unity.

Negative Impacts of football

One of the main negative impacts of football in Africa is the economic disparities and potential misallocation of resources that it can cause. Large sums of public money are sometimes allocated to the construction of stadiums and the organisation of international tournaments, which is not always justifiable given the pressing needs for health, education and infrastructure development in many African countries. Such investments can lead to debates about priorities and the efficient use of limited resources, especially if the facilities are underused after the tournaments or do not generate the expected economic benefits (Cornelissen, 2004).

The migration of African football talent to foreign leagues, while beneficial in terms of individual success and financial transfer, also has a "draining" effect on local leagues. This exodus often leads to a weakening of national competitions, a decline in fan interest and difficulties in developing the full potential of local talent in their country of origin. The flight of talent can hinder the overall growth and competitiveness of football at national level, leaving a gap between the grassroots and the world stage where African players shine (Darby, 2013).

Also, football in Africa and other parts of the world has not been free from cases of fan violence and hooliganism. This is especially the case with derby matches or matches that pit one's team against the other, which may lead to incidents of violence within and outside the stadium. Not only do these incidents pose safety risks, they also have negative impact on the image of the sport and discourage families and communities from supporting football games. Such violence indicates other conflicts and may actually increase social contrasts instead of being a bond (Stebbins & Giulianotti, 2000).

The prospect of practicing football at a professional level in Europe or any other rich league cannot bring about an exaggerated anticipation of success among young people especially in Africa. The truth however is that this dream is not within the reach of so many who aspire to be part of it, and those who are not disappointed are left with no choice but to look for other means of income. In addition, this dream supports the activities of some agents and academies, who guarantee placement in exchange for money or other forms of corruption, preying on the hopes of young players and their parents (Esson, 2013).

Football as a Tool of Manipulation of Masses

Football holds a very special place in the heart of the African society and that is why it becomes a powerful instrument of political influence. It has been common for governments and political leaders to utilize the power of football as a means to garner support or to distract the public from social issues, bribery or impoverished governance. The hosting of tournaments, adoration for the national team and development of football

facilities may be a way of winning the hearts of the people and or diverting their attention from other issues of concern (Kidd, 2019).

However, the use of football to foster nationalism is another way through which the people are controlled. Although this is a positive aspect of the use of sport, it can be used in a negative way to advance a specific political agenda, to silence individuals with different opinions or to hide the multiculturalism of a nation. This kind of football fanaticism based on nationalism and patriotism is equally a useful tool to foster the idea of sameness, or to silence other forms of identification based on difference (Jarvie, 2003).

Football can be a diversion, a way of taking the public's attention off of important matters that need to be addressed and dealt with in countries that are going through economic, political or social crisis. Football events and stadium constructions attract much funding which are often accused to be mere attempts at showcasing the prosperity and strength of the nation while ignoring other social and economic issues. This distraction can result in the calming of the public for a while hence hindering the process of carrying out much needed changes and the discussion on social justice and equal development (Cornelissen, 2004).

The ethical consequences of employing football for controlling the public are rather crucial. Such issues provoke the questions of autonomy of sport, functions of sport in society, as well as the duties of officials. Football politicization is a phenomenon that can be seen as the violation of the principles of the sport and the betrayal of the ideals of the fans and athletes who consider the sport as an entertainment and social value (Giulianotti, n.d.).

Theoretical Framework

Social Capital Theory is a conceptual framework which has been developed by scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu (Siisiäinen, n.d.), James S. Coleman (1997) and Robert Putnam (1998) to analyse the impact of football in African societies. Social capital refers to the aggregate of resources derived from social networks, norms, and trust that enable cooperation and collective action for the betterment of society. This theory provides a robust lens for understanding how football fosters social cohesion, builds networks, and

influences societal development in Africa. By examining football through the prism of social capital, we can better understand its dual role as both a unifying force and a driver of social, economic, and political change.

Social Capital Theory is particularly relevant for explaining the multifaceted nature of football in African societies. It helps us understand how football brings together people from diverse backgrounds, fosters trust and cooperation, and creates networks that transcend ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic divides. Moreover, the theory provides a foundation for exploring how football can be harnessed as a tool for community development, conflict resolution, and nation-building. By analysing football through the three dimensions of social capital - bonding, bridging, and linking – it is possible to gain deeper insights into its transformative potential in African contexts.

Definition and Relevance

Social capital can be explained as the ties that exist between people in a society and the resulting cohesion that results in collective action. It has three major types as listed below:

- Bonding social capital refers to the strong ties within close-knit groups, such as families, friends, or local communities. These ties foster a sense of belonging and mutual support
- Bridging social capital, in contrast, encompasses connections between diverse groups, promoting inclusivity and broader identities. It helps bridge gaps between different social, ethnic, or economic groups
- Linking social capital, finally, refers to vertical connections between individuals and institutions, such as governments, NGOs, or international organizations. These connections provide access to resources, opportunities, and power

In the context of African societies, football serves as a powerful vehicle for generating all three types of social capital. The sport brings together individuals from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, fostering networks and relationships that contribute to social cohesion and collective identity (Putnam, 2000). For example, during football matches, fans from different ethnic groups often unite to support their local or national teams, creating a shared sense of identity and purpose. This collective

experience strengthens social bonds and promotes trust, which are essential for community development and nation-building.

Football and Bonding Social Capital

Football is a powerful tool for strengthening bonding social capital within communities. The sport fosters strong in-group relationships among fans, players, and local communities. Through shared experiences such as matches, training sessions, and community events, individuals build trust, camaraderie, and a sense of belonging (Walters & Tacon, 2010). These interactions create a spirit of cooperation and mutual support, which is crucial for community stability and unity.

For instance, local football clubs and teams often serve as microcosms of society, where individuals with shared goals and values come together. These groups provide a space for social interaction, mentorship, and collective problem-solving. In many African communities, football clubs are not just about the sport; they are hubs for social engagement, where young people learn life skills, build relationships, and develop a sense of identity. The strong bonds formed through football contribute to the resilience of communities, particularly in regions affected by poverty, conflict, or social fragmentation.

Football and Bridging Social Capital

Football also plays a significant role in fostering bridging social capital by connecting individuals from diverse backgrounds. The sport transcends ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic boundaries, creating opportunities for cross-cultural interaction and understanding. During matches and tournaments, fans from different groups come together to support their teams, breaking down stereotypes and fostering a sense of inclusivity (Coalter, 2007).

These meetings are also a chance for people of different cultures to meet and discuss, combat stereotypes and feel like a part of society. The way fans cheer for the local and the national teams shows how football can act as a bond that knits people of different faiths and beliefs. This is also applicable to the idea of the collective identity

and societal harmony as people are also united by the activity of watching and supporting a team. The phenomenon of social capital being bridged through the medium of football is evident in the way that it connects individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds, thereby promoting inclusivity and unity. The spectator base for matches and tournaments is often diverse, transcends ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic boundaries. This collective identity and societal harmony are reinforced through the shared experience of supporting a team.

Football and Linking Social Capital

Football is a mean through which social capital is developed which is the relations between individuals, organizations and societies. Football is a way of reassembling people and providing them with opportunities they may not be able to get on their own. For instance, sports such as football enable children from poor backgrounds to get scholarships, training, and even employment opportunities (Levermore, 2008).

Furthermore, the community projects that are associated with football help in engaging institutional support that creates a platform for collaboration between the community, NGOs, and government institutions such as local authorities. It also plays a significant role in enhancing cohesion and unity within the society as people from all walks of life come together for a common cause (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2009).

Football also helps in the promotion of social capital by connecting people and organizations as well as people and social institutions. Football makes people interact with each other and have access to resources, opportunities, and networks that they could not have gotten without football. For example, athletes from struggling families can get a fellowship, training, and even a job through football (Skinner et al., 2008).

Furthermore, the football related community projects which are often accompanied by institutional support, create a platform where the community, non-governmental organizations and the local authorities can come together. It also has an important role in the improvement of the cohesiveness of the society as people of all ages and background come together for a common cause.

Empirical Support and Implications for Community Development

Empirical research has also demonstrated that football assists in enhancing social capital in various contexts. For example., according to (Putnam, 2000) physical activities like football are related to high levels of social trust and citizenship engagement. In the African situation, (Alegi, 2010) and (Darby, 2002) explain how football is a bond which provides people with an identity and sense of belonging. These research works are evidence that football is a means of generating social capital that is the networks for group cooperation.

Besides, when football is analysed with the help of social capital theory it is possible to notice that football can be used for the benefit of society. Through the social capital that is accumulated and the structures that are created due to football, the policy makers and community leaders can come up with measures that will help in the enhancement of the social and economic development of the society (Spaaij, 2009). For instance, football-based programs can be used to enhance education, health and conflict resolution since the sport has the potential of engaging people and making them work as a team.

CHAPTER III

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This section presents the main findings of the study as well as the main conclusions drawn from it with a focus on the relationship between football and African societies. The major goal of this section is to identify and explore the perceptions and experiences expressed by the participants, the ambivalent nature of football as both a bond and a factor that creates social problems.

This section also seeks to explain the role of football within the society, culture, economy and politics in Africa in its rich complexity through the responses made. The potential of football as a force for development is discussed alongside the vulnerability that comes with it, both the strengths and weaknesses are taken into consideration. The findings add value to existing discourses concerning the changing status of the sport in the African context and its effects on the process of sociopolitical development.

Overall finding of the study and Analysis

In response to the question of whether football has an impact on African societies and if so, what that impact is and how it influences African societies, interviewees tend to regard football as a significant social phenomenon with the potential to bring about positive change. However, they also acknowledge certain challenges that could hinder societal advancement. The interviewees posit that football has the capacity to inspire young people, promote community cohesion, and drive local development. It is noteworthy that the success of prominent footballers, who return to their communities to build infrastructure such as schools and hospitals, symbolises hope and provides role models for younger generations.

In terms of its positive aspects, football has been demonstrated to enhance social unity by facilitating the bridging of ethnic, religious and cultural divides (Smith, 2023). It provides a shared platform where disparate groups can converge, cultivating a sense of collective identity and pride.

The financial contributions of successful football players have a direct impact on infrastructure development, alleviating the financial burden on governments and stimulating local economies.

The portrayal of football as a source of inspiration and motivation for young people is a powerful one. It provides positive role models for young people to emulate, thereby encouraging resilience and ambition.

With regard to the negative aspects, seven interviewees out of eight have highlighted the potential for football to result in the misplacement of priorities. It has been observed that financial resources that could otherwise be allocated to essential sectors such as education are frequently reallocated towards the financing of the sport.

There is a concern that the aspiration to become a professional footballer may overshadow other career aspirations among young people, potentially limiting their economic potential and stunting workforce diversity.

In some instances, the sport is regarded as fostering unrealistic expectations, given the arduous and exclusive nature of the path to professional success in football.

The responses indicate that football is perceived as a social tool with dual-edged effects. While football has the potential to unite communities, inspire young people, and contribute to local development through the return of athletes, it also carries the risk of reinforcing economic imbalances and fostering narrow aspirations among youth.

- In response to the question of why football appears to be the most popular sport in Africa, interviewees emphasise that its widespread popularity can be attributed to two key factors: accessibility and low cost. Many respondents indicate that the sport functions as a unifying force, resonating profoundly with the communal values inherent in African societies and transcending economic, ethnic, and cultural barriers. The possibility of football to promote social inclusion and create environment where everyone can be involved is one of the main reasons of its popularity.

With regard to the positive aspects, the participants responded that accessibility of football is one of the key reasons as to why people take interest in the sport. This is because the sport does not require much equipment and space, and this means that it can be done almost anywhere including through streets and beaches. This has made it a very common activity especially in areas where there is lack of resources. Also, most of the participants stressed that football is a way to break barriers and people's perceptions to

come together and build relationships. In settings where other factors like ethnicity, language or religion may divide people football helps everyone to come together and respect each other. Also, football is considered as an intrinsic part of the African culture and the tactics used in the game are similar to those used in team work where people have to work together in order to win a game which are all values that are appreciated in the African culture.

There is one major disadvantage of football, however, while it is common for people to view football as a positive means of escaping the stresses of life, it can at times interfere with the focus on social and economic issues. Also, although football creates a platform for people to come together, some critics argue that this unity is not very strong and is only felt during matches or tournaments. Therefore, it may not be the proper way of dealing with the social inequality.

Football in Africa has its reputation based on the ease of access and the values that it portrays in the society making it not only a physical need but also a cultural one. This unity through football is seen as a strong concept of togetherness although this togetherness cannot always be said to be a continuous one in the society especially not beyond the footballing arena.

- When asked how football contributes to this in African communities, all the interviewees agree that football is an important tool in the process of social cohesion and community bonding in African societies. It is thus viewed as unique in a way that it is able to cut across the divides of tribe, region and social economic status to offer a common arena for people to come together for a common cause. The ability of football to unite people across different facets of the society is evidence of the popularity of the game in the society. This presence gives rise to a powerful sense of collective identity.

In terms of the positive aspects, interviewees have observed that football serves to unite individuals across tribal and regional boundaries, a function that is especially prized in contexts where such divisions may otherwise give rise to social unrest. Some respondents cite examples of instances where, during major football events, people have set aside ethnic or political differences in order to support a common cause, thereby illustrating the potential of football to overcome barriers that would typically separate them. Moreover, football serves as a symbolic bridge between different African regions,

facilitating cross-cultural understanding through competitive events such as the Africa Cup of Nations. The tournament in question is also a way through which the participating countries especially from North Africa sub-Saharan and Africa can meet other countries. The stated objectives of the tournament are to promote interdependence and friendship among the participating countries. Furthermore, the sport provides young people with a structured environment for social interaction and emotional expression, which facilitates the development of interpersonal skills and a sense of belonging within their communities.

On the other hand, the following oppositional viewpoint shows that, while football holds a significant place in promoting social cohesion, some of the research participants claimed that such effects can be more a matter of show than substance, or may only last for a certain period. This is because the unity generated by football can sometimes dissipate once the match or tournament ends. It is possible that the symbolic cohesion that football provides may not always result in sustained social integration. This is particularly the case in areas where there are significant underlying issues that extend beyond the domain of sports.

The unique ability of football to transcend social divides in African communities has been identified as a key factor in its capacity to promote unity within these societies. The provision of a neutral space for people to come together is a key aspect of football's unifying impact. However, this unifying effect may be limited to the context of the game itself. Nevertheless, the sport's symbolic and practical influence on community cohesion represents a defining positive aspect of its role in African social life.

In examining the question of whether there is any relationship between football and African culture, and what roles they play, interviewees consider how a sport that was not originally part of African traditions has been embraced and "Africanised" in a way that aligns with and reinforces African cultural values. They argue that football is not only a way of having fun but also a tool for expressing culture and identity, where African culture and heritage are displayed and emphasized especially on the international level

Five respondents have stated that football is in line with the cultural values of togetherness, solidarity, and social life that are evident in the African societies. This is evident in the sport because it is a team sport and this is in line with the African philosophy of togetherness and team work. International tournaments offer a platform

through which the African culture is exhibited through dressing, singing and dancing which is a form of pride. These moments offer the global audience a glimpse of the diverse African cultures thus creating a sense of unity. Some of the interviewees are also able to point out that football is increasingly being incorporated in the social life. For example, people may now watch football games during a community meeting or even at a wedding, which shows how the passion for the sport has become part of the African culture.

Nevertheless, four interviewees note that since the sport was introduced from Europe, it does not have a direct relation with the traditional African culture. Although the game has been embraced, the notion of football as an imported product still persists, which makes some question its relevance in the African culture.

Also, there are fears that the advertising of football on the world stage may somehow sideline other forms of African culture and heritage.

The use of football as a contemporary African philosophy is viewed to be in conformity with cultural conventions of togetherness and togetherness. It has not been an African tradition to play football, but it has been embraced by Africans as a way of promoting African identity. It is therefore important that, although the game was not originated in Africa, it has become an important symbol that reflects the African culture both at home and in the rest of the world due to the existence of the game in Africa.

When considering the part played by football in the economy and possibilities, the respondents viewed football as an economic engine in African societies. But they also know that the influence of football is usually limited by bribery and corruption. It is a generally accepted fact that football creates job creations and boosts the economic activities of any given locality. This is especially so when star players decide to retire from the game and go back to their homes to invest their earnings. However, a number of factors make it difficult for these opportunities to be realized for a larger cross section of the population.

The interviewees have identified that football offers a range of economic opportunities that extend beyond the players themselves. In countries such as Senegal, the sport has given rise to a number of supporting industries, including sports academies, healthcare, marketing and logistics. Such related sectors facilitate the creation of employment opportunities and contribute to the promotion of economic stability.

Furthermore, football exerts an influence on local business sectors, including the sale of merchandise, the operation of viewing centres, and the establishment of small businesses that benefit from local games. Those players who achieve success abroad frequently make financial contributions to their home communities. This can take the form of building schools, hospitals and infrastructure that benefits the local population and reduces the financial burden on the government. This reinvestment cycle by players who achieve international success serves to reinforce the role of football in supporting economic development at the community level.

