

Journal of Developing Country Studies (JDCS)

CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN FOOTBALL PLAYERS WHO PARTICIPATE IN FOOTBALL LEAGUES

Gorreti Wangari, Prof. Elishiba Kimani and Dr. Geoffrey Wango



CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN FOOTBALL PLAYERS WHO PARTICIPATE IN FOOTBALL LEAGUES

^{1*} Gorreti Wangari

Master's student, Kenyatta University

*Corresponding Author's Email: gowangam@gmail.com

² Prof. Elishiba Kimani

Lecture, Kenyatta University

³ Dr. Geoffrey Wango

Lecture, Kenyatta University

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to identify challenges faced by women football players who participate in football leagues.

Methodology: The study adopted a descriptive survey design. It was conducted in Gatundu North and Thika West. The target population for this study was the 8 and 6 women football teams in Gatundu North and Thika West districts, respectively. Focus group discussion guide, Interview schedule and Questionnaire were the instruments of data collection. The study mainly yielded qualitative data. This was sorted out, analyzed quantitatively and presented in tables.

Results: There were several challenges that faced women football players. Among them, funding was the main one. Others included; society's negative attitude towards women football which translates to poor participation of women in football activities in the area; biological factors such as menstruation and pregnancy; poor governance of the football organizations; limited access to facilities and equipment and women's gender roles and responsibilities.

Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study recommended that the National government, county government as well as the Football Kenya Federation should be keen on women football and give it the attention that it deserves in order to improve their participation in football.

Keywords: *Football leagues, challenges, women football players.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The importance of sports is diverse and broad, ranging from its role in individual economic value, health promotion and fitness, to peace building and community regeneration in post-conflict (Brady, 1998; Butler, 2010; UNESCO, 2015). The UNESCO International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport (UNESCO, 2015) acknowledges that cultural

diversity in physical education, physical activity and sport forms part of humanity's intangible heritage and that these includes physical play, recreation, dance, organized, casual, competitive, traditional and indigenous sports and games. The charter recognizes that physical education, physical activity and sport can bring a variety of individual and societal benefits, such as health, social and economic development, youth empowerment, reconciliation and peace. Recently, Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus (HIV) prevention programmes have begun to incorporate sports into efforts to adopt intervention strategies. Further, HIV prevention messages are disseminated and life skills are taught during sports (Brady, 1989). Sport is also considered as part of the local culture, linking young and old and creating opportunities for young people to realize a potential that is non academic (Nyanjom, 2010). Sports is considered as a tool in promoting gender equity and social inclusion for girls and women (Butler, 2010). Today, sport is big business, a source of youth employment and enjoyment, often keeping them away from negative influences and activities (Mwisukha *et al*, 2003).

According to Alegi (2010) football has been in existence since 1100 and was introduced to Africa by the colonialists. It is one of the greatest phenomena in terms of attraction to people of all ages, gender and nationality. The number of spectators has recently achieved staggering numbers – nowadays stadiums and sport arenas have to be gigantic so they can fit tens of thousands of football fans (Owen, et al, 2007). With the arrival of television, the number of football fans has grown to billions of people. Billions of people around the globe are attracted by the Federation International de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup that takes place every four years. In 2010, the world cup in South Africa and the slogan “it's time for Africa” brought a sense of belonging to many African football lovers (Andre, 2010). Being a loyal fan to a particular football team is undoubtedly a highly meaningful activity for football fans (Tapp, 2004). In Kenya, the modern football fan base is Euro-centric and is defined by a shift of the fan-base from local football to the English Premier League and European Champions League. Most of the Kenyan football clubs virtually have no fans but English clubs such as Arsenal, Manchester United and Chelsea have a wide fan-base (Andre, 2010).

