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News Reporting of Injury Prevalence in Football: A Study of Selected Nigerian Online Newspapers

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Despite the importance of football as an effective means of developing physical activity and fitness, routine data of football-related injuries are either inadequate or underreported, particularly in Nigeria. To develop an understanding of the football-related injuries and determine the prospects for prevention, logical and useful information specifying the occurrence of these incidents is necessary. Using a content analysis of 94 football-related news articles, this study identified the most commonly reported football-related injuries in Nigerian newspapers and determined their extent of coverage from agenda-setting perspectives. Altogether, five national newspapers with the highest readership and online popularity were selected using purposive sampling. Only football-related news articles were collected from the respective websites of the newspapers using internet-based searches between January 2015 and September 2019. The findings showed that knee, ankle, and hamstring are the most commonly affected locations in football-related injuries according to the news reports. This study shows that media-based analysis of football-related injuries could supplement other methods, such as prospective and retrospective analyses, particularly in the Nigerian context.

Keywords: Agenda-setting, football, health promotion, injury, news coverage, sports, Nigeria

A sports environment is a complex system in which people interact in different ways. Correctly, football is recognized as an essential means of health promotion and wellbeing with the likelihood of adverse outcomes, including injuries (Fortington, Bekker, & Finch, 2018). To prevent and manage sports-related injuries, there is a need for valid information and understanding of the injury occurrences. To develop an understanding of the football-related injuries and determine the prospects for prevention, relevant and useful information specifying the occurrence of these incidents is necessary. When damage occurs in the sports environment, such incident is likely to be reported in the media, and because football-related injuries are infrequent and unexpected, they become newsworthy events and topics of interest amongst the audiences. As such, the media content serves as a potential source of data for investigating football-related information (Berchiolla, Scarinzi, Snidero, Rahim, & Gregori, 2012). It is difficult to conceive of the media operating without a considerable infusion of professional sports content, especially in the twenty-first century (Rowe, Smelser, & Baltes, 2001).

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Sports-related injury is a complex emergent phenomenon that requires urgent attention (Bittencourt, Meeuwisse, Mendonça, Nettel-Aguirre, Ocarino, & Fonseca, 2016). Considering the importance of football in health promotion and wellbeing (Fortington et al., 2018), systematic investigation of the trends and pattern of football-related injuries could be useful in the prevention and management of such injuries (Fortington & Finch, 2016). Research shows that a better understanding of football-related injuries is necessary in developing strategies to prevent future injury occurrences (Finch, Cook, Kunstler, Akram, & Orchard, 2017; Junge, Dvorak, & Graf-Baumann, 2004). In addition, Junge et al. (2004) noted that a consistent analysis of football-related injuries offers an opportunity to monitor long-term changes in the dimensions and frequency of such injuries. An understanding of the occurrence and characteristics of injuries sustained by football players is crucial in designing a football injury prevention program (Owoeye, Aiyegbusi, Fapojuwo, Badru, & Babalola, 2017).

Football is the most popular sport worldwide (Svensson, Eckerman, Alricsson, Magounakis, & Werner, 2016). However, there are a lot of risks involved in football, and injuries are viewed as professional hazards, especially in the period of international tournaments (Junge et al., 2004). Besides, football administrators are increasingly concerned about being held responsible for the well-being and safety of their players (Anderson & Kian, 2012). Despite the importance of football as an effective means of developing physical activity and fitness, routine data of football-related injuries are either inadequate or underreported, particularly in Nigeria (Owoeye et al., 2017). In addition, the Nigerian media suffer from other professional ills. The media are not playing a significant role in investigative journalism. Mostly, the stories covered are episodic, and professional deficits could be one of the contributing factors in this regard (Onyenakeya & Salawu, 2020).

Previous studies investigated football-related injury occurrences using different study designs, such as prospective and cross-sectional surveys (Babwah, 2009; Azubuike & Okojie, 2009; Eirale, Farooq, Smiley, Tol, & Chalabi, 2013; Kerr, Lynall, Mauntel, & Dompier, 2016; Owoeye et al., 2017), and very few of them were conducted in Nigeria (Azubuike & Okojie, 2009; Owoeye et al., 2017). Therefore, via news content analysis, this study aims to identify the most commonly reported football-related injury locations and determine the extent of coverage of these incidents in major Nigerian newspapers. This could be helpful in the prevention and management of football-related injuries. It is also envisaged that this study could provide valuable conclusions for appropriate decision-making and identify further research directions on the media coverage of football-related injuries.