Despite its potential, interviewees frequently identify corruption as a significant impediment to the realization of football's entire economic interest. The misuse of funds intended for player development, infrastructure, and community initiatives constrains the potential for football to exert a beneficial influence on society at large. In countries such as South Africa and Cameroon, respondents have highlighted that this mismanagement, coupled with a dearth of adequate infrastructure, impedes the development of talent and precludes local communities from reaping the full benefits of the sport's economic potential. The one-sided nature of the economic system surrounding African football – with a significant proportion of funds being redirected abroad to international leagues – serves to further constrain local economic growth, as the financial gains derived from this activity do not always return to African communities in a meaningful way.

In response to the question of what benefits football brings to African local communities, the benefits of football for local communities are widely recognised by interviewees. There is a consensus that the sport has a significant positive impact on local communities, offering both social and economic advantages. The presence of role models and the development of infrastructure facilitate the fostering of a sense of pride and unity within communities, while also contributing to the improvement of community welfare and the creation of economic opportunities. Nevertheless, the prevalence of corruption and misallocation of resources represents a significant constraint on the full extent of these benefits.

The respondents have highlighted the capacity of football to serve as an inspirational source of role models for young people, encouraging them to pursue their aspirations with resilience. Successful players frequently return to their communities to invest in infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, and football fields. This not only benefits the

younger generation but also enhances the overall community welfare. Furthermore, football contributes to economic activity within communities by creating jobs in sectors such as viewing centres, merchandise sales, and local tournaments. For example, entrepreneurs may come up with new business opportunities as a result of their activities in the management and marketing of football games. In the same vein, this in turn has the possibility of stimulating economic activities at the local level. Furthermore, football facilitates social integration by uniting individuals from disparate backgrounds, thereby fostering a sense of collective identity and belonging within communities.

The presence of role models and the development of infrastructure help in the formation of pride and unity within the society as well as enhance the well-being of the society and its economic status. However, corruption and misuse of resources remain a barrier to the real realization of these advantages.

Some of the answers given by the respondents have indicated that football has the potential of being a source of role models for the youth to strive for their goals. It is common to see players after they have retired going back to their homes to put up schools, hospitals and football fields. It is not only advantageous for the youth but also boost the health of the society in general. Also, football boosts the economic status of the communities in as much as it creates employment opportunities in the viewing centres, sales of merchandise and in local games. For instance, entrepreneurs may come up with new business ideas in the management and marketing of football games. In the same manner, this in turn has the potential of boosting the economic activities at the sub-national level. Also, football plays a role of bringing people together and this helps in creating a sense of belongingness within the society.

Three respondents have however, pointed out that while football has the potential to have a positive impact, corruption and poor management have limited the impact. It has been a common tendency that the monies meant for community development or enhancement of infrastructure are embezzled and thus does not help the society as much as it could have with the presence of football. However, the reach of football is not always deep. Thus, it is important to note that although there are quite a number of successful players who make positive contributions to the society, such phenomenon should be seen as the exception rather than the rule. Also, there are numerous systemic barriers that prevent the realization of the stated potential.

Six interviewees have identified a phenomenon whereby political leaders utilise football as a means of diverting attention from social and economic challenges. For example, governments may organise football tournaments or emphasise national team victories as a means of deflecting attention from more pressing issues, such as unemployment, inflation or political instability. It is not uncommon for politicians to sponsor tournaments or attend matches during election campaigns with the intention of gaining the favour of young voters. This is done through the use of football as a form of propaganda rather than genuine support for the sport. In addition, there might be political leaders who will try to enlist the help of popular footballers to help them get votes and win elections and also influence the public to think and act in a specific manner and in the process not necessarily for the benefit of the general public.

In response to the question of whether football can be used as a tool for manipulation, the interviewees assert that political figures in Africa frequently employ the sport as a means of influencing public opinion and maintaining political control. Although football has the capacity to unite and mobilise communities, interviewees have expressed concern that this influence is frequently exploited by politicians to influence or distract the masses, particularly during periods of political unrest or economic adversity.

Seven interviewees acknowledge that, on occasion, football can facilitate a connection between leaders and the public on a more accessible and relatable level. By attending matches, sponsoring local tournaments, or publicly supporting the national team, politicians can foster the impression that they share interests and national pride with the general public. Such a perception of solidarity may foster a sense of unity and temporarily uplift public morale, particularly during major tournaments or in the wake of team victories.

Nevertheless, the interviewees assert that this involvement is frequently strategically calculated rather than authentic. Political figures are purported to utilize football events as a means of diverting citizens' attention from pressing concerns such as economic instability, corruption, or social inequality. By sponsoring or attending football events, particularly around election times, politicians exploit the sport's emotional appeal to gain favour with the public or secure votes without implementing substantial policy improvements. Interviewees cite instances where leaders have aligned themselves with popular football figures or successes in order to enhance their image. This has been

observed to occur in a manner that may be perceived as propaganda rather than as a genuine expression of support for the sport or community welfare.

Moreover, in countries where public dissent is prevalent, the organisation of football events can serve as a diversionary tactic to reduce social unrest, ensuring that citizens remain focused on entertainment rather than political issues. This exploitation of football's influence is regarded as a means of controlling mass sentiment and temporarily appeasing the public.

- In view of the present situation in football across the African continent, the participants are in agreement that the development of the sport is being compromised by a number of key structural hurdles. Some of the challenges that have been identified as hindering the growth of football in Africa include corruption, poor infrastructure, and lack of funds. In combination, these factors constrain the opportunities for the development of the sport for the benefit of the societies as a whole. These problems are preventing football to be all that it can be for the players and the communities that benefit from it by providing jobs.

Four participants are however optimistic that football can triumph over these challenges thus emerge even better. Although the resources are limited, the participants highlight that football is one of the few ways through which the youth can be productively engaged and nurtured through social activities and skills. Football remains a beacon of hope and dreams for many young Africans, where the dream of making it big may open up possibilities for the betterment of the community if only given a chance with proper support. Also, some of the respondents pointed out that sports academies and training programs are being created in some countries, indicating the positive changes toward the advancement of football system.

In all the interviews, respondents have identified corruption as a significant and enduring obstacle. It is common that the funds which are supposed to be used for players' preparation or development of infrastructure are embezzled by officials. This fails to provide quality training facilities, stadiums and other necessary amenities which are vital in identifying and nurturing talents as well as the growth of professional leagues. However, the respondents claim that financial resources are available in the international leagues and this leaves the African countries with no option but to develop their own football programs.

- When it comes to African football talent, the participants saw migration as something that was bound to happen but at the same time a problem. Although African players moving to other teams in other countries helps the players get better opportunities and income sources, it leaves a negative impact on the growth of domestic leagues as well as the retention of players.

The interviewed parties underlined that migration enables African players to get better conditions, infrastructure, coaching, and financial remuneration, which can be absent in their homelands. In addition, the experience that the players get when playing in other leagues can also benefit Africa in the long run; this is because, the players who perform well usually retire to their home towns to invest their money in socio-economic development. This may include the provision of educational facilities, sporting facilities and other forms of infrastructure. To many of the interviewees, this migration is seen as a way of making it rich for African players and thus help support their families and have a huge effect when they go back home.

However, the interviewed parties have expressed their concerns that the continuous migration of top athletes has a negative impact on the growth and competitiveness of African leagues on the international level. The phenomenon of ‘hollowing out’ or talent drain has been observed to weakly the ability of local leagues to be fully realize their potential. This is because the most talented players usually get transferred to other teams before they are able to offer much to the growth of the local football teams.

Furthermore, the poor state of infrastructure and the prospects within Africa make it easier for many young players to see migration as the only way to enhance their careers. According to some of the interviewees, this leads to dependence on the international leagues and does not help the development of the strong domestic football league.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This section is to present a critique of the findings of the study and sit the findings within the context of existing theoretical framework and literature review. Through the discussion of football's effects on African societies as a multidimensional phenomenon, this discussion assesses football's potential to enhance social cohesion, reinterpret culture, and create job opportunities while recognising the structural and systemic obstacles that it encounters. All the themes have been discussed keeping in mind the fact that football has the potential to change the world for the better as well as being a depiction of various issues prevailing in the society.

Special attention is given to the way football goes beyond the entertainment to shape and shape the culture of identity, the development of economy and the political arena. It also takes into account the issue of talent migration and spectatorship as related concepts and their significance and possibilities to the host communities. In this way, this section presents football as both a force that brings people together and a lens through which to understand social relations, which in turn paves the way for future research on football's impact.

The Social Unifying and Developmental Effects of Football

The ability of football to create unity and be a tool for development can also be seen as another key finding where participants stressed that it has the potential to overcome on ethnic, religious and socio-economic divisions. This is in line with (Alegi, 2010) who has argued that football serves as a means of 'common language' across Africa, thus helping to foster unity. However, this research uniquely focuses on the returnee footballers as changemakers, with their investments in physical infrastructure like schools and hospitals being examples of tangible contributions towards the growth of the society.

Furthermore, while scholars such as (Bale & Sang, 2013) concentrate on the role of football in urban areas, this study emphasises its impact on rural communities, where

infrastructure investments frequently create opportunities that governments are unable to provide. By documenting the dual function of football as both an aspirational force for young people and a developmental tool, this research addresses a gap in understanding the sport's localized effects.

The Cultural Reinterpretation of Football

The Africanisation of football represents a notable contribution to the field, demonstrating how the sport has become integrated into the fabric of African cultural life. The respondents indicate that football is perceived to align with the communal values of solidarity and teamwork, which are considered to be central to the African identity. (Darby, 2002) critique of football as a colonial import is contextualised by this research, which demonstrates how African societies have reclaimed and transformed football into a vehicle for cultural pride.

In addition, the integration of football in the traditional events and diplomacy the tool use during of the football international as tournaments a like cultural the Africa Cup of Nations shows how the role of football has changed from being a cultural activity to being a symbol of African culture. This contributes to the existing body of research by demonstrating that football has the capacity to advance both local traditions and global representation simultaneously.

The Economic Potential and Structural Barriers

The capacity of football to generate economic opportunities is well-documented. In the responses received, job creation, infrastructure development and stimulation of local businesses were identified as key areas of benefit. This corroborates (Dobson & Goddard, 2001) findings on the sport's role in the formation of global labour markets. However, this study builds upon the existing discourse by providing a detailed account of the cyclical reinvestments of successful players, who return to fund essential community projects.

Concurrently, systemic issues such as corruption and poor management are identified as significant impediments. As (Armstrong & Giulianotti, 2004) highlight, the

misappropriation of funds has the effect of stifling grassroots initiatives. This view is supported by the interviewees, who identify the mismanagement of resources as a recurring challenge. This research brings together theoretical and practical perspectives by outlining how governance reforms could unlock the full economic potential of football for African societies.

The Relationship Between Football and Politics

The interviews underscore the dual role of football as both a unifying force and a vehicle for manipulation. While football has the potential to inspire peace and solidarity, as evidenced by Drogba's actions during the civil war in Côte d'Ivoire (Darby, 2013), the study also reveals instances where politicians exploit the sport for propaganda purposes. By associating themselves with national teams or leveraging players' influence, political figures frequently exploit football's emotional appeal to distract from socio-economic issues or gain electoral support.

This research extends the existing analyses by showing that football's symbolic power is not only used in times of crisis but that it is also entrenched as a means of regulating and preserving power over the public. The study's examination of this phenomenon contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between sports and political legitimacy in African contexts.

The Significant Phenomenon of Talent Migration

The movement of African football players is seen as an inevitable result of the systemic inequalities present in local leagues. The interviewees emphasise that players' access to superior training and financial security abroad is consistent with (Magee & Sugden, 2002) (2002) analysis of global sports labour markets. However, the study offers a distinctive viewpoint by underscoring the constructive feedback loop that is initiated when returning players channel their investments back into their local communities.

This nuanced perspective challenges the dichotomous framing of migration as either a "brain drain" or a "pathway to success." By elucidating the ways in which migration engenders both individual and collective benefits, the research enriches the

discourse surrounding the viability of domestic leagues in Africa, particularly in light of the persistent outflow of talent.

Football as a Reflection of Broader Societal Issues

Finally, football is used as a microcosm of the broader societal challenges facing Africa. The observations made by the interviewees on the subjects of inequality, governance failures and limited infrastructure are in alignment with the findings of (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011) in his exploration of the structural barriers present in African sports.

Nevertheless, this research builds upon the aforementioned argument by demonstrating that football not only reflects these issues but also provides opportunities for resistance and reform, contingent upon the manner in which it is managed.

The capacity of football to inspire, unify and economically empower makes it a dynamic force for both change and continuity within African societies. This dual role serves to illustrate the significance of football as a lens through which broader social, economic, and political processes can be understood.

The Checklist: Results and Discussion

Social and Cultural Integration

Football is one of the most popular games which have been able to enhance the social cohesiveness among the ethno-culturally diverse population and also break barriers and foster harmony among the participants. It fosters harmony and understanding and is a symbol of unity of the culture. From the data presented in this paper, it is possible to conclude that football serves as a uniting factor that brings people of different ethnicity, language, and social status together, especially during major tournaments or matches. The shared feeling helps in the creation of an identity thus helping in the healing process of the African societies. The Africa Cup of Nations for instance is not only a platform through which the continent's footballing giants are displayed but also a platform through which nations from North Africa, West Africa and sub-Saharan Africa come together

under the banner of unity and African pride. Football has thus not only a role of uniting people but also a way of promoting culture and identity. This is illustrated by the use of traditional dances, singing and dressing during matches whereby the stadiums and viewing centres are turned into cultural arenas. The celebration of culture on both local and international stages enhances the visibility of African traditions, contributing to a broader sense of identity and pride.

- **Bertoua:** In a city accommodating displaced individuals from the Central African Republic, football has emerged as a vital medium for social integration, bridging divides and fostering inclusion.
- **Garoua:** Football festivals and communal celebrations in Garoua bring together individuals from varied ethnic backgrounds, celebrating shared identities and achievements.
- **Yaounde:** As the capital of Cameroon, Yaoundé is a cosmopolitan city, home to people from a multitude of backgrounds. For these diverse communities, football serves as a unifying factor, transcending linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic differences.

Academic research highlights football's unique ability to transcend differences, as demonstrated in pan-African tournaments that promote regional unity and a sense of collective identity (Keim & De Coning, 2014). These tournaments different for cultural, instance language AFCON and has history been (Smith, seen 2020). to These play events the create role a of platform promoting whereby communication ethnic between countries with and national conflict is set aside in favour of unity and patriotism. (Keim & De Coning, 2014)highlight that these events not only facilitate cross-cultural interaction but also contribute to the development of a broader pan-African identity, thereby reinforcing a sense of belonging to a collective African heritage. This viewpoint is reinforced by (Alegi, 2010), who posits that African football serves as a unifying force, fostering a sense of shared identity and belonging among diverse groups through a common passion for the game. It is frequently observed that football matches serve as dynamic platforms for cultural expression, wherein national pride is manifested through the performance of traditional chants, dances, and attire. This phenomenon transforms stadiums into microcosms of cultural celebration and regional solidarity. Such events permit African

countries to proclaim their identities on the global stage, contesting stereotypes and reclaiming narratives about the continent's capabilities and vibrancy. Furthermore, these tournaments facilitate diplomatic and social dialogue among nations that may have experienced historical tensions, thereby demonstrating football's potential to facilitate reconciliation and cooperation. However, as (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011) observes, this unifying impact can be constrained by structural challenges, such as economic disparities and organisational mismanagement, which impede the full realisation of football's potential to foster unity. Notwithstanding these constraints, football continues to represent one of the most efficacious instruments for regional integration, offering a collective experience that resonates profoundly across borders and cultures, thereby reinforcing its distinctive capacity to transcend differences and foster a collective identity.

Economic Opportunities

Football serves as a powerful economic engine, generating jobs, spurring local business activities, and facilitating investments in community infrastructure. The sport creates a wide range of direct and indirect economic opportunities, benefiting not only professional players but also those involved in ancillary industries such as event management, sports merchandising, transportation, and hospitality. Local businesses flourish during football matches, particularly in communities where viewing centres, food vendors, and small traders capitalise on the influx of fans seeking to experience the game. This economic activity has a stimulating effect on local markets, providing income opportunities for entrepreneurs and creating ripple effects that benefit entire households. In addition, when African players excel in their foreign clubs, this leads to huge investments in the players' home communities in terms of infrastructural development like putting up schools, hospitals, sports facilities and community halls thus easing the burden on the government and boosting development of the area. In this way, these contributions have a great effect on the neediest regions and provide better conditions for the education, health care and the youth's recreation. From a wider view, football tournaments and leagues also bring in sponsors, tourists and media, which brings in the much-needed cash into the local economies and offer jobs in various industries.