The first women's football world cup was held in 1991, sixty one years after the first men football world cup. It is held after every five years though little is known about as (Alegi, (2010) argues that there are inexcusable delays by the organizers that make women football more difficult for fans and media to participate in the competitions. It is clear that women World cup is not as publicized as the Men's world cup a fact that shows that women football still has a long way to go. According to the FIFA women's world cup Report (2011), Germany and USA has won twice while Norway and Japan won the other matches. Nigeria and South Africa has represented Africa in the Women's world cup though with poor performances often losing the matches early (FIFA Africa Report, 2010).

In Africa, women football is not given much attention (Saavadra, 2007). Only Nigeria and South Africa seems to be leading as they have both made appearances in the FIFA women's world cup and has continually participated in African women championships. Both teams have played in several editions of the women football world cup though none has ever gone beyond the quarter finals (CAF, 2011). According to Alegi (2010), their performance is greatly attributed to the fact that Nigeria and South Africa have a more established league system although the countries are

still struggling to get their women's national team to international level. According to Saavadra, (2003), other African countries such as Senegal, Ghana, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea have participated though unsuccessfully in Africa Cup of Nations(CAF) organized by Confederation of Africa Women Football (CAWF).

Kenya's national women football team, Harambee Starlets has been in existence since 1984 but has had dismal performance often not appearing or withdrawing from championships before end of season. The poor performance can be attributed to lack of funds. For example, FKF in its financial report-2013/2014 financial year indicated that Ksh.101 million was spent on Men's football while only Ksh. 1.5 million was spent on women's football. Though men's football often gets the lion's share of the FKF budget, the performance of the national team is still poor as compared to other African teams but the men's football league is more established. The National women football team Harambee Starlets played in qualifying matches for the Olympics in 2006 and Africa cup of Nations in 2007. It also played in Africa Women football cup in 2010 but withdrew before the end of the season citing lack of funds. Both men and women national teams have never been in the world cup (FKF, 2011). Despite the great importance and popularity of sport for both men and women, women's participation in sport is still quite low all over the world as they face a lot of challenges that bar them from active participation (Fahmy, 2011; FIFA, 2015; Xhakaza, 2005). This was the concern of this study by investigating women participation in football in Thika Sub-county.

Sport, like certain other activities in society, has been perceived more as more masculine than feminine. These findings are consistent across the globe (Hardin & Croston, 2012; Feldman et al., 2003; FIFA, 2015; Koivula, 2005) considered a highly male domain and football appears to have been a masculine field. Various analysis and reports by FIFA have pinpointed to a lower involvement of women in football (Fahmy, 2011; FIFA, 2015). In addition, studies conducted on physical activity and sedentary activities have found that there are more girls than boys in the low and moderate physical activity groups and more boys than girls in the high activity group (Feldman et al., 2003). FIFA in turn conducted a survey on women's football in 2014 (FIFA, 2015) that included perceptions of women football, investment in women football and priorities for women's football. This study enhances gender equity through sports and football in particular.

1.2 Statement of the problem

From the foregoing background, football is one of the leading participation and spectator sport in the world over. However, females continue to be poorly represented in football, world over including Kenya. To increase the participation in football, there is need to have a sustainable system of competitions such as leagues. In most countries, the women leagues are not regular and suffer from challenges such as inadequate funding and low motivation for players. In Kenya, the national men's football league has been ongoing since 1963, while the first National women league in Kenya was held in 2010. Worse still the women's leagues have been on and off and in some regions, the grassroots leagues are not held at all. It is out of the concern for low

participation of women in football that this study was initiated. The study was conducted in an urban and a rural setting.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to identify the challenges faced by women football players who participate in football leagues.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study was guided by Liberal Feminism theory which was advanced by Mary Wollstonecraft, Johnn Stuart Mill and Harriet Tylor in the 1960s and 1970S. The theory focuses on discrimination and exclusion on the basis of sex and gender, objectification, structural and economic inequality, power and oppression, gender roles and stereotypes (Knoppers, 1994; Olgesby, 1978). According to Liberal Feminists theorists, differences in female sport participation are as a result of socialization practices by institutions such as family, media and school (Greendorfer, 1993; Scraton, 1992).