Literature Review

Several studies focused on injury occurrences in football (Waldén & Ekstrand, 2005; Babwah, 2009; Mallo, González, Veiga, & Navarro, 2011; Scase, Magarey, Chalmers, Heynen, Petkov, & Bailey, 2012; Hrysomallis, 2013; Kerr et al., 2016). These studies were influenced by different research designs and populations (Eirale et al., 2013). Some studies focus on injury occurrence at the team level while others paid attention to national and international tournaments. For example, Babwah (2009) conducted a retrospective analysis to determine the presence and types of injury in the Trinidad and Tobago football team. The study recorded a total of 50 significant injuries. Likewise, a prospective cohort study at the team level in Qatar found a total of 217 casualties out of which more than one-third were muscle strains (Eirale et al., 2013). Similarly, a prospective cohort study conducted by Ekstrand, Häggglund, and Waldén (2011) found 4483 injuries in 23 European professional football teams.

In addition, Mallo et al. (2011) investigated injury occurrence in Spanish sub-elite professional football team during four consecutive seasons. It was found that the injury occurrence amongst the players averaged 88%. Subsequently, Murphy, O'Malley, Gissane, and Blake (2012) conducted an epidemiology study to describe the appearance and nature of sport-related injuries in elite Gaelic (a national sport of Ireland) football players over four consecutive seasons between 2007 and 2010. The study recorded a total of 1014 football injuries, and hamstring injury was found to be the most common injury type. Moreover, Waldén, Hägglund, and Ekstrand (2005) prospectively studied injury patterns in 14 Swedish elite football teams. According to the study, thigh strain was the single most common injury, while knee sprain was the most common significant injury.

Using a cross-sectional survey, Azubuike, and Okojie (2009) evaluated the determinants and effects of football injuries amongst 196 players from seven teams in Nigeria. A total of 204 injuries were recorded, while ankle and knee were found to be the most affected locations. In the same vein, Owoeye et al. (2017) further employed prospective design to evaluate the occurrence and pattern of injuries in 756 semi-professional football players from 22 different teams in Nigeria. The study shows that the overall incidence of injuries among Nigerian semi-professional football players is high. According to the study, injuries mostly affected the lower extremity, and lower leg contusion and knee sprain were the most common specific injury types. Some studies compared the situation in various countries. For example, Waldén and Ekstrand (2005) prospectively studied injury occurrence among professional football players in Sweden and Denmark. The study found that the distribution of injuries according to type and location was similar in both countries. Waldén, Hägglund, Orchard, Kristenson, and Ekstrand (2013) investigated regional differences in injury occurrence amongst professional football players in Europe. A nine-season prospective cohort study was carried out between 2001-2002 and 2009-2010, involving 1357 players in 25 teams from nine countries. Teams from the northern parts of Europe were found to have higher incidences of injury compared to teams from southern regions.

At the international tournament level, Junge and Dvorak (2013) analyzed the occurrence of football injuries during FIFA tournaments and the Olympic Games between 1998 and 2012. A total of 3944 injuries were reported from 1546 matches. The most commonly injured locations were the ankle, lower leg, and head/neck. According to the study, strict application of football rules is an essential means of injury prevention. In the same vein, Wilson, Caffrey, King, Casey, and Gissane (2007) relied on an interview to investigate the injury incidence amongst 83 Gaelic football players from three counties. The study showed that there were almost twice as many injuries during matches as in training. Besides, the ankle was found to be the most commonly injured site.

At the national tournament level, Orchard and Seward (2002) focused on the epidemiology of injuries in the Australian Football League (AFL) over four seasons. According to the study, the most common and prevalent injury was hamstring strain, followed by anterior cruciate ligament and groin injuries. Similarly, Scase et al. (2012) conducted a longitudinal cohort study to determine injury occurrence among players in a junior elite Australian Football competition. The survey recorded a total of 256 injuries during the season. Ankle joint injury was the most commonly reported injury during the period. Besides, Hrysomallis (2013) summarized the injury incidence in Australian Rules Football (ARF). According to the study, the most common injuries were hamstrings, ankle, and concussion.