Nevertheless, the potential of football as an economic engine is usually hampered by issues including corruption, mismanagement of resources and poor infrastructure, which hampers its ability to generate sustainable and widespread gains.

- **Eseka:** Local vendors, event organizers, and stadium workers benefit from the surge in economic activity during football events, underscoring its significance for local economies.
- **Ayos:** Football infrastructure in Ayos, catalysed by its proximity to Yaoundé, supports urban spillover development and local business growth.
- **Douala:** Football players are integrated into the urban fabric of this city, which serves as a nexus for the country and the Central African sub-region.

Large-scale football events, such as the Africa Cup of Nations, have been documented to stimulate tourism and create employment, providing short- and long-term economic benefits (Cornelissen, 2004). The occurrence of these tournaments attracts a considerable number of fans, players, officials, and media personnel, which subsequently results in an increased demand for a variety of services, including accommodation, transportation, food, and entertainment. The influx of visitors generates a substantial increase in economic activity for local businesses, with hotels, restaurants, and small vendors experiencing a significant rise in revenue. The organisation of such events frequently requires significant capital expenditure on infrastructure, including the construction or refurbishment of stadiums, roads, airports and public facilities. Therefore, this leads to the creation of short-term jobs for the employees in the local market. (Alegi, 2010) posits that such infrastructure projects frequently leave a lasting legacy in host cities, enhancing their capacity to support tourism and future events while also improving the quality of life for local populations.

Nevertheless, the comprehensive realisation of these advantages may be constrained by structural impediments, including unequal resource distribution, corruption, and a dearth of inclusivity for local enterprises and communities in the planning process (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011). To illustrate, while large corporations may generate substantial profits, small-scale vendors and informal workers frequently derive only marginal benefits from these mega-events. Furthermore, (Armstrong & Giulianotti, 2004) contend that the economic impact of these events is not always as significant as claimed,

particularly when infrastructure projects fail to align with long-term community needs or become obsolete following the event.

Youth Empowerment

Football inspires and empowers youth by providing platforms for skills development, education, and leadership while fostering healthy lifestyles and reducing risky behaviours. As a sport that is widely accessible and inclusive, football provides young people with opportunities to cultivate essential life skills, including teamwork, discipline, and perseverance. Participation in organised football activities, including local leagues, academies, and community tournaments, facilitates the nurturing of leadership qualities, as young players are frequently required to assume roles that necessitate decision-making, responsibility, and collaboration. For many young people, football provides a conduit for self-expression and personal growth, imparting a sense of purpose and direction that can serve to deter them from engaging in negative activities like substance abuse, criminal behaviour, or idleness.

Furthermore, football facilitates educational advancement by associating participation in the sport with academic achievement in diverse programmes, motivating young people to remain in school and pursue their studies while engaging in physical activity. Furthermore, football provides youth with the tools to navigate personal and professional challenges through mentorship and structured training, instilling in them resilience and confidence. For those with exceptional talent, football provides pathways to professional careers, both on and off the field, thereby creating opportunities for social mobility and financial independence. In addition to the physical and skill-based advantages, the sport cultivates a sense of belonging and inclusion, particularly in marginalised communities where social and economic constraints frequently restrict youth engagement in constructive pursuits. By encouraging young people to aspire to ambitious goals and to work diligently towards their achievements, football plays an instrumental role in youth empowerment. It provides a source of hope, motivation, and a framework for building brighter futures.

- **Meiganga:** Grassroots football programs linked to academies offer skill development and scholarship opportunities, helping young individuals realize their potential.
- **Ndom:** Prominent football players from Ndom, who represent Cameroon internationally, inspire local youth, instilling ambition and promoting constructive engagement.
- **Ngaoundere:** Football academies provide an opportunity for young people to pursue their academic studies while simultaneously developing their passion for football, thereby facilitating the construction of a responsible future.

Structured sports programs worldwide have shown to reduce juvenile delinquency, promote academic performance, and encourage community involvement (Coalter, 1985). As one of the most accessible and popular sports in Africa, football plays a pivotal role in achieving these outcomes by engaging young people in structured, goal-oriented activities. Participation in organised football programmes provides an alternative to negative influences such as crime, substance abuse and antisocial behaviour, offering young people a positive, regulated environment in which they can develop essential life skills. Coalter, (1985) emphasises that such programmes instil discipline, routine and accountability, which are instrumental in steering young people away from delinquency. This perspective is supported by the findings of (Giulianotti, n.d.), who asserts that structured sports encourage prosocial behaviour and facilitate the development of a sense of identity and purpose among young people.

Moreover, many football programmes place an emphasis on the connection between education and participation. In numerous initiatives, continued involvement in football is contingent upon school attendance and academic performance, thereby providing an incentive for young people to remain in school and to improve their educational outcomes. The findings of Dyck (2000) corroborate this assertion, indicating that engagement in sports is associated with enhanced focus, academic performance, and goal-setting among young people. Additionally, football facilitates community involvement, as youth leagues and local tournaments necessitate collaboration and engagement among players, coaches, families, and community leaders. Sugden (2008)

posits that such programmes facilitate social inclusion by fostering intergenerational and societal integration, reinforcing community cohesion, and promoting mutual assistance.

Health and Well-being

Football promotes physical and mental health by encouraging active lifestyles and providing platforms for addressing critical health issues. This is due to the fact that the physical exertion that is required in football makes it a very useful way of keeping fit for people especially the youths. This is done by enhancing the cardiovascular system, increasing muscle mass and improving the general fitness. It has been established that football practice helps to decrease the likelihood of getting chronic diseases including obesity, diabetes and heart diseases. Also, it promotes the development of positive behaviours that can be embraced in the future. Besides the physical advantages, football enhances the mental health since it is a way of reducing stress and expressing one's feelings. The feeling that comes with personal development and team victory has been known to increase confidence and tenacity, which are crucial in mental health. Also, the social aspect of football helps to fight social isolation as it offers people a chance to interact, work in groups, and feel like they belong. Also, football is a way of addressing important health concerns in many societies as well. Thus, football may be used as a tool to teach people about proper hygiene, nutrition, and disease prevention, for instance. In areas where the health care and health education are scarce football is a way of spreading important information, encouraging people to lead healthy lifestyles and supporting the fight against such diseases as HIV/AIDS or drug abuse. The elements of physical activity and health education within the context of football not only enhances the fitness of the participants but also enhances the well-being of the society as a whole.

- **Garoua:** Football-related campaigns addressing HIV/AIDS and mental health show how sport can be used in enhancing the well-being of the society.
- **Ayos:** Accessible football facilities in Ayos have enabled community members to engage in physical activity, enhancing mental health and reducing stress.

- **Kribi:** The organisation of football-related activities facilitates the integration of the well-being of the local population with that of visitors as part of the tourism industry.

There is ample research that supports the fact that engagement in sports has positive impact on the mental health of people including the reduction of anxiety and improved social relations (Eime & Harvey, 2018). Football is a team contact and fast-moving game which helps the participants to deal with stress effectively. It helps them to feel that they have achieved something in life and at the same time helps in reducing mental stress. This relationship between the regular Reilly exercise and enhanced psychological well-being is further supported by findings Reilly & Gilbourne, (2003). The authors emphasise that sports like football provide opportunities for social connection and boost self-esteem, both of which are critical for mental resilience. From a physiological standpoint, participation in football has been demonstrated to enhance cardiovascular fitness, augment muscular strength, and cultivate overall physical endurance. This, in turn, has been linked to a reduction in the risk of developing chronic illnesses such as obesity, diabetes, and hypertension (Cope et al., 2017). Engagement in football fosters the formation of healthy behavioural habits, encouraging individuals to adopt active lifestyles and avoid sedentary patterns that can lead to long-term health complications. It is noteworthy that studies such as those conducted by Faude et al. (2018) indicate that football's intermittent high-intensity nature offers superior fitness benefits, even when compared to some other physical activities. This makes it an effective tool for promoting holistic health among diverse age groups. Furthermore, football fosters a sense of belonging and emotional support through its emphasis on teamwork and collaboration. As evidenced by the findings of Eime & Harvey (2018), participation in sports has been shown to enhance social cohesion by promoting the formation of shared goals, mutual support, and collective achievements. For those who are marginalised or at risk, football provides a secure environment in which to cultivate relationships and emotional resilience. This effectively serves to diminish isolation and promote positive mental health outcomes.

Cultural and Political Influence

Football acts as a cultural beacon and a diplomatic instrument, fostering peace, reconciliation, and unity. The sport of football serves as a cultural beacon and a diplomatic instrument, fostering peace, reconciliation, and unity across diverse and divided communities. Football has been found to play an important role in the society as a cultural symbol and a diplomatic tool for building peace, reconciliation and unity where different groups of people meet and converge (Allison, 1986). As a sport with a profound and pervasive influence on the lives of people across the globe, football serves as a conduit for transcending cultural, ethnic, and political differences. It provides a neutral ground where individuals and groups can come together in support of a shared passion, irrespective of their cultural, ethnic, or political affiliations. It serves as a potent vehicle for cultural expression, wherein traditions, songs, dances, and attire are given a platform for celebration during matches, thereby fostering a sense of pride and identity among fans and participants alike. Football stadiums and tournaments serve as dynamic platforms for the celebration of cultural diversity, reinforcing a collective identity that acknowledges shared heritage while respecting differences.

Besides its cultural value, football has the potential to serve as a means of recovery. It functions as a unifying force in regions affected by diplomatic conflicts or experiencing political instability, facilitating communication and fostering social cohesion. It has been demonstrated that large-scale football events, whether local or national in scale, function as a conduit for interpersonal connection and the promotion of causes. The act of playing football fosters a spirit of cooperation and respect, thereby creating a platform for individuals from diverse backgrounds to congregate and forge common ground, thus mitigating hostility and building bridges where political endeavours may prove unsuccessful. Furthermore, the presence of football tournaments and teams can act as a unifying element during periods of national emergency, as they provide individuals with a sense of hope, strength, and a means of self-expression, which is crucial in the processes of reconciliation and healing.

- **Eseka:** The cases of regional football tournaments evidence the importance of football as a tool for peace, and therefore its diplomatic.

- **Meiganga:** Football clubs in Meiganga promote togetherness amongst the different communities in the area as they work towards a common goal and political unity.
- **Ngaoundere:** The integration of football related activities with cultural activities helps in the promotion of unity of the different groups.

The role of football in the reconciliation and dialogue has been analysed in the post-conflict environment with the help of football as a means of conflict resolution (Levermore, 2008). The role of football in reconciliation and dialogue has therefore been a topic of study in post-conflict societies with many works indicating that football has the potential to reconcile and bring people together (Levermore, 2008). This is because football is a sport which is not limited by culture, ethnicity or politics, and thus is an activity which people and communities of different background can all enlist their interest and passion for. In contexts marked by enduring conflict or political volatilities, football acts as a medium for healing and as a means through which polarized groups can engage with each other. Levermore (2008) argues that football tournaments and events create situations where people can share, which can help to break down antagonism and build trust between different groups of people. It is through the spirit of working as teammates or supporting the same team that the focus is shifted from the differences to the similarities and thus the process of reconciliation is created. Football is a symbol of togetherness especially in countries that have been through a lot of conflict. According to Alegi (2010), in such cases, national teams and football tournaments have the capacity to create a feeling of national pride and a sense of belonging that can help the citizens of a country come together with a sense of unity and purpose. For example, during the international competitions, the political and social conflicts between the countries are set aside and they come together to support their national teams thus creating the feeling of togetherness. This ability to get people to come together for a particular purpose makes football not only a cultural symbol but also a diplomatic one. Also, NGOs or community groups have adopted football to teach people about peace education and conflict resolution through various initiatives.

However, football has a great potential to be used as a tool for reconciliation and its effectiveness depends on the development of proper and well-structured programs.

Giulianotti & Robertson (2009) have pointed out that the healing power of football can actually backfire if it is used to sustain inequality or play to the public's fears. Thus, it is crucial that football initiatives are perceived as inclusive and transparent and directed towards the needs of the community in order to achieve the desired impact of the football initiatives for peace and dialogue.

Environmental Sustainability

There is little literature on this specific subject and therefore there are no research questions that can be stated at the present time. Still, there is little research on this specific subject at the moment, but there are certain examples that demonstrate the potential of football to support environmental awareness and sustainability. Football is one of the world's most popular and most watched sports, which makes it easier to capture the attention of people and means motivate them to undertake environmentally friendly actions. Like football climate clubs, change, championships waste and management grassroots and movements resource can utilization. For instance, the embedding of environmentally friendly measures into football activities like encouraging recycling, waste minimisation through the reduction of plastics, energy conservation in stadia also shows how the sport can advance sustainable development goals.

Also, football is very popular and has a large audience, which makes it possible to conduct educational campaigns aimed at the players and the spectators. This paper therefore discusses how environmental preservation messages can be incorporated in training sessions, community leagues and high-profile competitions to make the participants practice the environmental conservation measures. Community programmes and football academies in particular are in a prime position to introduce environmental awareness to young players and thus develop future environmentally conscious citizens. From a more comprehensive viewpoint, development and maintenance of football infrastructure provides measures for the integration of sustainable systems in facility development such as renewable energy sources, water conservation systems and eco-friendly construction materials. Such measures not only help to reduce the impact of the sport on the environment, but also set an example for other industries as well. Also,

football events which are conducted in natural environment including parks and community grounds help the people involved in the event to have a better appreciation and care for the environment thus enhancing the relationship between sports and nature.

- **Bertoua:** The campaigns during football events have also been effective in raising awareness of the need to protect the environment making football as a tool for change.
- **Ayos:** The town exemplifies the proper use of football facilities thus providing a good example of how sports facilities can be operated in an environmentally friendly manner.
- **Douala:** The environmental protection policies that have been put in place by the city's teams are therefore useful in increasing the awareness of ecological practices in this city that has an industrial edge.

Such initiatives as FIFA's "Green Goal" have demonstrated how large-scale events may include environmentally friendly measures, including reductions in carbon footprint and waste management (Sven et al., 2024). Thus, the global popularity of football makes this discipline a perfect tool for promoting environmental awareness and introducing sustainable practices on the practical level. This was evident with the introduction of FIFA's Green Goal program during such tournaments as the 2006 FIFA World Cup where the event organizers endeavoured to reduce the ecological impact of the tournament through the use of renewable energy sources, carbon dioxide offsetting and efficient waste management. These measures not only helped in decreasing the emissions of greenhouse gases but also set a base for sustainability in other sports events as well. Also, the construction of football facilities offers another dimension in the achievement of environmental conservation. It is possible for the stadiums and training facilities to have energy saving systems, solar panels and water recovery systems which has been seen in the recent developments in the eco-friendly sports facilities. Such innovations help in cutting down the costs of operation and at the same time set new standards of sustainability in the sporting industry. For instance, the incorporation of green technology during event management makes sure that sustainability is part of the sports management process.

Challenges and Contradictions

Despite the numerous advantages that come with footballing there are issues that need to be solved to enhance its potential of bringing positive change; corruption, inequalities and social tensions. Perhaps one of the biggest and most widespread issues is that of corruption, especially in the area of finances and assets of football institutions. The misuse of resources and the lack of transparency hinders the growth of the local leagues, youth systems, and infrastructure investments thus constraining the sport's potential to be a tool for positive change. In addition, the processes of favouritism and unethical practices in the selection of players may deny other deserving players equal opportunity to be given a chance thus compromising on the credibility and equity of the system. It is also crucial to point out that there is inequality in football which can be seen as the difference between the haves and have nots between the wealthy clubs and weak grassroots teams. While the professional leagues and players get richer, the local communities usually do not have access to proper facilities, coaching and means of developing young talents. These inequalities hinder the participation of the marginalized, thus preventing football from realizing its full potential for changing the world for the better. Women's football remains underdeveloped and neglected, which reflects the wider inequality in the society. Also, football may exacerbate social divisions that it was meant to heal, in particular, where derbies and national teams' rivalries lead to, rather than bring people together. In its simplest form football has the potential to bring people together, however competition or the political aspect can sometimes turn it into a cause of conflict, not just in the field. In some instances, the considerable pressure on teams and individuals to achieve success can result in unethical conduct, such as match-fixing or the exploitation of young players seeking opportunities abroad.

- **Garoua:** Intense club rivalries occasionally escalate tensions, underscoring the need for community engagement and conflict resolution mechanisms.

- **Eseka:** Instances of corruption in football-related activities detract from its developmental potential.
- **Ndom:** Displacement caused by large-scale football infrastructure projects highlights the need for equitable urban planning.