At the school level, Kerr et al. (2016) investigated injury rates in high school football using a cross-sectional survey. The study found that injury rates were higher among full-time school employees compared with outreach. Another study retrospectively

analyzed injury surveillance data followed by prospective study during fall and spring practices in schools (Albright, Powell, Martindale, Black, Crowley, Schmidt, & Salvaterra, 2004). A total of 3950 fall injuries and 1007 spring injuries were recorded in the retrospective study, while 1502 fall injuries and 648 spring injuries were recovered in the prospective study. According to Adickes and Stuart (2004), injury incidence among youth players was found to be low when compared with adult players, and the knee is the most commonly affected site followed by ankle, wrist, and hand. In sum, it is evident in the previous literature that injury occurrences are prevalent among football players. Research on football injury is seen as an essential pre-requisite for injury prevention amongst football players (Wilson et al., 2007; Junge & Dvorak, 2013).

Media-Based Research on Football-Related Injuries

Several media-based injury analyzes with different study designs and data quality have been published over the past years (Leventer, Eek, Hofstetter, & Lames, 2016; Fortington et al., 2018; Schiffner, Latz, Grassmann, Schek, Thelen, Windolf, & Jungbluth, 2018; Beaudouin, Aus der Fünten, Tröb, Reinsberger, & Meyer, 2019). These studies have investigated various dimensions and characteristics of football-related injuries, including the types, location, and severity of injuries sustained by football players. Some studies used a combination of retrospective analysis and media-generated datasets, while others focused mainly on media-based analysis. For example, Fortington et al. (2018) identified a total of 34 football-related fatalities through news media coverage of football-related deaths in Australia. Through media-based analysis, Anderson and Kian (2012) also explored the US print media discourse on concussion in American football players. The study concluded that significant sports media are beginning to support the notion of health over a masculine warrior narrative. The players' desire to play, based on their actions, is becoming less significant than their long-term health and fitness.

Based on information obtained from the public media, Leventer et al. (2016) described the types, localization, and severity of injuries among football players in Germany. According to the study, strains and sprains were the major injury types, and wing-defenders sustained significantly lower rates of groin injury occurrence compared with forwards. The highest percentage of injury during matches occurred among wing-midfielders, while central-defenders continued the highest injury occurrence during training periods. Another study focused on the practice-driven investigation of media-based data to provide information about professional football injuries in Germany (Krutsch, Memmel, Krutsch, Angele, Tröb, Aus der Fünten, & Meyer, 2019). The study identified 57 primary ACL ruptures in the first German football league during the seasons 2007-2008 and 2016-2017. Besides, six recurrent injuries were found.

To minimize the underreporting of football-related injuries, a prospective cohort study obtained additional data from the mass media (Fünten, Faude, Lensch, & Meyer, 2014). The study mainly focused on injury characteristics in German football after the shortened winter break in the 2009-2010 season. According to the survey, high-intensity and competitive training could have further contributed to an increased fatigue level. Recently, Beaudouin et al. (2019) conducted a retrospective analysis combined with media-driven data to investigate injury occurrences and mechanisms of head injuries in German football seasons. The study focused on continuously recorded data from the German football magazine "kicker" via which publicly available clinical information was obtained. The study found that most head injuries in professional male football are caused by head-head and elbow-head contacts.

Through media-based registers, Schiffner et al. (2018) identified the epidemiology and injury-related lay-off after Anterior Cruciate Ligament ruptures (ACLRs) in professional male soccer players in Germany using two media-based registers. The number of ACLRs recorded per season varied during the period observed. Goalkeepers are significantly less prone to suffer an ACLR compared to outfield players. According to the study, understanding ACLR mechanisms and knowledge of injury risk factors are necessary, especially among the coaches, medical staff, football players, insurance, and team managers. Interestingly, the results obtained from media-based content are consistent with the reports based on information from the teams' medical staff. Therefore, analysis of football-related injuries based on media sources may serve as an alternative for injury reports from clinical perspectives.