Studies indicate that without fair management, professionalization often exacerbates inequities, sidelining grassroots initiatives (Darby et al., 2007). While football has the potential to effect significant and positive change, its unchecked professionalisation has the effect of reinforcing existing structural disparities. This is because the priorities of elite leagues and commercially viable programmes tend to override community-level development. Darby (2002) highlights that grassroots football, which forms the foundation of the sport, frequently suffers from insufficient funding and infrastructure, with financial resources disproportionately allocated to professional clubs and leagues. This results in a significant imbalance, whereby marginalised communities lack access to quality facilities, coaching, and opportunities to nurture talent. The phenomenon of talent migration is a salient illustration of these inequities. A notable example of this phenomenon is the migration of young African players to football academies and international leagues, driven by the pursuit of enhanced opportunities. However, this migration is not without its drawbacks, as some players have reported experiencing exploitative conditions. Joseph Maguire, (2000) Joseph Maguire emphasises how the process of professionalisation has transformed football talent into a global commodity, with the majority of economic benefits accruing to elite stakeholders, while grassroots programmes remain under-resourced.

Furthermore, gender disparities represent a significant and persistent challenge in the process of professionalisation. While the men's football industry has undoubtedly benefited from increased investment and media coverage, the women's football industry continues to face systemic underfunding and limited opportunities for professionalisation. Hovden's (2010) proposition is that this inequity is indicative of a more pervasive gender-based challenge within the domain of sports governance, wherein the participation and development of women are frequently regarded as secondary priorities. The issue of corruption is also identified as a significant obstacle to the equitable development of football. As Armstrong & Giulianotti (2004) observe, the mismanagement of resources,

the practice of favouritism in player selection, and the lack of transparency within football governance structures all serve to impede the sport's broader societal impact. Professionalisation can also give rise to social tensions within local communities, as the commercialisation of football on occasion gives precedence to profit-driven objectives over the principle of inclusivity. (Alegi, 2010) observes that while professional leagues generate economic benefits, they can also exacerbate rivalries and deepen divisions, particularly in regions where there is a significant discrepancy between successful elite clubs and struggling community teams.

Football plays a multifaceted role in African societies, uniting communities, driving economic growth, and empowering individuals. It serves as a cultural touchstone, a tool for diplomacy, and a platform for addressing social and environmental challenges. However, realizing its full potential requires proactive management to address systemic challenges and maximize benefits.

1. **Invest in Grassroots Programs:** Create more spaces for youths and their talents to be nurtured.
2. **Strengthen Governance:** Ensure that there is a proper scrutiny to curb vices such as corruption and proper distribution of resources.
3. **Promote Sustainability:** Ensure that football related activities and structures are environmentally friendly
4. **Leverage Football for Health:** This way football can be used to address other pressing health concerns while promoting the well-being of the society.

Football in Africa can be a great force for change, development, equity and unity if only the opportunities that it presents are well captained.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This thesis has tried to explore the part played by football in African societies and has found out that football has the capacity to be a tool for change, a source of unity, identity and even economic growth but at the same time there are a number of obstacles which prevent this from happening. Theoretical frameworks and empirical data are used in this research to give a comprehensive view of football as a reflection of social relations and as a factor that can bring about social change.

Football's capacity to congregate individuals from diverse ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds serves as a compelling illustration of the sport's potential as a unifying social force. The sport's popularity has grown extensively throughout the African continent, profoundly impacting its cultural fabric. This has resulted in the emergence of communal gatherings where individuals can identify with specific groups and experience a sense of pride. Furthermore, the sport's morale boosting effect on the youth can also be seen with the achievements of the African players at the international level which shows how football acts as a source of motivation and expectation. From an economical point of view, football also creates possibilities for the development of the surrounding area where successful players reinvest their earnings in the form of various projects such as construction, education and health care.

However, vices this of thesis corruption, also mismanagement underscores and some the of unequal the distribution system of barriers resources that have hinder not the helped growth matters of by football. suppressing the grassroots development and talent identification. This has made the sport to be politicised and used as a tool for manipulation, thus raising ethical questions on its use in diverting attention from social and economic problems. Also, although football creates a feeling of togetherness during

the matches and tournaments, this unity is usually not very strong and long lasting, which shows that more should be done to tackle the root causes of division in societies.

Football culture has grown from its colonial roots to become an African icon and a source of pride. This has made the sport to be adapted to the traditional culture and used as a way of presenting the culture of the African continent to the rest of the world. However, there are still issues of safeguarding the authenticity of the sport as well as the neglect of the indigenous African culture. It is against this background that a balanced approach that respects the African traditions yet at the same time acknowledging the universal status of the sport should be taken.

This thesis therefore argues that football is a double-edged sword in the African societies. Despite its capability to unify, motivate and change the society for the better, it is also susceptible to corruption and other structural biases. In other words, in order to make football have the best impact, it is crucial that those in charge of the game focus on improving the governance systems, dispersing resources equally and investing in the development of the grassroots football. These challenges if addressed, football has the possibility of becoming a sustainable resource for social development, increasing its role in the improvement of social cohesion, cultural identity and economic engagement.

Further research should also seek to examine how football can be used more effectively as a means of promoting inclusive development and how it can be harnessed to overcome systemic obstacles. Football still remains an important factor in the development of African societies and the representation of challenges and opportunities as the societies move forward makes the role of football even more relevant for the definition of the African narrative on the global level.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Football has positive and negative impacts in the African societies. What do you think about it?
2. Why does football seem to be the most popular sport activity in Africa? Does football shape our perspectives towards mingling with each other and understanding the idea of togetherness? How?
3. How has football contributed to the community bonding and social cohesion in African communities?
4. Is there any relationship between football and African culture? What are the roles they play?
5. What role does football play in the economic development of African countries? What economic opportunity does football create in the African communities?
6. What benefits does football bring to the African local communities?
7. What is the correlation or interaction and roles of politics in football? How is football used as a tool for political influence or propaganda in African countries? Are there any notable examples where football has played a role in political movements or campaigns in Africa?
8. What are some of the challenges facing the football sector in Africa, such as corruption, lack of infrastructure, or financial constraints?
9. How is football used to manipulate masses
10. What is your opinion about the migration of African football talents?

APPENDIX II

CHECKLIST

Community: Kribi

Kribi is a town in the south of Cameroon, renowned for its beaches. With a population exceeding 600,000, it attracts a considerable number of tourists, as well as economic sector players, largely due to the port's extensive coverage across multiple regions within Cameroon. Additionally, the town boasts a thriving sporting culture, including the popular pastime of beach soccer.

Observation Checklist for Assessing the Dual Role of Football in African Societies

Social and Cultural Integration

✓	Football as a unifying factor among diverse ethnic and cultural groups.
✓	Evidence of football fostering social cohesion and reducing societal divisions.
	Promotion of local traditions and cultural pride through football events.
✓	Community celebrations or festivals centered around football matches or achievements.

Economic Opportunities

✓	Job creation related to football (e.g., stadium staff, event organizers, local vendors).
✓	Football as a driver for local business growth, especially during events.

	Investments in community infrastructure spurred by football activities.
✓	Evidence of tourism associated with football tournaments or events.

Youth Empowerment

✓	Football academies or grassroots programs aimed at skill development.
	Scholarships or educational initiatives tied to football participation.
	Evidence of youth taking leadership roles in football related activities.
	Reduction in risky behaviors among youth due to football engagement.

Health and Well-being

✓	Community access to football facilities promoting physical activity.
	Initiatives addressing health issues through football campaigns (e.g., HIV/AIDS awareness, mental health workshops).
	Improvement in mental well being and stress reduction linked to football participation.
✓	Programs encouraging inclusive sports participation (e.g., for women, disabled individuals).

Political and Diplomatic Influence

✓	Football as a tool for peacebuilding and resolving conflicts.
	Evidence of governments leveraging football for political unity or campaigns.
	Regional cooperation fostered through pan African football tournaments.
	Football influencing political policies or raising awareness of societal issues.

Community Development

	New or upgraded football facilities accessible to the general community.
	Long term benefits for communities from football investments.
	Visible empowerment of marginalized groups through football initiatives.
✓	Enhanced community pride and collective identity through football achievements.

Environmental and Sustainability Impact

✓	Measures in place to reduce the environmental impact of football events.
✓	Campaigns using football to promote environmental sustainability.
	Infrastructure built for football events being maintained sustainably.
	Awareness raised on eco-friendly practices through football related platforms.

Challenges and Contradictions

	Instances where football exacerbates community divisions (e.g., club rivalries).
	Evidence of exploitation or corruption linked to football activities.
	Displacement or negative social effects from large scale football infrastructure projects.
✓	Financial inequities between grassroots football and professional leagues.

Community: Douala

Like many other cities in Cameroon, Douala is a cosmopolitan city with a population exceeding four million. It is a highly sought-after location due to its numerous activities, notably its port, which facilitates the shipment of a considerable volume of goods to and from Cameroon and other countries within the Central African sub-region.

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✓ ✓ ✓	Promotion of local traditions and cultural pride through football events.
	Community celebrations or festivals centered around football matches or achievements.

Economic Opportunities

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	Football as a driver for local business growth, especially during events.
	Investments in community infrastructure spurred by football activities.
	Evidence of tourism associated with football tournaments or events.

Youth Empowerment

✓	Football academies or grassroots programs aimed at skill development.
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✓	Scholarships or educational initiatives tied to football participation.
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	Reduction in risky behaviours among youth due to football engagement.

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	Displacement or negative social effects from large scale football infrastructure projects.
✓	Financial inequities between grassroots football and professional leagues.

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Community: Ayos

The town of Ayos is situated on the periphery of Cameroon's capital city, Yaoundé. Due to its proximity to this major urban centre, Ayos experiences a considerable inflow of individuals from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, Ayos serves as a source of sustenance for the Cameroonian capital.

Observation Checklist for Assessing the Dual Role of Football in African Societies

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✓	Evidence of football fostering social cohesion and reducing societal divisions.
✓	Promotion of local traditions and cultural pride through football events.
	Community celebrations or festivals centered around football matches or achievements.

Economic Opportunities

	Job creation related to football (e.g., stadium staff, event organizers, local vendors).
✓	Football as a driver for local business growth, especially during events.
	Investments in community infrastructure spurred by football activities.
	Evidence of tourism associated with football tournaments or events.

Youth Empowerment

✓	Football academies or grassroots programs aimed at skill development.
	Scholarships or educational initiatives tied to football participation.
	Evidence of youth taking leadership roles in football related activities.
✓	Reduction in risky behaviors among youth due to football engagement.

Health and Well-being

✓	Community access to football facilities promoting physical activity.
	Initiatives addressing health issues through football campaigns (e.g., HIV/AIDS awareness, mental health workshops).
	Improvement in mental well being and stress reduction linked to football participation.
✓	Programs encouraging inclusive sports participation (e.g., for women, disabled individuals).

Political and Diplomatic Influence

✓	Football as a tool for peacebuilding and resolving conflicts.
	Evidence of governments leveraging football for political unity or campaigns.
	Regional cooperation fostered through pan African football tournaments.
	Football influencing political policies or raising awareness of societal issues.

Community Development

✓	New or upgraded football facilities accessible to the general community.
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Challenges and Contradictions

	Instances where football exacerbates community divisions (e.g., club rivalries).
	Evidence of exploitation or corruption linked to football activities.
	Displacement or negative social effects from large scale football infrastructure projects.
✓	Financial inequities between grassroots football and professional leagues.

Community: Bertoua

Bertoua is the capital of the East region of Cameroon, renowned for its fertile soil and subsoil. Despite its relatively low population density, the city is home to a diverse population comprising individuals from numerous regions. The area is home to individuals who have been displaced from the Central African Republic (CAR) and have established a new residence in this location.

Observation Checklist for Assessing the Dual Role of Football in African Societies

Social and Cultural Integration

✓	Football as a unifying factor among diverse ethnic and cultural groups.
✓	Evidence of football fostering social cohesion and reducing societal divisions.
✓ ✓ ✓	Promotion of local traditions and cultural pride through football events.
	Community celebrations or festivals centered around football matches or achievements.

Economic Opportunities

✓	Job creation related to football (e.g., stadium staff, event organizers, local vendors).
✓	Football as a driver for local business growth, especially during events.
	Investments in community infrastructure spurred by football activities.
✓	Evidence of tourism associated with football tournaments or events.

Youth Empowerment

✓	Football academies or grassroots programs aimed at skill development.
	Scholarships or educational initiatives tied to football participation.
✓	Evidence of youth taking leadership roles in football related activities.
	Reduction in risky behaviors among youth due to football engagement.

Health and Well-being

✓	Community access to football facilities promoting physical activity.
✓	Initiatives addressing health issues through football campaigns (e.g., HIV/AIDS awareness, mental health workshops).
	Improvement in mental well being and stress reduction linked to football participation.
✓	Programs encouraging inclusive sports participation (e.g., for women, disabled individuals).

Political and Diplomatic Influence

✓	Football as a tool for peacebuilding and resolving conflicts.
✓	Evidence of governments leveraging football for political unity or campaigns.
✓	Regional cooperation fostered through pan African football tournaments.
	Football influencing political policies or raising awareness of societal issues.

Community Development

	New or upgraded football facilities accessible to the general community.
	Long term benefits for communities from football investments.
	Visible empowerment of marginalized groups through football initiatives.
✓	Enhanced community pride and collective identity through football achievements.

Environmental and Sustainability Impact

	Measures in place to reduce the environmental impact of football events.
	Campaigns using football to promote environmental sustainability.
	Infrastructure built for football events being maintained sustainably.
	Awareness raised on eco-friendly practices through football related platforms.

Challenges and Contradictions

	Instances where football exacerbates community divisions (e.g., club rivalries).
	Evidence of exploitation or corruption linked to football activities.
	Displacement or negative social effects from large scale football infrastructure projects.
✓	Financial inequities between grassroots football and professional leagues.

Community: Eseka

Eseka is located between Cameroon's two most populous cities, Yaoundé and Douala. It is a cultural crossroads and continues to be a source of many of the talents that contribute to the success of numerous football teams.

Observation Checklist for Assessing the Dual Role of Football in African Societies

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Community: Garoua

Garoua is the capital of the North Cameroon region. The town has a strong footballing culture, with clubs that have achieved considerable success at both the national and international levels. Notable among these is Coton Sport de Garoua, which has produced a number of high-profile players, including Vincent Aboubakar.

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Community: Meiganga

Meiganga is a town situated on the border between eastern Cameroon and the rest of the country. It serves as a cultural and economic bridge between communities in the north and south of the country. The town is home to a mining school that welcomes a large number of young people from a variety of backgrounds, including those with an interest in football.

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Community: Ngaoundere

The town of Ngaoundéré is a significant transportation hub in Cameroon, serving as a vital link between the southern towns and the northernmost regions of the country. It is a destination for individuals from diverse backgrounds, including those from other regions within Cameroon and neighbouring countries such as Nigeria and the Central African Republic.

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Community: Ndom

Ndom is a small town in the Littoral region of Cameroon with a reputation for agricultural excellence. Despite its modest size, the town has a notable association with football, with numerous players from the town having competed at the highest level and represented the Cameroon national team on the international stage.

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APPENDIX III

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

1- Liberia

The first question is, football has a positive and a negative has positive impact in the African societies. What do you think about it?

I strongly believe that it has a positive impact on African society because I have seen many other footballers who have left Africa and come back with better representation.

I'll mention Sadio Mane, for example. Sadio Mane is one of those players who went abroad. He represented his country abroad; he played for Senegal and he contributed a lot. From what we have read, he has built schools, hospitals and so on in Senegal and he is still building. If you look at George Weah, George Weah is also someone who has gone abroad.

He is the only Ballon d'Or winner in Africa. He came back home. He constructed lot of things, lot of buildings, lot of schools, football fields in Liberia. If you also look at Mohamed Salah is the same thing. We came also construction in, Egypt as well as Hakimi from Morocco. He also continues to build in Morocco. So these are positive effects. I think these are positive effects of football in Africa.

Thank you very much. The second question is why do you think football is the most popular sporting activity in Africa? Does football shape our perspective toward mingling, with other with each other and understanding the idea of togetherness. How?

Football is one of the easiest sports to play. It's so easy that a lot of young people can find it easy to play football and it's the most affordable sport, I think. It's one of the most affordable sports and it's also one of the most inclusive sports in Africa. We are not a poor nation. We have a financial crisis. I know that. But from childhood, we've noticed that if you want to play basketball, there are limited fees.

There is always a place where you can see basketball being played, but there are only a few people playing it. But while there is football, there are a lot of people who come to play football, because there are a lot of people who think they can play football easily, and it's cheaper, and it can be played anywhere. You cannot play basketball anywhere. We can play football on the beach. We can play football on the main roads, even when cars are passing.

We play football. Even in our houses, we play football wherever there are lots of people, wherever we can play with lots of teams. It's more entertainment. A lot of people can come and watch football because it's more fun and more entertainment than basketball. It's more inclusive than basketball.

If you look at it financially, because it's easier, it's more affordable for a lot of African youth, that's why we focus more on football than basketball. I remember we used to play football and I used to buy a football and get my friends together. A lot of people come to play. We used to have a team tournament. We used to have a tournament for more than 20 teams to face a pool and having a team to participate is easier than facing a basketball court.