The studies mentioned above suggest that media-based injury reports could provide athletes, medical practitioners, and sports administrators with useful and exciting information for effective injury management and prevention strategies. Besides, the preliminary review suggests that most media-based studies on football-related injuries were conducted in Germany (Fünten et al., 2014; Leventer et al., 2016; Schiffner et al., 2018; Krutsch et al., 2019; Beaudouin et al., 2019), Australia (Fortington et al., 2018), and the US (Anderson & Kian, 2012). An empirical study on football-related injuries is needed, particularly in Nigeria, since there is often a keen interest in these incidents among the audience, medical practitioners, and sports administrators (Owoeye et al., 2017). This study, though focusing more on news reports than clinical procedures, could be helpful to the medical practitioners dealing with professional football players and the managers of football teams in general (Schiffner, 2018; Beaudouin et al., 2019).

Based on the elements of frequency, the extent of news coverage, and prominence assumed in agenda-setting theory, this study aims to examine the news coverage of injuries sustained by football players in major Nigerian newspapers. Specifically, the following objectives were developed:

- (i) To identify the most commonly reported football-related injury locations in the selected newspapers during the chosen period.
- (ii) To determine the extent of coverage of football-related injuries in the selected newspapers during the chosen period.

Methodology

Theoretical Approach

This study is based on the Agenda-setting theory, which suggests that the media offer cues about the salience of issues in the daily news, such as in front pages and headlines. By repeating these cues day after day, the media effectively communicate the importance of each issue. In this case, how much importance attached to an issue depends on the emphasis placed on it in the news. McCombs and Saw (1972) provided the first strong experimental support of the agenda-setting effect in their study of the 1968 presidential campaign. Their analysis revealed that when the media report specific issues more saliently than others, those salient issues become the focus of the campaign (Potter, 2012). Okwuchukwu (2014) noted that the power of media to set the society's plan by focusing on public attention on particular issues is a well-documented phenomenon.

Agenda-setting depends on the ability of the media to provide salience to a topic while de-emphasizing others in the process of communication. To identify salience in media agenda-setting, studies have focused on the attention level of

agenda-setting (Lim, 2010). Incidentally, there is a relationship between what the media consider important and its salience in the people's mind. Some of the elements associated with agenda-setting include the extent or frequency of reporting and the level of prominence attributed to the issue (Folarin, 1998). Reporting sources also define issues and determine their future discourse (Berkowitz, 1992). The ability of the media to raise the importance of an issue in the people's mind depends on these elements. Based on this argument, this study investigates how much emphasis the media accord on football-related injuries.

Agenda-setting consists of two levels. The first-level of agenda-setting refers to the salience transfer of sets of issues, while the second level is the process of various attributes competing for attention (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). The first-level of agenda-setting refers to the transfer of salience of an issue from the mass media to the public (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This level is described as a process of presenting specific issues frequently and prominently in the media, where large segments of the society come to perceive such matters more critical than others (Coleman, McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 2009). In this case, the extent of news coverage of particular issues, such as football-related injuries, determines the perceived importance of those issues in the audience mindsets.

The second-level of agenda-setting expands the original meaning of agenda-setting. This level of agenda-setting focuses on the transfer of attribute salience. It focuses on the attributes and characteristics of a particular issue as well as its tone of coverage. The quality of the agenda defines how people think about a specific subject, individual, or group. There are two dimensions of the second-level agenda setting: substantive and affective dimensions. The functional aspect refers to the attributes of issues or individuals selected by the media to report such matters. The emotional size is concerned with the tone of news reports on the selected characteristics. In this case, the media could report an issue in a positive, negative, or neutral tone (McCombs & Shaw, 1993; Kim & McCombs, 2007). Agenda-setting theory is still developing both in focus and in dimension.

This study uses content analysis to investigate the news coverage of football-related injuries in five selected major Nigerian newspapers. Content analysis is chosen as it centers on media message characteristics. It also provides specific media content that can be analyzed to produce valid results and provide useful information. It looks at communication via text and allows for both quantitative and qualitative analyses, and it is considered a relative research method based on facts, as opposed to Discourse Analysis (Weaver, 2007). According to Cohen (2007), "content analysis takes texts and analyses, reduces and interrogates them into summary form through the use of both pre-existing categories and emergent themes to generate or test a theory" (p. 476).

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the news articles. It refers to a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the elements to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher. Purposive sampling enables researchers to select an example based on the purpose of the study (Neuendorf, 2002; Palys, 2008). Five national newspapers with the highest readership and online popularity were selected for analysis: *Vanguard*, *Punch*, *The Nation*, *Sun*, and *ThisDay*. These newspapers are the top daily English language publications (top ten Nigerian Newspapers, 2019). Only football-related news articles published in the selected newspapers between January 2015 and September 2019 were selected. This represents the period within which various football tournaments were carried out, including the *Africa Cup of Nations* and *World Cup Championships*. This time frame was chosen to make the data into a manageable size for analysis.

The researchers conducted an internet-based search for football-related news articles on the websites of the respective newspapers using *Football* and *Injury* as keywords. All newspaper articles identified using this method were included in the content analysis.

Any item that focusses upon a report about football-related injury fulfills the inclusion criteria. Each item in the original sample was read for relevance. The contexts of coverage were studied based on headlines and news content. This study considers newspaper articles because newspaper readers have control over their news consumption as they can attend to the news at any time (Soroka, 2002). Newspapers represent a readily available source of data, which is more detailed and accurate than the traditional datasets (Berchiarella et al., 2012). Though data generated from news content is considered qualitative, they can be quantified to obtain valid results. It is manifested in the work of Hsieh and Shannon (2005) that content analysis is classified as primarily a quantitative versus qualitative research method.

Coding Procedure

Before interpretations, all decisions regarding measurement and coding must be made (Neuendorf, 2002). In this study, the coding characteristics included: types of football-related injury, the extent of coverage, news sources, and the teams' responses. At the preliminary stage of data coding, all the selected articles were summarized, and a database was generated. Every single detail of the news articles was studied and coded using a hierarchical code system. The advantage of hierarchical coding is the amount of information it can represent in a relatively small number of digits (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A second coder was hired to ensure reliability in this study. To assess the level of agreement between ratings on the article coding, Cohen's kappa test was used to measure inter-coder agreement.

The accuracy of news content has been recognized in providing valuable information about the dimensions and occurrences of accidental injuries (Berchiarella et al., 2012). In this study, particular attention was paid to the themes relating to football-related injuries, the extent of coverage, news sources, and the teams' responses within the selected articles throughout the coding process. Besides, the themes were critically analyzed to avoid the re-production of the media content or revealing the dominant themes containing certain football-related information. Specifically, the researchers aimed to explore the documented news construction related to football-related injuries which contain emerging issues through the coding process (Sparkes, 1992). This procedure consists of subjective judgment, but using inter-coder reliability resulted in an empirical and systematic approach (Creswell, 2003).

Findings

The newspapers produced a total of 94 football-related news articles within the chosen period. *Sun* published 19 articles; *Vanguard* published 16; *Punch* published only 5 while *The Nation* and *ThisDay* each published 27 football-related news articles respectively. Altogether, 94 football-related articles were analyzed. The data were coded using content analysis proposed by Cohen et al. (2007) and then quantified to produce valid results by breaking down the news content into units of study, undertaking statistical analysis of the units. Football-related injuries are in frequent to allow the collection of relatively larger samples within the data collection period.

Nevertheless, newspapers are recognized as an accurate source of football-related information (Berchiarella et al., 2012). The first objective of this study was to identify the most commonly reported football-related injury locations in the selected newspapers. The following table depicts information on the types of injury sustained at the time of football-related events published in the newspapers.

Table 1. Reported football-related injuries

	Injury locations	Freq.	Percent	Relative freq.
1	Knee injury	25	26.6	0.27
2	Unidentified injury	23	24.5	0.24
3	Ankle injury	14	14.9	0.15
4	Hamstring injury	07	7.4	0.10
5	Shoulder injury	04	4.3	0.04
6	Foot injury	04	4.3	0.04
7	Groin injury	03	3.2	0.03
8	Leg injury	03	3.2	0.03
9	Thigh injury	02	2.1	0.02
10	Wrist injury	02	2.1	0.02
11	Back injury	01	1.1	0.01
12	Rib injury	01	1.1	0.01
13	Hip injury	01	1.1	0.01
14	Genital injury	01	1.1	0.01
15	Muscle injury	01	1.1	0.01
16	Calf injury	01	1.1	0.01
	Total	94	100.0	1.00