We can play on the beach. You just take a pipe; what do you call it? Two branches from the tree and you plant it and you've already got a pool where people will come and contribute, people will come and play, lots of people will come and watch. That's why a lot of young Africans are interested in our kind of basketball because it's more affordable, it's more entertaining, it's more inclusive.

And how has football contributed to the community bonding and social cohesion in African communities?

It contributes a lot. 1, if you look at football today, football has money and there are a lot of people in football. Okay. There are a lot of people who go out, achieve and come back to the community and bring development. I come from Liberia where I came from a community where George Weir played in my community.

There was a football field that was in that community for over a year that we grew up and we learned that George Weah used to play on that field. But when George Weah was successful, he went abroad. He achieved. He came back. If you go back to that neighbourhood today, that field has been rebuilt because of the impact of football.

If George Weah had never played in that community, that field would be the same today. But George we played there because of the impact of football, because of the impact of football George we came back. He rebuilt the track that led to that field and he also built that field. He also built a lot of pitches in Africa. If you can go to Africa, you'll come to Liberia.

You come across a lot of football pitches where a lot of young people are playing, simply because George Weah was able to go abroad and represent this country and come back and work for everybody in the community.

Is there any relationship between football and African culture, and what are the roles they play? Yeah.

One thing I can say about that is I can maybe just tell you the relationship is not direct but the best way I can describe it is that football is one way we used to sell the culture of Africa to the westerners because the westerners have a different perception about African culture. They have a different ideology about Africa. So we use football to sell the culture. How do we use football to sell African culture? I'll give you an example of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

The culture of Africa was practised, that people from different parts of Africa came and we celebrated our culture by weighing our culture clothes, by doing our culture dance and people came. People from all over the world came to Africa and they discovered a lot about Africa through the medium of football. There were a lot of people who never knew the real Africa. All they saw was social media, TV and all that stuff. But when they came to the 2010 World Cup, they travelled around Africa.

They went to other African countries. They realise that Africa is more beautiful than what is portrayed on social media. So I think football, on the one hand, cannot be directly related to our culture, but on the other hand, we can use football to sell the real image, the true image, the true values of our culture to Westerners.

What is the role of football in the economic development of African countries? What economic opportunity does football create in the African communities?

The rules of football in our economy in Africa is the contribution of those who have achieved abroad coming back to contribute. In Africa, when we talk about the economy or the government, it is all about expectations. Everybody wants to expect something from the government.

Nobody asks, what am I giving to the government? It is all about the economy. Like, the economy is not just about the government doing well. Okay? But it's also about what the citizen can do to meet the government and do well.

I'll give you two or three examples. Weah played, he went abroad. He came back. He contributed a lot to the economy of Liberia. Now the economy of Liberia is not what it was before, but it has changed a lot because of the influence that Weah had. He went abroad. He achieved and he came back. He contributed to the economy. Look. Right now in Senegal, Mane is well respected.

He built schools. He built hospitals. He contributed a lot to the economy there. Now the economy can grow from that side because everything is not coming from the government

anymore. You cannot expect 100% from the government. He's also contributing to the economy to improve the economy. If you look at Cameroon, even if it's wrong to use Kylian Mbappe as an example, but people like to use him even though he played for France, but he's in Cameroon. We cannot deny him. He came back to Cameroon. He tried to build something.

It's a great achievement. Samuel Eto'o is there too. He is based on great achievements. These are all great contributions to the economy. Now he's contributing to the government so that the government can contribute to the people. Someone has already contributed. So that also helped to stimulate the economy. There are other people who contribute to the agricultural sector. I may not remember all of them, but some of them contribute to the agricultural sector. They are all footballers. These are all things that help to reduce the burden on the government and also help to boost the economy.

What benefits does football bring to local communities in Africa?

Yes. The benefit it brings to the local community is by, what do you call it, taking the skills, for example, there are some talented, young people within the community, but with the help of football, they left and they came back and they developed their community.

It's a great help when you're in the community. Samuel Eto'o has a very poor community, from what we read about him on social media. He used to push a wheelbarrow. There was a photo of him pushing a wheelbarrow from the community where he used to work with no shoes. But when he got the money, what did he do? He went back to the same community. He built a school. He has made a huge impact. George Weah.

George Weah came from the community lessons, then he played there, and he went back to rebuild a football field, and many like David used to go and watch football, and he paved the road that led to that football field. That's a big contribution. There are so many footballers too. They were in those places. They started playing football for this community. They achieved something. They improved themselves. Those skills inside them were shown to the world and they went abroad. They never stayed there, but they came back home and they contributed back to that community. So in that way I think it has contributed a lot to many communities in Africa by sending their children out and they come back and make their contribution to the community.

Well, what is the correlation or interaction and roles of politics in football? How is football used as a tool for political influence or propaganda in African countries? Are there any notable examples where football has played a role in political movements or campaigns in Africa? Yeah. There are many.

There are so many footballers who use that influence, to take political seats, for example, in Africa. There are so many politicians as well that use footballers to, use the influence of footballers to take political seats in Africa. Example, I will give you, Liberia, George Weah. George Weah used his own influence as the only winner of Ballon d'Or in Africa. He brought so many footballers to Liberia, the lack of Asamoah or Didier Drogba. He brought all of them, and Iberian people saw them, and they gave him their support. They did Liberian people to believe that George Weah was a good person, and they voted him. He also uses influence of bringing some actors and actresses to Liberia, and they also came because he's a famous person.

Everybody in Africa knows George Weah. Wherever George Weah goes in Africa, everyone wants to see him because he's the only Ballon d'Or winner in Africa. It's a big deal. It's a great achievement. So there are so many of them.

You can also see Samuel Eto'o, for example. Samuel Eto'o is also using his influence to win a political seat in Cameroon. Didier Drogba also tried to use his influence to win a political seat in the federation, but he didn't succeed. What about Asamoah Gyan, who is rumoured to be using his influence to win a political seat in Ghana? What is true, and I'm not too sure. So there are also some Africans who use their political influence in their football to take political seats, and there are some political leaders who knew these footballers. They brought them and they use them, they use their influence to take political seats.

What are some of the challenges facing football in Africa, such as corruption, lack of infrastructure or financial constraints?

There are so many challenges facing football in Africa. For example, you mentioned corruption. Let me take the example of Kylian Mbappe. If you read a story about him, a lot of people would say that he wanted to play for Cameroon, but he didn't because of corruption. He played for, what do you call it? He played for France because there are so many talented footballers in Africa. We watch them every day on social media. We watch them on YouTube.

We watch them on Facebook. There are so many talented footballers in Africa. But because of corruption, those boys, those youngsters who come out of Africa because of corruption, they are there. Their skills are dying. So those who are challenged, they go through challenges. A lot of our young graduates, they are very good at football. They play well. But if you don't have the contact, it's not what you know. It's not what you know, it's who you know. That's why so many people have left Africa.

There are so many footballers who have left Africa. They didn't come back. Why did they not come back? Because of corruption, they couldn't make our two national teams. Because to play in the national team, you have to pay a lot of money to some politicians who put you in the system. But if you don't know them, if you don't know somebody who knows them, if you don't know somebody who knows somebody who knows somebody who knows somebody who knows somebody, or even if you do, but if you don't have the financial backing to help you get there, then definitely your skills are going to go there. So we have a lot of them. They are there. We need help. But because of corruption, their skills are dying. We can come up.

How is football used to manipulate masses?

Football is often used by politicians to manipulate the masses. For example, they know that many young people love the game. A lot of young people love the game. So what do you do when you are in a political situation? For example, I want to be president of Liberia.

I can just have a tournament, you know, buy jerseys for a lot of young teams. There are so many teams. They want to play football but they don't have any support, right? So some people come, oh I will support your team. They buy them a jersey.

You buy them a football. They start to play. Within this political time, this campaign time, they will support them and manipulate them and deceive them to make them believe that yes, indeed, I support you, then they vote for them. After they are elected, they stop supporting them and they have the skills. All they need is your support. So during the political time, during the campaign time in Africa, so many things happen. People with football team, community, politicians come. They organise a league. They organise tournament and bring people together to play football. Then you come, oh but this guy is a good guy.

He has money. He has supported our young people here. He didn't do it to take the seat. After he won the seat, he let us go. So, they use football a lot of times with money with us and take the position and leave us and forget about us after the election.

And the last question is, what is your opinion about the migration of African football talents?

Those who leave the continent and go and play outside the continent are leaving the continent. For example, many people attack me when it comes to Timothy, who is George's son. The reason is that it is not easy to be successful in Africa. It's not easy. I'm in Turkey. There are a lot of people who can look at me and say oh Leo, you are talented. You have this. In Africa

there are tens, tens of new ones. Thousands of new ones. Yeah. It's not easy to be successful. So when you find these guys going out there, staying there, they have no choice.

They have to stay there because they know that they are all like that in Europe. They are better than these white people. They are much better than them. But if you come to Africa, there are thousands of you. So if you come there, the chances of you surviving or these chances of you succeeding are 1 in 10. That's why a lot of them end up going abroad and staying there because the people who are brought here, the white people, believe in black people as very talented creatures. They believe that we are so talented. They believe that we have a lot of talent embedded in us. That's why they will be willing to use us to get all those talents. But enough, because we have a lot of them, we have a surplus of those talents.

They are not in the mood to use us, but they want us to pay to show our talent. Because if you refuse to pay, I already have someone who is willing to pay and show their talent. So why should I waste my time with you? So I have no negative idea or negative statement towards those guys who go abroad to play and stay there. They have every right to do so. Timothy, we are just like any other player. Kylian Mbappe, they have the right. I think they are lucky to be able to stay abroad.

2- Republic of South Africa

Our first question is, football has positive and negative impacts in the African societies. What do you think about it?

I think football is the biggest sport in the world, played by the most people, I would think. So, you know, there's a lot of impact obviously in different ways. So, yeah, definitely this has a huge impact because of and results will obviously determine that as well. People are, you know, when the team wins, they're positive. When their team loses, obviously there's a negativity. But in general, there's a huge impact on the general society in Africa.

And what do you think what does football seem to be the most popular sport activity in Africa? Does football shape our perspective toward, mingling with each other and understanding the idea of togetherness?

Well, it's the simplest, cheapest sport to play because, you know, you need a patch of field or grass or, you know, to play a game of football. And, you only need 1 ball, and then people can join in. It's not a complicated game if you're playing unstructured football. And people like to play unstructured football in Africa in terms of, you know, no lines and just playing and playing with freedom and a chance to express themselves. And for that period of time, they can, you know, in Africa, which is obviously generally a poor continent, people can enjoy themselves and relax and forget their problems for an hour or two.

That's part of the awareness; that's kind of the answer to the next question which was how has football contributed to community bonding and social cohesion in African communities?

Well, in the African community, as I said, in the African communities, which is generally, I mean, let's call a spade a spade and be honest that it's a poor continent, generally. It's a rich continent, but a point in terms of facilities and things like that. And people are living below the bread line, if you want to call it that, in Africa. And then people, as I say, football is a universal game and people can play it in all shapes and sizes and people can enjoy themselves. And it gives them a sense of freedom. It gives them a sense of expressing themselves, and African people love football because of that, I think you'll see that African football is different too much of the world because the way African players play is much freer and more undisciplined, if you want to call it

that. And in the structure. And people, that's why people, that's why the game is so popular in Africa.

What is there any relationship between football and African cultures, and what are the role they each play?

African cultures, it's difficult, I wouldn't say yes. You can look at it that way because you'll generally find the southern region of Africa, the players are much smaller and more agile and much quicker. So, the culture is a different type of it's a much more it's a faster brand of football where in your in your in your West Africa and, North Africa, the players are much bigger and stronger. So, the culture is a different type of football. Central Africa, also a bit of a mix of strength and size.

The cultures are different from a footballing point of view, the way the game is played. Southern Africa is all about trying to express yourself with the speed of the game and it is where, as I say, West Africa and North Africa players are bigger and stronger. So the cult from that perspective, from a football culture, is different.

What role does football play in the economic development of Africa? What economic opportunities does football create?

Economic opportunities certainly, yeah, from a personal perspective, players can improve and make a lot of money. And Europe and the rest of the world are looking at Africa because the players are very athletic. So, a lot of players have been exported from Africa.

But does the money come back into the country? No. It goes into, club to club, maybe in agents to agents or agents and that sort of thing. So, I don't think the money in Africa, that the money is going out of Africa, but it's not going back into the facilities. Well, maybe the powers that be are not putting money back into facilities.

The biggest problem in Africa is facilities. And if you don't have good facilities, you can't improve your players. You cannot improve football in Africa. It's never going to improve unless you're one of the biggest nations in Africa and Nigeria. You've just got to look at the facilities in Nigeria.

It's poor, poor, poor. And they and they've got the most people in Africa in terms of numbers. And, you know, they produce so many players, but look at their facilities in the local league. And facilities is the big why Europe always do better? Because they got facilities to train players and coach players, and that's what you need.

And of course, you also need coaching expertise, you know, which we lack. So, a lot of money is going out of Africa and not coming back in where it should be going. Definitely. And what other benefits does football bring to local African communities? I don't think, obviously, the direct families of the communities' benefit because, obviously, a lot of these players go to Europe or wherever and play and get big contracts and their money so they can look after their local.

But that's just a few people around them. I know people like the Saudi Omanis and they put money back into the communities, they build hospitals and things like that. So, they, you know, Sala have done those things. But in saying that, there's not, there's not, the communities generally don't benefit because, as I said earlier, the money goes up, doesn't come back, or part of it doesn't come back. You know, when you sell it, when you sell a player from a club in Africa to Europe, you know, and you've got a percentage of the sale, you should be putting that money back into facilities so we can train the next ones coming through and create good academies and things like that.

And what's the correlation between, and role of politics in football? How is football used as a tool for political influence or propaganda in African countries?

Sometimes you get presidents of countries that love football and then they show their face at the games. And, of course, they're, you know, in countries, so they generate a lot of support through people, showing, you know, showing their face, being at games and and talking about it. Because, you know, generally in Africa, a lot, a lot of people in every country follow football. So, if the president of the country or the leaders are seen to be doing things for football, I think oh, so it's definitely used as a political tool, which is as long as they I don't mind that.

And, what are some of the challenges that the football sector face in Africa, such as corruption lack of, facilities, financial constraints?

I think training expertise, qualified coaches, good facilities to train in and, you know, that sort of thing. I think there is, you know, the corruption side, I, you know, I don't know, but it's definitely there, you know?

Everybody talks about it but I don't, you know, you don't really see it. Certainly, there's been a lot of I mean from the officiating and from that perspective there's certainly been a lot of that. There's been a lot of intimidation and things like that over the years. And, and, you know, and I think we as a whole, as a continent, the African continent needs to be seen.

But how do we do that through good faith, through good in in in doing things properly and not being, you know, underhanded. So, we have to, you know, but how does that take time for people to, you know, as I always say in life, you know, you can always trust somebody until that that that they deep you that you trust them. So how do we, how do we have to show a sign that we are doing things right. Officiating is good. Facilities are good.

How is football used to manipulate masses, populations?

Well, I said it before. Politically, you know, when you see your president, like when Cameroon had the Nations Cup, your president was there every game.

He's there and he's waving to the crowd and he's coming in with a whole entourage and everybody's voting for him because he's doing so well for the country. So, they can use it as a political tool, football, because the masses love football. So, if you're president as I said before, if you're president or you're minister of sport or whatever it is, he seems to be helping the game or showing interest in the game, I think, you know, that'll make people vote for him.

And that's what it's all about, isn't it? That's how politicians' poll, that's what they do. They drive emotions. A good politician drives emotions, but a good politician has to be seen to be doing things behind the scenes, not just in front of the cameras.

And the last question is, what did what do you think about the migration of, African talent? African?

Talent. Talent. Yes. Well, it's just natural. It's natural. The money is in Europe. So, the players are and a lot of them, I've got a lot, a lot of countries in Africa have got a lot of what's the word? Colonisation. Store of their roots or French or Spanish or Portuguese or so, generally the players who speak those languages migrate to French speaking countries, Spanish speaking countries, Portuguese speaking countries. So those things, you know, they'll get trials there at clubs.

So, the Angolan players will go. A lot of them Portugal, the French players, Cameroonians, Senegalese. They'll go to a lot of French countries, second division, and then find their way, you know, Congolese, you know, that sort of thing. So yeah, it's natural and that's where the money is. It's nothing unusual, but what we need to do in Africa is to improve our domestic leagues.

So, your Nigerian league, your Cameroonian league. The players I know, like Egypt and the North Africans, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, a lot of those players stay in their countries because their leagues are good and the money is good, with the same as South Africa. A lot of those players don't want to go overseas because the money is good here and the league is well run. You need good facilities, you know, respected leagues, good officiating, good coaching.

And then the players domestically will stay longer in their own league, or you have players who go out to Europe and come back and play in the domestic league, you know, at the end of their careers with a bigger start. So that domestically, he has to get better in all the countries.