Table 1 shows that knee injury is the most commonly reported football-related injury in Nigerian newspapers, constituting 26% of the total injuries reported in the selected papers, followed by ankle injury and hamstring injury with 14% and 7%, respectively. Similarly, a prospective study found that most of the football-related injuries were located in the lower extremities, and almost half of them occurred in the knee and ankle (Söderman, Adolphson, Lorentzon, & Alfredson, 2001). Besides, the study showed that recurrent injuries mostly occurred in the ankle. Altogether, the newspapers reported 94 football-related injuries across 15 different types of injury. Of the overall reported incidents, unknown injury locations amounted to 24.5%. Leventer et al. (2016) noted that detecting and categorizing football injury locations are necessary, especially for injury management and prevention strategies.

The newspapers reported the football injury locations with different news construction angles. For example, some news articles stated that a player made a return after having a broken leg while others called it a career-ending incident. On October 3, 2016, *ThisDay* newspaper stated that “the massive celebration of the vociferous Enugu fans was marred by the career-ending injury sustained by Ifeanyi Ekwim whose leg got broken.” On October 5, 2016, the same newspaper wrote: “Enugu Rangers striker, Ifeanyi Ekwim, is expected to make a return to competitive football.” The extent of news coverage determines the level of prominence attributed to the issues being reported” (Folarin, 1998). Hence, the second objective of this study was to determine the extent to which football-related injuries are published in the selected newspapers. The following table depicts information on the extent of coverage, the news sources, and the football teams’ responses regarding the injuries reported in the newspapers.

As shown in Table 2, the selected newspapers covered more global news (54.3%) on football-related injuries than regional (28.7%) or local (17.0%). This suggests that the selected newspapers considered global news on football-related injuries more important than regional or local because the extent of news coverage determines the perceived importance of the issues being reported in the audience mindsets (Folarin, 1998; Coleman et al., 2009). Football events, especially international tournaments, constitute an essential aspect of sports events, which efficiently allows a battlefield experience enriched and shaped by the powerful interference of the media (Kösebalaban, 2004). In terms of news sources of

Table 2. Coverage of football-related injuries

Variables	Codes	Freq.	Percent	Relative freq.
Extent of coverage	Global	51	54.3	0.54
	Regional	27	28.7	0.29
	Local	16	17.0	0.17
	Total	94	100.0	1.00
News sources	Unidentified	22	23.4	0.23
	Other Websites	21	22.3	0.22
	Correspondence	19	20.2	0.20
	News Agency	18	19.1	0.19
	Other Media	07	7.4	0.07
	Social Media	04	4.3	0.04
	Club Website	03	3.2	0.03
	Total	94	100.0	1.00
Team responses	Reported	48	51.1	0.51
	Not reported	46	48.9	0.49

football-related injuries, the news papers relied on websites (22.3%), followed by correspondence reports (20.2%) and news agencies (19.1%). Stories from other media constitute 7.4% of the overall reporting sources of football-related injuries, while only 4.3% and 3.2% of the news were obtained from social media and club websites respectively. Besides, unidentified reporting sources in the newspapers amounted to 23.4%. The responses of the respective teams were reported in more than half of the incidents (51.1%). This indicates the news accuracy of football-related injuries in the newspapers because important injury-related information could be obtained from football teams (Dunlop, Ardern, Andersen, Lewin, Dupont, Ashworth, & McCall, 2019).

Discussion

This study was set to identify the most commonly reported football-related injury locations and determine the extent to which football-related injuries are reported in significant Nigerian news papers. A total of 94 injuries were reported in the selected newspapers during the period of data collection. The findings indicated that knee injury is the most commonly reported football-related injury in Nigerian newspapers, followed by an ankle injury and hamstring injury. Based on the assumption of Agenda-setting theory, this information could provide the public, particularly medical personnel, team managers and the athletes, with a signal about the most affected injury locations in football through the transfer of salience (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) about the knee injury, ankle injury, and hamstring injury.