3- Cameroun

The first question is, football has a positive and a negative impact in the African societies. What do you think about it? Yes. I I was I strongly agree with this.

I would like to start by talking about the negative side of football. For me, I think dedicated things like the development of the company. When African countries try to develop the football sector, they don't really focus on the infrastructure. I think the money is, is huge because now all the things that are more important.

I think the negative side of football in Africa is the economic part of it, because when they use their money, which should be used for education, for resources that are more valuable than football. And the process of it is it gives the hope for a young for a young African to see themselves in big clubs and make a lot of money that they can help develop their country socially, economically.

The second question is why does football seem to be the most popular sport activity in Africa? Does football shape our perspective toward mingling with each other and understanding the idea of togetherness. How? I think football is the is the most popular, game in Africa.

I think it goes back to its simplicity, its ease of play. And you don't need a lot of equipment to play football. You don't need a ball and you don't need any kind of shoes and you can play. So the popularity of it is because of its affordability compared to other sports. Let's say like hockey, like horse riding, like swimming.

So those are a bit more expensive to participate in. But football in the neighbourhood, you just take a ball and you just give it to your friends. So that's where the performance is. Okay. And, of course, I think it helped us build a strong relationship with football.

Like, I remember as a kid, when you play with your friends, you have this neighbourhood, this thing, belonging, that this is mine. This is my neighbourhood, which makes you feel a very strong relationship with the people around you.

How has football contributed to the community bonding and social cohesion in African communities?

Actually, I can say it in a positive way, because, you know, in Africa we have a lot of tribalism. The only time that tribalism goes out of the window is when there is a football match. It could be an international football match. It could be a national football match. So whenever there is a football match, we put aside our differences. And we support the team now. We love we like. We enjoy with them. We dance with them. You know what I mean? In Africa we sing with them. So, I think based on this section. Okay. So, I think it's possible.

According to you, is there any relationship between football and African culture, and what are the role they play?

I can't say that there's a direct relationship between football and African culture because, you know, football is a sport that was imported into Africa by the British, by the Europeans. Because, you know, Africa, we don't have our own, non-football sports like wrestling and, wrestling, like horse riding, those kinds of sports that are more common in Africa compared to football. Okay.

The 3rd question is what role does football play in the economic development of African countries? What economic opportunity does football create in the African communities?

You know, football normally, football should create a huge economic potential, especially for countries that are organised state. Football, for example, is the case of Cameroon. However, because of the middle mismanagement of resources in Africa, based on this football, economic policy, so it doesn't really benefit the general public. It benefits a few at the top. So, unfortunately, it doesn't directly benefit the local person, but it does benefit the people who are directly involved in the management of the game.

And, what is the correlation or interaction and rules of politics in football? How is football used as a tool for political influence or propaganda in African countries? In that in that way, are there any notable example why football has played a role in in political movement or campaigns in Africa?

It's actually there's a strong correlation between football and, and, and African politics because of politics and using it to either unite people or divide them to work together. I would take the example of the Ivory Coast. Remember when they had a coup d'etat, when they had a civil war in, in Cote d'Ivoire. I can't remember the exact year. Yes. Do you remember the year the

year 2000? Early 2000. And because of football, and the leadership of players like, Didier Drogba. It could actually lead to peace coming out.

So, there's a strong leadership team in football and politics in Africa. For example, you cannot separate symbol and politics in Africa. For example, most of the African federations, even though they are supposed to be independent, they have been highly suspended or sponsored by the Ministry of Sport, which is a political entity per se in Africa. It's actually sponsored by the government.

For example, I can use countries where the president has been there for a very long time and they don't have a clue anymore. The only way they can mobilise the youth and stay in power is to try to organise, for example, an African nation. Okay. Just build this statue. The populations will think that he is a good person and we've forgotten the deep economic problem we have. So, well, I think they use it in that sense. Okay. And what are some of the challenges facing the football sector in Africa, such as corruption, lack of infrastructure or financial constraints? The biggest challenge in, in football in Africa is management.

And, the management is, as I said, everyone allocates resources for the for the building of study and for building educational facility. That will first of all educate the students and make them develop their footprint. The finances have been, how shall I put it? They have been siphoned off. They are not used properly.

And so, when it comes to the management of football, most African countries, not all of them. But we can also take good examples, like from North Africa, like in Egypt, in Indonesia, in Algeria, that they have a very good infrastructure. Or, like, in South Africa, they have very good infrastructures that are really focused on the development of football. They have a lot of committees that look after that, but the exception does not make the rule. In general, the management is very bad.

And according to you, how is football used to manipulate masses, to manipulate populations?

You know, we live in a world of technology, in a world where the desire to consume what some people do, to have this hotel entertainment is what people need. And the government understands that the only way to control the masses is to give them entertainment. And football is one of the biggest forms of entertainment in the world, not just in Africa. So, for example, I'm talking about how, how, politicians are trying to organise the African nation to, to mobilise the youth to support their idols, even though there's economic hardship.

They use they use 1,000,000,000 of dollars for the AFCON. And within a month, people forget the reality of what is really going on. And they just concentrate on football, having fun. And so, there is a sense of, of instant gratification, which is not the long-term solution. So, football, and entertainment in general, is the way to manipulate people.

What is your opinion about the migration of football, African football talents? Those who move from their homelands to, you know, other countries. What is your opinion about that?

I have mixed opinions about it. It is something inevitable. For example, I live in Turkey. If I have a son, he grew up here. He doesn't know anything about my country, he doesn't know the history of my country. All his friends are here. He went to football schools here and he developed here. I think it's okay for him. It's okay. I feel like I want to play for this country, Turkey for example. But, when you are born and bred in, in an African country and, he grew up there, and, the fact that decides to go to another country, I find it, not a good decision because there is a lot of patriotism behind it.

Like, if you are a patriot, you have to represent your country. Football is a political tool. It's political representation. For example, you know, a lot of black people represent France and everything or England. After their football career nobody remembers them. They don't get a statue erected somewhere. But their other colleagues, the white British or the white French, they have statues all over the place. So, they use it as a means to put their nation in front of the world, which is still a political agenda. So, if you represent your country and really have that role, I think it's much better.

Even if you don't win the World Cup, it's much better to be part of a community. You can, how shall I put it? You can belong to a community that you may never belong to. So yes. But the question here is more about using Africa as a place of production of talent, like where people are really talented but now, they have to show their talents outside.

Let me give you an example of leagues, like the South African leagues. Most of the South African players, they don't go out. They don't usually go out. Like, 90% of them play in their country. Like, the Egyptian leagues, 90% of them play in their country. Even the Congo, which is very developed, like 90% of them play in their country. It comes down to management and lack of proper infrastructure. If you have a good policy that ensures proper management, proper allocation of resources, then footballers are well prepared and built accordingly. I don't think anybody is going to decide to go out for for for, anybody. They'll be able to show their talent in their country, even if they have to travel and go and play in that country.

For example, if they had this infrastructure and there are footballers in the account, for example, who play football in the afternoon and even go to work. Like, football is a profession. You don't have to have football and go to, you know, this job. That's not what I mean.

So, it's a lack of management and, you know, allocation of resources. If you have a good infrastructure, I don't think this would happen at a high rate. Like, we have examples in South Africa and Egypt that most of their local players are fleeing their local leagues.

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4- Senegal

Football has positive and negative impacts in African societies. What do you think about it?

I completely agree. It has both negative and positive effects. But which is, you know, heavier or which effect has a bigger impact? And I think football in Africa has more negative aspects than positive ones.

The reason why I think that is because we focus on the number of players. We focus on the amount of money they make. We hear those numbers and we focus on people getting jobs. And, yes, that's very nice, but, when you look at the economic situation of our continent and when you look at the problems that we face, I think we have more priorities related to, industrial work or, let's say, education or, let's say, management work than to leisure.

I think one of the big negative effects of football in Africa is the economy. It's not directly football, but it's the fact that a lot of young people are inspired and run after becoming footballers. And to do that at the highest level, you need a certain background, you know, of education, work and training. That's why, no matter how young African players look, in the end they don't have the opportunity to play at the highest level. Cristiano Ronaldo scored 900 goals when he was 40 years old. This is this is hard to from an African player.

Why does football seem to be the most popular sport activity in Africa? Those football shape our perspective toward mingling?

I think the reason why football is so popular is because it's accessible. It's accessible. It's easy to play when, you know, you don't need a basket. You don't need a racket. You don't need, I don't know. You don't need a bike or a swimming pool. You don't need a lot of things. You just need a boat and some space. That is why football is easier for countries like us, who have less infrastructure, to have access to football. Now it brings people together. But for me, the reason why it's popular is because it's easy to play.

The third question is, how has football contributed to the community bonding and social cohesion in African communities?

It brings people together. It brings people together in the sense that we get to know other countries when they organise the Africa Cup of Nations, for example. We get to know other

citizens from other places. We get to like, in the beginning, I think in the early 1990s and 2000s, football has really divided Africa. I think North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa. But now we are seeing more communities coming together, which is really a great thing. I mean, only football brings us together, I mean, apart from maybe the African Union.

When we talk about interaction between countries and people, North Africa, the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa communicate through football. Football also breaks the language barrier because the South African countries or the East African countries generally speak Swahili or English, while the West African countries speak French. So, it was difficult for them to communicate because there was this language of worry. But football brings us together, makes us try to, you know, communicate, say things together, say things to each other. I'm sorry. And also, to communicate through smiles or body language or just a flag. And of course, with the rise of social media it has brought us even closer. I think the ad more algorithm of social media makes us even bigger and shows that, wow. We're really together and we're really excited to show our colours and the countries we represent.

Do you think there is any relationship between football and African culture, or what are the roles they play?

Well, as you know, they say that football was, you know, created by England from England. I don't think it's very different from the culture of any country. I think coming together, sports and battlefields, these are really everywhere. It has been done in so many places. But right now, in the world we are in, football is mostly seen not as a sport but as a way to entertain people. So, I think it has that aspect of sport.

But I think it's more of an entertainment because that's the entertainment part that generates money. Sponsors focus on that because people like it and watch it. It gives people pleasure, so people run and watch football. That is why you see now in the half time, in the Super Bowl for example, in America, it generates millions of dollars.

At half time, singers and performers say that when a country organises the African Cup or the African nation of basketball, you see the culture on display. So, it really helps to promote and recognise African culture. And you've seen now in the World Cup, when African countries go to the World Cup, they also try to bring their African clothes and it's just incredible. I have friends who went to the Ivory Coast during the African Cup of Nations and they loved it. They told me about the food, how the country is fun, how the people are, and it really it brings bits of culture in in football. But I think the entertainment part of football brings in more culture than the sport itself.

What role does football play in the economic development of African countries? And what economic opportunities does football create in African communities?

I think endless possibilities, you know. Football is a huge chain. It's a huge chain of jobs that are coming together now. It's a huge organisation and that's why it's the most popular and the most powerful sport in the world. I'm going to give you the example of Senegal. The Senegalese people understood very early on those players leaving the continent, going abroad, could be a really, really, really big economic advantage and for the country and it could bring a lot of money. So instead of just letting those players leave the country and try to make it as footballers, they now start at an early age with General Sonfu, Jambar or other academies. They start early to make connections and make sure that they have a chain of schools that are producing sportsmen and women who are ready to go to Europe and play at a high level. Now, behind the scenes, you see the food chain. There is also the medical chain, the logistics and the equipment.

So a lot of sectors come together to make football what it is. I think the game itself and the footballers are the least seen but the least important parts of the chain. So you come at the end. Yes. They're the superstar, but there's a lot of business behind it. There's a lot of sales, a lot of advertising, a lot of revenue generation. It's a moment for companies to show off their brands. It's also an opportunity for certain physiotherapists to find work, or doctors to get into football. Multilingual people can also be translators. There are lawyers who come into football, agents, football agents. You also have management schools or language teachers or, let's say, cooks, chefs and logistics drivers. A lot of things come together to make football what it is. The players are the most important part, but there's more, you know, the hours of work before those 90 minutes.

When there's football, we love, you know, cheering our people up. It brings us together. Football has brought Côte d'Ivoire together to fall. You know? Football brings people together. We miss each other in general. As Africans, it's hard for us to come together because generally it's the ruling people, like the presidents, the governments, the workers. They are the ones who meet at the intercontinental level. Students, yes, to a certain extent. But for the people, for the rich, for the poor, for everybody to come together and meet as Africans, it doesn't have to be a physical meeting, but all our thoughts going towards one thing, I think it brings joy to the continent togetherness and football, only football can do it in Africa because of how it can influence.

What do you think, is the role or interaction, of politics in football? How is fully used as a tool for political influence and propaganda in African countries? And can you have some notable examples where football has played a role in political movements or campaigns in Africa?

It is always known that wherever there is economic growth or if there is a spot generating, an important economic level, the government is there to control, to structure it and to make sure that the rule of law is applied. It is also important to understand that wherever there are crowds, there are people who are influenced. You see, the government is there to get the government or politicians, I'm sorry, are there to get more votes. If there are influencers, people who are idolised, I'm sorry, people who are loved, I want to give the example of Didier Drogba, Samuel Eto'o or, Sadio Mane, El Hadj Diouf. These are great players. Or the Togolese Emmanuel Adebayor, these are huge players who influence the course of their political situations. Mohammed Salah did it in Egypt.

He told his people to stop the riots. I don't think these are the actors who are actually willing, but I think they are behind the politics or behind the politicians, or their role is now a political role. Because once you have so many followers and once you represent a country, you are actually in diplomacy, which is in politics. And I think these players add that value to a country. Now I've also seen the other side, especially in Senegal, because I'm Senegalese and I follow Senegalese politics. I've seen some footballers used by politicians to send a message or to try to promote certain personalities. You know? We've seen it during the 2021 riots. Some footballers took a stand and said what's happening is wrong and some of them actually supported the government.

And we also had some basketball players who literally took a stand. So you can understand that there's politics in football and football players are politicians to a certain extent. We have seen George Weah, a football player who has gained popularity. The only African Ballon d'Or, the FIFA Ballon d'Or, that became president.

The Egyptians. Most of them are very involved in politics. Mohammed Salah, I think, was told to support Islamic groups, according to certain media.

What are some of the challenges that football sector, the football sector in Africa faces such as corruption, lack of infrastructure, financial constraints.

You might get the impression from my speech that I don't think football is important, or that football players are important, or that I don't support football, and I love football. I wish I could be a footballer, by the way. I played football. I really love the game. But what I have learnt is that sometimes too many rules have killed it. They killed the fun. But the government also has the supreme duty to protect its citizens. So wherever there are crowds, they have to be involved.

Now there is an economy generated by football. But it is only at the final whistle that you see the authorities rushing to get in on the act. It's only when you win, or it's only when there's an opening ceremony where people you know are there to have their agenda or to be seen, you know, by the public.

It's about those moments. But where we don't see the politicians is in the philosophy of creating education systems that incorporate sport into the African, the African life, to incorporate sport into the African curriculum. The reason I say this is because you can't have the youngest people in the world. Sport is generally done by young people. You have the largest populations in the world as African presidents and leaders. You feed European, American, Asian countries, maybe less in Asia, but European-American countries, you feed them in terms of sportsmen, sportswomen. But you don't come up with a philosophy to keep those people at home, to keep them at home and still prepare them at the highest level. NBA Seeds does that. The immigration policy too, you know, immigrants, people running there, if they could build infrastructures like, the Senegalese philosophy is good, but it's it should be more, I think.

It should be more in Africa, in Senegal itself. People have to understand that at a young age there will be swimmers who will represent Africa. There will be, let's say, athletes, football players, but basketball players, sports in general, that will represent Africa. And as you can see, in the Olympics, we are always behind. We always win in, the race, the running. But for others, which need infrastructures, you see, we do not win. Yes. As you see running here, they say there are people who have mountains, oxygen. Yes. This effect plays in it.

But I think to a certain extent the fact that you don't need anything else to walk but your feet make Africans able to, you know, our land structures, yes. But the fact that you only need feet makes us equal when we go there. And once we were equal, we really had the genetic advantage to help us strive. But when it comes to the infrastructure, when it comes to the technology and the philosophy that a nation or a government puts in place and applies, we generally lose these sports. Africans win for every country except Africa.

I even had a question on your opinion about the migration of African talents. We have already answered to the question, actually. So the last question will be, how is football used to manipulate masses according to you?

In general, as you can see, the war in Ukraine and Russia have taken over the sites. Some countries don't take part in certain events because of the war. There are double standards and we see it. If it's organised by Qatar, it's oil money. But if it's in Europe, it's fine. If it's in Africa, it's never in Africa. So, it is obvious that football is a weapon, you know, because the number of

people, because of its popularity, people use it to show some political agendas. But also, the football fans themselves use football as a weapon. For example, Celtic fans or Irish fans or Galatasaray team fans or African fans, they show their support for Palestine during these events. You also see the Spanish League or European leagues with the rainbow flag, which is also a political agenda of the West.

You also see the flag of Ukraine flying next to La Liga. You see in England, you have some, what do you call it, some club presidents who have been sacked because of their political views, let us say, opinions. So, you can see here that no matter what happens, football is something powerful that is used both by players sometimes to show their political anger, so their political views, then their celebrations, sending messages, also used by football fans, but mostly as we all know and we've all noticed everywhere by politicians, which can also be an agenda. Some countries play somewhere and some other countries don't play anywhere. Some other countries, some, let's say, what I'm most against is the fact that the rules that were made when some countries were colonised were not free, set some standards, and it's because of those standards that we are now in certain realities, certain domination of sport, and I find that very political.

I don't believe that Africa, which couldn't take part in the World Cup because we were colonised at the time. I couldn't understand how these standards of winning by certain countries made Europe have 13, 10 participants where we have Africa with 5 participants. We have countries that have been free for 100 years and we have some other countries that have only been free for 60 or 70 years at the most. And you want to set the standards like, you know, I think it is unfair. You understand. I don't I find it very political. You also see the influence of organisations, how, certain, politicians use the fees or the money given by sport to organise an event. They use that money, yes. They use it to build infrastructure, but they put it in their political agenda, saying that they are the ones who are doing this, and they use it as a weapon to campaign and to win elections. The saddest part, just one last thing. The saddest thing is to see countries, instead of coming together for football, being divided by football.

5- Nigeria

Football has positive and negative impact in the African societies. What do you think about it?

Somehow football has more positive than negative effects on African society. Because football is the activity or the sport that brings us together. If you look at the other sports, I mean the fields that people play, we don't have much interest in them. It's either basketball or football and football is more dominant. So, through football we can connect with each other. We used to play as kids from different neighbourhoods just to mix with each other. There are competitions that just bring us together and that creates more networking. So, through that, I can say that football has more positive than negative impact on African society, I think.

The second question is, why does football seem to be the most popular sport activity in Africa? Those football shape, our perspective to what mingling, which it orders and understanding the idea of, togetherness.

I think the reason why football is popular is because I mean it's easier to do, I mean it's not like basketball. You can just make football with your own socks. You just get all your socks together to form a football and start playing with the people around you. So it wasn't that hard to get a ball and play. Not like basketball. Basketball is more of a prestige game for our people. So I think that's why football is more popular or it's more popular than the other sports and I think through football we mix with each other. We make fun of each other. We, I mean, football, not only in Africa, even, like, if you look at the world in general, you can see this wall, I mean, the world is moving through football, through these tournaments that are happening, the world competitions, World Cup, like, Euro or Afcon and things like that. We get to know the countries we go to. We get to know the people that we meet and we get to know each other through these kinds of activities.

I think the most important thing is that football is the source of togetherness or the source of unity within Africa and beyond. So through football, we can do a lot of things that politics cannot do for us. We leave our tribal limitation through football. Some people, I mean, there are people just mingling with Christians or sorry. Muslims mingling with Muslims, but Christians mingling with Christians. But when it comes, when it comes to football, we forget our own

religion and we just focus on playing the ball, which is right in the middle, I mean, on the field. I think it, it creates a huge, space for discussion and understanding each other's culture.

How has football contributed to the community bonding and social cohesion on in African, communities?

With football, I can sit with you and talk about football for hours and we don't even get bored. So, what we find through football is because our people or we, we have this interest in football and it's, it's the thing, I mean, it's the medium that makes us understand each other. It's like, without football, it's not like without football. We won't understand each other, but through football we find a certain interest that we, I mean, common interest that we can just focus on and talk about. So it's just like the common interest, I think. So we bond through football. And if, you know, maybe the people you meet today or you meet an African and then you ask them like, "Hey. Where are you from? I am from Malawi. Are you from Malawi? You don't know how to play football and then they, you know, they start there. So that creates a bond. It's all like we're fighting each other, but fighting in a respectful way creates more than just sitting down and talking about other things.

Is there any relationship between football and African culture, and what are the roles they play?

Normally in African culture we believe in unity. There is nothing like being stranded or being alone in African culture. It's like being European. When you get 18, you leave your father's house and stuff like that, but people can be older than 18 or more, I mean, older than 20, and then they can still stay with their families. There are people who get married and they live with their own families. So if you look at it, the creation or the coming together of people playing football, which creates a certain relationship between those people, keeps the African culture alive because we don't normally stay away from each other. And that, that bond that we create makes us like a family. We play together. We eat together.

Some people, instead of having wedding parties after a wedding, they usually go or some people go and form a team and then play against, like, the bride and groom's team, you know. So there's something like that. It's all about being together and the African culture always teaches us how to become one, how to become together. So through football we understand that we are together, we play together, we eat together, we drink together. And there's no way anybody is going to divide us based on our own perspective or our own culture.

Let's move on to the economic role of football. What role does football play in the economic development of the African countries involved? What economic opportunities, does football create in those communities?

There is, in the community where I grew up, the market there, at the entrance to the market, they usually have shops that sell jerseys. Mm. So maybe you can find, what do you call it, a shirt from, I mean, from 2,004, or you can find, Soares, I'm sorry. What do you call it? Arsene Wenger's Arsenal shirt in this shop. When you look at it, it's like, okay. These people can sell this stuff, this clothing, through the idea of football or through the and as politics that, buy the shirts. You can find Deco's Barcelona shirt. Can you imagine that? People create business through football. People sell things with football. So apart from buying and selling stuff with football, we have, I mean, viewing centres where we go to watch football. Without football, those viewing centres might not exist because we just go there, we pay money to watch the game, to watch El Clasico for example, or to watch the derby between Arsenal and Manchester or the derby between Liverpool and Manchester United.

These places were in business because of football. And apart from that, buying and selling and providing services through football is actually great. And if you look at the footballers today, they are going back to Africa. Some of them, of course, are going back to Africa and trying to invest in the economy of their own country, and that is a wonderful thing, apart from the indirect way of, indirect help, oh, sorry, the support of, football in the African community and economy. There's also a direct, help that the players give to their own people and that's really good, to boost the economy of the country.

In the same vein, what benefits, what benefits, sorry, those football bring to the African local communities?

If you ask my father that question, he will say no, there is no benefit at all because we used to bother them to buy boots and shirts and then we end up maybe breaking our legs or arms or something like that. So, for them, if you look at it that way, you might say it doesn't bring any benefit, it doesn't bring any benefit because people are fighting each other because of it. But if you look at the positive way of football or if you look at how football brings us together and helps us mix with each other, we can say yes, football benefits us because if you look at the history or let's say when Drogba went against the political issue that was happening in his country and brought them together to play football or let's say through, I mean, let's say Okocha is from the southern part of Nigeria and then Kanu is from the southern part but Ahmed Musa is from the

northern part. But they are all equally trapped in Nigeria. So instead of focusing on the negative part of football, we can see that it has a more positive role in the community than I mean, more than the negative. I think I answered your question correctly.

And, what is the correlation and roles of politics in football? Now let's talk about politics. And how is football used as a tool for political influence or propaganda in African countries? And if you can have some notable examples where football has played a role in the political movement or campaigns in African countries.

Now when I say African country in general, apart from the Dropbox example, I say, what do you call it? What's his name? Sadio Mane builds in school through, football or George Weah became the president of Liberia. These people are famous. Or if you look at the life of these people, they were footballers and then they became philanthropists. I'll give you an example of the people in my community. If someone wants to be a representative, they organise a tournament. When people come to these tournaments, they tell them, "Yes, we are organising this tournament, and at the end of the day, I am going to run for this and that. So, you guys, I expect your votes. You know? So apart from just talking about tournaments, people are also using, I mean, there is the governorship cup or the presidential cup that are happening.

And all these, they are trying to boost the youth to think about, yes, there is politicians or there are politicians in our countries, and they also want us to have fun. So that's also a role that the football plays in the political system in Africa because through football also, people get votes because there is a way that they preach their own propaganda. When we come together to play football, then they have a chance or they have a medium to talk to us and then tell us what they want from us. Unfortunately, we cannot use football to go against the politicians are disturbing the countries or the I mean, we cannot use football to do everything. Yeah.

What are some challenges, that football face, in Africa, such as corruption, lack of infrastructure, or financial constraint?

If you look at it in general, we don't have a lot of football pitches. We just have a normal field where we just go and put a post there and then we play our football. But, like, okay. If I try to compare Turkey and Nigeria, because I lived in Turkey for a long time. And as a Nigerian, I mean, the government is not working on, I mean, improving the youth or just for the sake of sport. The government is not doing enough or a lot of things. So, for example, building a stadium, just a little stadium or a little park where people can just go and do their sports is not provided. People

just find a field, clean it up and play their own football. And the owner of the field, at the end of the day, when they come, they chase those people away.

So the challenges that people face in most African countries is the lack of infrastructure and the lack of support from the government when it comes to exercising our bodies. I can tell you that I have never seen, I have never seen a tennis court for example. When I talk about sports in general, I have never seen a tennis court in our local government, like, built by the government, apart from a stadium where you can come and see some sports facilities. But the other parts are all done by the people. Like, they try to create their own thing but the government is not working on, on improving the quality of health of the people because we all, I mean, we all know that we play football and we love football but nobody cares about how to improve the life of the people or just make them professional.

So that's why you have players from the lots of African players end up growing up in France and then playing professionally in Europe when we have lots of talented players in Africa, but lack of, lack of infrastructure, lack of, what do you call it, opportunity, and that cause, that makes them feel like backward in the system.

How is football used to manipulate masses? How is football used to manipulate masses?

Most of the time, people just get together. When they organize a football match, there, they say, after this match, we're going to do something like this. the masses or let me give you an example of what happened during the, I mean, at the beginning of August this year, 2024. There was a general uprising in Nigeria. So that happened because of the, lack of, I mean, because of the standard of living. The cost of living has become difficult and people are really struggling and there are people from a certain football team, a certain football group or a certain football field in the same area and they come together and they form themselves and then they work as a group. So that is a good thing because they usually know each other because they play together and they will know whatever they are going through. In this case, in the sense of manipulation, the government is also using these people to go against, the opposition party for example. I see you guys; you don't have a field to play on. You don't have good infrastructure. You don't have good facilities to play.

Maybe you should revolt against the government, so they could, yeah. They could push these people and then these people will riot and, you know, cause a lot of trouble and then the government will not do anything about what is happening. So, there are lots of ways that people use football to manipulate and to make other people's lives better. But actually, if you look at it

in general, you can see that the, the role of football in general is good, but there are lots of challenges.

The last question is, what is your opinion about the migration of African football talent?

Of course I would love to see Saka playing for Nigeria. Look, I would love to see Kylian Mbappe in Cameroon or Lamine Yamal playing for Equatorial Guinea or Morocco. I mean, Africans have talent. But the opportunities they have in Africa are quite small. It's less than or it's not even enough for them to shine. That's why it's better for them to go to France or to go to England or to go to Spain to play for Spain, because that's where they find their life. Less than life because everything is there for them. When they come back to Africa, they might be treated differently because politics, I mean, now football is politics in most of the African countries, unfortunately.

So I'm not against anyone going abroad just to play football, but I want them to think about their own country sometimes. Even if the country doesn't care about the people, we still need our people to do something for themselves. Because no matter what you do in France, one day you'll still be considered a foreigner, okay, because of the colour of your skin. So there should always be a way to bring our people back to us, even if we cannot give them as much infrastructure, as much money as the Europeans.

6- Côte d'Ivoire

Football has positive and negative impact in the African societies. What do you think about it?

There may be some exceptions, but in general I agree that football has a great impact on African societies. It promotes social cohesion and helps to educate young people. Here in Africa, we can say that this sport helps to transcend ethnic, religious and cultural differences by providing a public space where individuals can come together and rally around a shared passion.

Why does football seem to be the most popular sport activity in Africa? Those football shape, our perspective to what mingling, which it order and understanding the idea of, togetherness.

Football is a team sport. As such, it promotes cohesion and team spirit. However, a sociological analysis of our African societies shows that we have a communitarian way of life based on solidarity and mutual aid, where the community takes precedence over the individual. As a result, football has become a very popular sport in our country because of its association with the collective. It helps to reinforce the idea that individuals, despite their differences, can work together to achieve common goals, whether on the pitch or in everyday life. Football is popular in Africa because it requires few resources to play and is accessible to almost everyone.

How has football contributed to the community bonding and social cohesion on in African, communities?

Football strengthens community ties here in Africa because it brings Africans together around local and national teams. Matches and competitions are unique opportunities to come together, meet new people, talk and share experiences that sometimes go beyond sport. All these moments of encounter and reunion help to strengthen our community ties and to accept our cultural differences.

Is there any relationship between football and African culture, and what are the roles they play?

Yes, and we can mention community spirit and solidarity. It is an important means of cultural and patriotic expression, with supporters and players proudly displaying their colours, dancing and singing local songs at matches, such as “Coupe de Marteau”, the anthem of the CAN 2024.

What role does football play in the economic development of African countries? What economic opportunities does football create in African communities?

Football plays an important role in economic development in Africa. It generates income through ticket sales, television broadcasting and sponsorship. It also creates jobs in a range of sectors such as event organisation, stadium management, sports marketing and merchandising. What's more, local talent who make it to international clubs often send money back to their families or set up businesses locally, contributing to local economic development and the fight against unemployment.

What benefits does football bring to local communities in Africa?

Football brings many benefits to local communities: it helps develop talent and strengthens social cohesion. Successful older people become role models for the community. In this sense, football can be said to provide young people with role models and opportunities to escape poverty. It also contributes to physical health by encouraging young people to take part in sporting activities. Finally, it can promote peace in areas where there are ethnic or political tensions, as in Côte d'Ivoire, where we had the opportunity to participate in an African Cup of Nations, which our political authorities called the Unity Cup of Nations.

What is the correlation or interaction between politics and football? How is football used as a tool for political influence or propaganda in African countries? Are there any notable examples where football has played a role in political movements or campaigns in Africa?

Football and politics are often linked in Africa. Governments and politicians use football as a means of political influence, using the popularity of the sport to improve their image or distract the public from political issues. A recent example is the 2024 Africa Cup of Nations in Côte d'Ivoire, which was used as a means to demonstrate the country's political stability after the

military-political crises of 2002 and 2010. Leaders are often very present in the stadium, with the fans, to encourage their teams and thereby increase their popularity with the electorate.

What are some of the challenges facing football in Africa, such as corruption, lack of infrastructure and financial constraints?

Football in Africa faces a number of challenges. Corruption is a major problem, particularly in the sport's federations, which undermines the development of talent and infrastructure. The lack of adequate infrastructure, such as quality stadiums and training grounds, also hinders the growth of the sport. Financial constraints affect clubs, which often find it difficult to pay their players or invest in the development of young talent.

How football is used to manipulate the masses

Football can be used to manipulate the masses by diverting public attention from social and political problems. Leaders may organise major sporting events to create a sense of national unity or to deflect criticism. In some cases, football victories are exploited to reinforce the legitimacy of leaders.

What is your opinion on the migration of African football talent?

The migration of African talent is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it offers African players the opportunity to access better infrastructure and higher salaries in foreign leagues. It also allows them to financially support their families and invest in their home countries. But it also deprives African leagues of their best players, which hinders their development. Therefore, it would be important to create favourable conditions to retain certain talents and work with foreign clubs to build successful partnerships.

7- Egypt

Our first question is, football has positive and negative impacts in the African societies
and what do you think about it?

Football in Africa has a very, it's very popular in Africa and like almost everybody, children, old people, young people, they play football. It gives a lot of social energy and it helps people to socialise and to do something that they actually love, to enjoy their, like you know, in Africa we face some difficulties in terms of economy, politics, but people always find a way to get out of it, mainly through football, like watching or playing.

Why does football seem to be the most popular sport in activity in Africa? Does it shape our perspective toward mingling each other and understanding the idea of togetherness?

Of course, it's a team, it's a team sport, so like it's not an individual sport, you play it with a team, you play in a team and you need to play with your teammates, so you can't play it alone. At the same time, as I said, because in Africa we have some economic difficulties, I assume that football is one of the most affordable sports anyone can play. So, for example, if we say tennis, if we say kickboxing, whatever, these kinds of sports can be more pricey, you need some equipment and stuff, but for football you just need a ball.

Yes, definitely. So how has football contributed to community bonding and social cohesion in African communities? It's probably in terms of supporting teams, and of course especially national teams, like when I see there's the World Cup, we remember the 2010 World Cup that was hosted by South Africa. We see how the African people were united and how the people supported, all the people from all over the continent supported the African teams in that competition and we especially remember the first goal, the opening goal. Yes, by Chabalala. We always remember it, yes, that's for him. We always remember it and for most Africans it's a very good memory, we like to remember it. So it was probably the supporters of the teams, and like I said, especially the national teams, but we can see the African Championship with the clubs, the people who follow it. We also remember 2008, Egypt were playing in the continental cup and they had great games. It was in South Africa too, that tournament. We were actually shocked by the number of people supporting Egypt from different countries on the continent. It's a really good thing.