Interestingly, the findings of this study are consistent with those obtained in most prospective studies (Söderman et al., 2001; Häggglund, 2007; Constantinou, 2010; Owioye et al., 2017). These studies specifically focused on the types and locations of football injury. Some of the studies concluded that the majority of football-related injuries affect the lower extremities (Häggglund, 2007; Söderman et al., 2001). Junge et al. (2004) found that the most frequently injured body parts include the thigh, lower leg, head, knee, and ankle. This consistency, particularly about the knowledge of injury risk factors, signifies the importance of media sources in the analysis of football-related injuries as an alternative for injury reports from prospective and clinical perspectives (Schiffner et al., 2018). Increased awareness of the importance of fair play may contribute to the prevention of football-related injuries (Junge et al., 2004).

Injuries have economic, physical, and psychological impacts as well as a considerable influence on the performance of professional football players (Azubuike & Okojie, 2017; Schiffner et al., 2018). In particular, the Nigerian government, through the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) and National Sports Agency (NSA), spends a considerable amount of money in the prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of sports injuries (Azubuike & Okojie, 2017). Through proper documentation of football-related injuries, studies of this nature are expected to influence the government's efforts. This is because related information could help design adequate management and prevention strategies. Identifying location differences in football injury occurrences could be crucial to medical practitioners when considering preventive measures and management (Leventer et al., 2016).

The findings of this study also showed that the selected newspapers covered more global news on football-related injuries than regional or local, which suggests the perceived importance accorded to football injury reports in the newspapers (Folarin, 1998; Coleman et al., 2009). This is because, according to Agenda-Setting theory, the extent and frequency of reporting are considered essential variables in determining the level of prominence attributed to the issues being reported (Folarin, 1998). Further analysis of the data revealed that the selected newspapers relied on local, regional, and international websites such as Spanish football site, *africanfootball.com*, *sportinglife*, *footballlive.ng*, and *soccernet.ng*, followed by correspondence reports and news agency. Besides, only 23.4% of the reporting sources of football-related injuries were unidentified in the newspapers. This indicates the accuracy of media-based data in providing valuable football-related information. According to Berkowitz (1992), reporting sources also define issues and determine their efficiency, significance, and future discourse. In addition, more than half of the articles obtained additional information from the respective football teams, which contributes to the news accuracy of football-related injuries in the newspapers.

In sum, knee, ankle, and hamstring are the most commonly affected locations in football-related injuries according to the news reports. This is consistent with most prospective studies (Söderman et al., 2001; Häggglund, 2007; Constantinou, 2010; Owoeye et al., 2017). Injuries have a considerable influence on the performance of professional football players, and therefore identifying the locations of football injury occurrences could be crucial to medical practitioners. Considering the assumption of agenda-setting theory, much importance is accorded to football injury reports, but the newspapers relied on websites for related information. Besides, more than half of the articles obtained additional information from the respective football teams, which contributes to the news accuracy of football-related injuries in the newspapers.

Conclusion

This study investigated the news coverage of football injury events to quantify their occurrences and validate media-based methods of reporting. It is evident in this study that the media could provide valuable information about football injuries, particularly about injury locations and their frequency, which could be useful to medical practitioners, football teams, and the athletes themselves. It is proven that media-based analysis of football-related injuries could supplement other methods, such as prospective and retrospective analyses. The timeliness, accessibility, and permanency of the media content make it especially useful in analyzing football-related injuries. According to this study, football-related injuries are accorded much salience in Nigerian newspapers.

The infrequency of football-related injuries restrains the collection of relatively larger samples within the data collection period. Hence, future research may consider a more extended period of data collection. Besides, only online newspapers were considered while other forms of media, such as blogs and social media, were viewed as too subjective for this study. Nevertheless, these forms of media could be useful alternative sources of data in future research. Despite the lack of factual football-related injury data in Nigeria, research of this nature is either lacking or inadequate in the country.

This study advances our understanding of football-related injuries through media content, which could further be used for prospective investigation of injury occurrences in football, particularly in the Nigerian context. It is hoped that this study would supplement the Nigerian government's efforts in curtailing the economic, physical, and psychological impacts of football injuries. Identifying football injury occurrences could be beneficial to sports administrators and medical practitioners in the prevention and management of injuries (Leventer et al., 2016). Hence, the findings of this study are expected to influence the decisions of sports agencies in Nigeria, such as NFA and NSA, in the implementation of injury prevention mechanisms.

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