And according to you, is there any relationship between football and African culture, and what are the roles football and culture plays?

Football as a sport has a certain freedom, you know? It's not like swimming, it's not like athletics, because in athletics or swimming, with all due respect, you know what you have to do. You're supposed to go from this place to that place as fast as you can. But in football there's nothing like that. In football, you have the ball, you have the pitch and you can do whatever you want. You are free on the pitch and you can be as creative as you want. I think people in Africa need that kind of freedom for a long time. Maybe people don't find that kind of freedom in their lives, so they try to practise it on the pitch or on the field. That's why they are more interested in football or in playing football. So maybe you can say that's the connection between African society and a special connection that's different from other continents and places.

Let's come to the economic benefits of football. What are they, and what role does football play in the economic development of African countries?

We can see that football is growing every year in economic terms. It's growing all over the world. But in Africa we were a bit behind and we still have a lot to do. As we see, most African players prefer to play in European leagues or outside Africa. Even in terms of national teams, we have some African players who get a second citizenship in another country and they're just represented, as we see in France, Belgium and Spain, in many countries, especially in Europe. So there is a lack of infrastructure in Africa in terms of sport in general and of course football. There are a lot of scouts, for example. They're marketing for, like, we're going to send you to Europe. We'll make you a professional player in Europe. Of course we hear a lot about them. There are some scammers. There are some people who are trying to do something.

But unfortunately most of them are fraudsters and there's no official intervention in this kind of activity. So we just see a private company. You never know who the owner is and who the people are who work there, but they just say they're going to send you to Europe to get approved, which doesn't make sense, you know.

The next question is, what are the other benefits of football in the African local communities?

We actually have some examples. We have some big examples. Like, we mentioned unity before, people supporting national teams or even their local teams. We mentioned unity. Other than that, we see, like, when there's an African player from a country playing in Africa, we have some examples like, you know, the ones we've seen. Of course there have been some from before.

Like, I remember there's an African player who won the Ballon d'Or. But nowadays we have, like, Sadio Mane, Mohamed Salah, we have Olivier Drogba, Samuel Eto'o. We have some names that really represent the continent abroad in a beautiful way. And they have shown how Africans behave on and off the pitch. So they were really good examples of the African people. And when we come to their own countries, we see that they are supporting the growth of many different facilities in their own cities or countries. So they're always sending money, they're always donating and supporting their families, not just their families, of course, but their whole country. So they're always building hospitals, they're always building schools, they're always supporting the place they came from.

And now, when it comes to the politics, the role of what is the relation, the correlation and roles of politics in football? How is it used as a tool for manipulation or influence in African countries? And can you have some notable examples?

You don't know everything. Things are always done under the table. It even started with the African confederation, which is below FIFA, I mean. We see some problems with referees and tournaments, some problems with the organisation of big tournaments like this. But we can still see that people are being manipulated, of course, with football. I will talk about Egypt for example. We have a very big change in prices or and some kind of problem in the country. You always see some news about football, you know, like it can be as simple as some players getting arrested in a bar, you know, like they just got into a fight and it's a very normal thing. But you just see everybody talking about it, everybody talking about it, the media and everybody. So because these people are famous and the propaganda doesn't happen, people know that there are people who are for it and people who are against it, like people who support these players and they support their teams and they support the other team. If we talk about the two biggest teams in Egypt. So you see on social media, people have forgotten about the prices and everything. They're talking about football. We can't say it's a manipulative action and it happens a lot. It always happens.

I mean, whenever there's something like this, you can see how the national team managers of the sector, they change it, for example, or Mohamed Salah has a new haircut, you know. Yeah, just to distract people from the main issues in the country. Of course it seems that way.

According to you, what are some of the challenges faced by football in Africa? I mean, such as corruption, lack of infrastructure and all the rest.

Of course there is corruption, but I think the biggest problem would be infrastructure, of course, the lack of it. It can come with infrastructure, but it's like how do you take care of young footballers, of course, because we were talking about growing successful footballers. We need a lot of factors. We need things like sleep, food. In general, we need people who are healthy and well-fed. There are people who have a good lifestyle. So we can see that, unfortunately, even with the simplest thing, which is water, you know, like water is a necessity, not for footballers, but for people. So we can see like other problems with food and stuff. We can say that even when governments try to put money into it, when governments try to invest in their own people and their own football infrastructure, unfortunately they always go in the wrong direction. I don't see that kind of improvement. For example, I always follow the advertising when they do it or how they do it, of course, every two years in a different country. We always follow it and see it. We cannot see something like, for example, what happened with the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, you know. It's too far away in terms of investment, even in terms of organisation. Like, even if you have the money, I think there has to be more good organisation, more focus on the organisation and like the management.

And how is football used to manipulate masses, to manipulate populations?

Well, like I said, it's like the news and like whenever something big happens, like football, it always brings people from there. Even it can cause conflicts between people within the region or within the country. Like we see in, for example, I'm from North Africa, so I see it from some countries in North Africa, like there are some big rivalries between clubs there or countries there. Sometimes, unfortunately, it goes to like a fight, you know, between the fans outside the stadium or like with the players inside the pitch, which is not professional at all. And it's just, it's humiliating for us. It represents us in a bad way. Because football, at the end of the day, it's a game. And as soon as a referee blows his whistle, the game is over and then I think it will be okay.

Finally, what do you think about the migration of African talent, football talent, to other continents?

It's happening a lot and it's increasing, like it's increasing because as we said, like people, of course, like now we have internet, we have more connections to the outside, so we can easily go outside. Like before, I didn't know how these guys used to go or do it, but now it's easier. You can, like, if you're a player in Africa, you can just make some videos of yourself playing in the

street or wherever. And some clubs from Europe can follow you, you know. But like before, before the internet, it was difficult. So it's growing. People are, there are more people going out of Africa. Like I said, we have people getting another nationality, representing foreign national teams. And we have others who still choose to represent their homeland, their country of origin, which is a good thing. I think it's a good thing to still be proud of your country and try to represent it in the best way possible. As long as you're financially stable and you're just doing it for the sake of playing at a high level or something like that.

So it happens, migration happens. And I can't say it's difficult in Africa. Like if we compare the chances of you being a professional player in Africa or in Germany, for example, or in any European country, like it's really difficult because in Africa, how many leagues do you have in each country? For example, how many like tiers do we have? In some countries in Europe we have up to 11 and 12 tiers. So everybody can play football. Like you can go five minutes away from home, find a pitch and just register with the club and play a league like the other weekend. Whereas in Africa it's really hard. Like I will talk about Egypt, you have to pay money to get registered. And sometimes like, yeah, like the registration money to the association if you're playing for a club and you're playing a league, so you're representing the club. Actually you should be getting money from that club or if you are an amateur player, so you are not paying or not getting anything. But unfortunately in Egypt, in some cases, like clubs, they take the registration money from the players. So in order to represent that club, you have to pay your registration fees. I think this is the case in many African countries, not just Egypt. Yes, I suppose it is. So it's expensive and it's not so professional. And when we talk about the directories, the pitches, there are a lot of factors that have to be taken into account when we compare the two. So that's why we can't play in like African countries, African players of travelling or like migrating to play football, the biggest dream to be a football player and they have the right to do so.

8- Democratic Republic of Congo

The first question is, football has positive and negative impacts in the African societies. What do you think about it?

Actually, football always has its positive side, and what I'm talking about is, I really mean that football is important first of all for the youth and at the same time as a part of sport. We all know that sport is important for our health and for the good of society. We also know that it brings everything together, like the unity of a nation, that's what I can say. But the negative side, I think we're going to develop it more in a way like, you know, in Africa, the way we see football is like, when the youth are playing football, sometimes they tend not to concentrate on their studies. So, football is just like a way out for the youth to make it in life. So, I think that is the negative side and that is a responsibility that needs to be taken to make sure that football is not just for those who are like a minority, but it should be part of a constructive society.

Why does football seem to be the most popular sport activity in Africa? Does it shape our perspective toward mingling with each other and understanding the idea of togetherness?

As I previously mentioned, football is a sport that is particularly popular among the youth in Africa. This is because it is both popular and enjoyable for children. Engaging in football with friends or on the streets is a common pastime. However, given the limited technological resources available to us, we are unable to provide our youth with the same opportunities to express their creativity. Consequently, any creativity exhibited is largely attributable to the influence of the African mind. As an African myself, I can personally attest to the importance of football in my youth. I believe that, in the absence of a wider range of activities, football becomes a primary source of recreation for many. I believe that football is particularly important for young people, especially young boys. It is simply a matter of providing them with opportunities to express themselves and alleviate feelings of isolation. In my opinion, football has the potential to positively influence the lives of young people. However, it should be noted that this is only part of their lives, and when I refer to their lives, I am specifically referring to young boys. In Africa, it is a sport that is generally considered to be homogenous. However, it should be noted that this excludes young girls. Football has the potential to positively influence the lives of young boys in society by providing them with an enjoyable and expressive outlet. The enjoyment derived from playing football is also a key factor. In what ways can football contribute to community bonding and social cohesion in African communities? The focus on youth is a recurring theme. Football

is one of the most popular sports in Africa, and it is evident that it plays a significant role in the development of communities across the continent. It is an outdoor sport. As previously mentioned, in countries where the population lives in urban areas, there are designated spaces where children can gather and participate in activities. In Africa, it is widely acknowledged that every child aspires to possess a football.

I mean, you could start with a piece of shoe, then football, and then go outside to play. And, in a way that looks at society, I can say that football helps bring young people together. With the right training, it helps keep young boys together and stop them doing things that are bad for society. For example, they might be more likely to avoid drugs or other potentially harmful activities. So, if they don't have good role models or support from society, they might get into trouble. Without football, I think there's a high risk those young boys will get involved with illegal activities. But I think that, with good protection and good organisation, football can be a positive force. I haven't seen it being very effective in Africa, but if we set up a good centre, like a football academy, where we can recruit young boys and girls who want to play football and love the sport, we can show them and guide them to see football as a profession and not just for fun.

Is there any relationship between football and African cultures and what are the roles they play?

As I'm sure you're aware, football is not a part of our culture. African culture is characterised by a rich diversity. The African people are renowned for their resilience and commitment to music and dance. When I refer to music and dance, I am specifically alluding to authentic African music and dance, encompassing traditional forms and expressions. Furthermore, Africans have their own unique sports and games. The adoption of football as a popular sport is an example of how cultural elements can be embraced and integrated into our own. We have now adopted football as part of our cultural fabric, as part of African culture, and as part of our cultural customs. Engaging in football can contribute to the development of mental effectiveness in young children and adolescents. I firmly believe that football, like all other cultural patterns within our society, contributes to the development of our children's character and personality. Football, therefore, can contribute to the development of the mind and mentality.

What role does football play in the economic development of African countries and what opportunities does football create in the African communities?

Sadly, there just isn't enough being done to help African communities through football. So, football, or more specifically, this sport that we're talking about, is the most popular sport in the world. When we compare other countries, we can see that football has done a lot for countries like Brazil. The money they put into football has also brought them returns. It's clear that Brazil is the most successful football country in the world, because most of the world's best players come from Brazil. So, I think in Africa, we also know talent. But we don't see the government helping to develop these talents and give them exposure. This means it's not good for the economy because the government isn't supporting the sport. So, I think that my point of view here is that football is not really taken very seriously in Africa. But if it was taken more seriously, I think football could make a bigger economic contribution to the country. We can see this in the African Cup of Nations, where the winning country always gets something out of it.

You know, I forgot to mention this before, but the young people represent the talent. And in the youth, you find talent. This could be in football or other sports. If we can help them to develop their talents, and guide them well, they will be able to achieve great things. If you have one star who cannot help others, it doesn't matter. But if you have a star who can shine and also help others to shine, I think that's good for the sport, for the community and for football. We can see this in the way they change, especially when you look at the most famous players. Take Samuel Eto'o, Didier Drogba and Jay Jay Okocha, for example. They also have their own foundations or associations. They try to give back to the community. But this is not enough. We need more of these high-profile figures to make a real difference and to support the community. They don't owe anything to anyone. But I think that if the government is serious about creating or restoring that structure, and making that area balanced enough for professional footballers to invest in the community without demanding more or asking for bribes, it will definitely bring a huge change to the community.

What is the correlation or interactions and roles of politics in football? I mean, how is it used as a tool for political influence or propaganda in African countries? And you can give some examples to mention them.

As previously stated, football is the most popular sport in Africa and worldwide. It is also associated with the media. It also attracts talented individuals and generates a star system. For politicians, it serves as a platform to promote their ideological beliefs. These figures can be used to promote the politician's personal brand. For instance, if the Congolese national team is playing against another team, politicians can leverage the event to promote their political agendas. Politicians will be present at the stadium, attempting to show their support, because they

understand that a national team victory will be positively received by the public. When the populace rejoices for the national team's victory, it is as if they have contributed to a significant achievement, as if they have supported the footballers or have contributed to the success of the team. This is achieved by ensuring that prominent figures, such as the minister of sport and the president of the federation, are present to provide support and assurance to the footballers. This has led to an increase in the sale of their images. This is a way in which they are able to generate revenue.

In addition, the local community will have the opportunity to engage with politicians, who will be organising events such as football competitions, offering a cup and an award. This initiative serves to foster a sense of community cohesion and facilitates the dissemination of the politician's ideological vision within the community. In conclusion, I would say that football is a tool that can be used in any sector of our culture, as well as in social facilities.

What are some challenges that football faces in Africa?

There are so many challenges. The problems that football faces. As I said before, I was talking about things like the right structures and facilities to help young talents develop into professionals and receive the guidance they need. These are the things that we are facing as challenges that we're struggling with today in our communities or in our countries. We don't see that. Only individuals will come. A professional footballer who has become famous will come back to the community where they grew up and try to make changes, but they cannot do it for the whole nation. So, when they set examples, it's because they've seen it outside, they know how it's going outside. When they come back with their experience and try to make a difference, they still have to deal with other politicians who try to stop them.

Take Samuel Eto'o, for example. He experienced this way of thinking. We need to get rid of this way of thinking in our society. We should find good leaders who can encourage people who want to change how this sport is seen. Especially in Africa, where most children want to play football. I'm not saying that's a bad thing, but it's not a good example. I'm just saying that this is the talent we have in Africa. But now, these talents are being wasted. For example, if a child is very smart and wants to become an engineer, they need access to the right facilities to develop their skills. Without these, they will never succeed. It would all be wasted. It's the same with football. These kids need proper training facilities and support from the government and the sport's governing body. These are the challenges we face in Africa.

How is football used to manipulate masses?

However, they will now take the talent and try to invest all in it. When they achieve success, they are aware that there are people who will follow the team or club. These supporters can be used to disseminate specific ideologies or images, for example, of politicians who are corrupt and susceptible to bribery. However, he allocates a significant portion of these funds to supporting the team and the club, perhaps allocating up to half of the money he has misappropriated. This is done to satisfy the fans and provide them with the enjoyment of football. In this way, the general public focuses on the sport itself rather than the policies surrounding it. I hope this makes sense. The users are simply being used as a distraction from the real issues. This is how they operate. It is unfortunate that in today's Africa, there is a pervasive presence of politicians in every sector of business. This is a matter that should be given due consideration.

What do you think about the migration of African talents?

There are advantages and disadvantages to this. It is evident that African leagues and federations have a significant opportunity to contribute to the advancement of football across various regions in Africa. The presence of African professionals in Europe, the UAE, and other regions is a positive development. However, the return on investment from these professionals is not always in the form of direct financial contribution. Instead, they may opt to repatriate their earnings and establish their own academies, while others may choose to invest in real estate development. However, the concept of African professionals returning home to establish their own leagues is a developing ideology in Africa. For instance, Samuel Eto'o, at the conclusion of his career, could return to Africa to play for an African league. Similarly, at the conclusion of their careers, many Brazilian players return to their homeland to finish their professional journeys. This is in contrast to the European context, where such a career path is not commonplace. It is noteworthy that Africans, once they are out, will never return home to end their career, with the exception of promoting the league. Promoting the league is of significant importance. By showcasing prominent players such as Didier Drogba and El Hadji Diouf, we are effectively promoting the African continent as a whole, rather than just the individual. However, when discussing the African Cup of Nations, Drogba's involvement can be considered a significant selling point for the tournament. However, it is important to consider the African Nations Cup in this context. What about the leagues? What about the Confederation Cups? To achieve this, it is essential to have professional players who can compete in the league.

Similar to the Egyptian legend, the name of which I am unable to recall at present, Mido. Another notable figure is Mohamed Aboutrika. These players were among the most prominent figures to represent the African nations, both in international competitions and within the domestic leagues. This contributes to the development of a robust continental league. However, the migration of talent has its drawbacks. It is beneficial to have the opportunity to explore and then return. However, remaining outside and being unwilling to return is not beneficial. This is akin to our allies departing Africa and never returning. Consequently, it is important to recognise that the benefits and recognition for our efforts often accrue to others.