Liberal feminism emphasizes the limitation of women's life opportunities because of socialization and social stereotypes. Girls are socialized into feminine sporting activities such as netball, gymnastics, or hockey and into a female physicality while boys are socialized into masculine sports such as football, rugby, or cricket and into a male physicality (Scraton, 1992). Therefore, girls grow into women with the perception that football is strictly a male's game. In fact, football is perceived to be a male's game and that it is not important for the social development of women since the values of achievement, aggressiveness and competition are irrelevant to the life experience of women (Olgesby, 1978). According to liberal feminists, socialization and stereotyping which starts at birth and continues for life, has an upper hand in discouraging women and girls to participate in football.

Furthermore, discriminatory practices prevent women from having equal access to sporting opportunities including facilities and resources (Pherson, 1989). Women do not have as many opportunities to compete as their male counterparts. A number of leagues and tournaments in men football at local, national and international level are organized frequently which is not the case for women football. Therefore, the positive outcomes of sport for gender equality and women's empowerment are constrained by gender based discrimination in all areas and at all levels of sport and physical activity including football. This is fuelled by continuing stereotypes of women's physical abilities and social roles. Allocation of funds and other resources is also discriminatory as men football is awarded huge amounts of money while women football is given only a small share of the funds. The value placed on women's sport is often lower, resulting in inadequate resources and unequal wages and awards. This applies to other football resources including balls and playing grounds which are first available to men before they become available to women. Furthermore, Liberal Feminism Theory also focuses on

underrepresentation of women in decision making positions in sport which includes coaching and leadership posts (Kinnoppers, 1994).

Men continue to dominate key decision-making posts and the percentage of women in governing and administrative organizations in the sports arena remains low. The entire management of football which includes football organizations, government and the sponsors, coaches and managers of women football teams is highly dominated by men (Talbot, 2001), who knowingly or unknowingly tend to direct resources especially funds to men's football at the expense of women football. This imbalance caused by socialization and stereotyping, discrimination, unequal distribution of resources and under-representation in decision making posts continues to edge women out of sports. Unless this is looked into, women will continue being ignored and poorly represented in sport.

Critics of this theory argue that the theory focuses on socialization and sex-role differentiation and treats women as a homogeneous group with little regard to differences between women (White, 1995). It ignores the fact that women have different interests some of which are different types of sports and that they use their interests in sports to demonstrate their feministic characters. Like education, work, religion, and family, the cultural institution of sports has the power to affect women's status in society, and not necessarily in a positive manner (Dowling, 2000). Further, liberal feminists theory ignores the fact that the sports can be used and has been by women as one of the ways leading to equality. Sport therefore, plays a major role in defining women and placing them at equal levels with men. Emphasis should therefore be on how close the gap on discrimination, provide equal opportunities in sports including football so that women can also enjoy the sports particularly football.

2.2 Empirical Review

Reviewed literature reveals that women who participate in sports particularly football are faced by many challenges (FIFA, 2015; Hargreaves, 1997; LeUnes and Nation, 1991; Yan & Thomas, 1995). These challenges include biological, social-cultural, economic factors. Some scholars such as Henderson et al., (1999) have also argue that women lack the strength or the stamina to run, kick, or tackle. These and other factors were incorporated in this study.

(a) Biological

Since a woman's body is biologically adapted to her main biological role of giving birth, her body goes through several body processes such as menstruation and pregnancy which may interfere though rarely with sports and physical activity. Hargreaves(1997)carried out a research that proved and demonstrated that strenuous exercises did not negatively affect the menstrual cycle, nor did menstruation significantly affect physical performance. However, LeUnes and Nation (1991), argued that menstrual irregularities are caused by heavy exercise and training. A study by Morris & Summers (1995) on 729 Hungarian females participating in sports indicated that 83% of the females registered no change in their menstrual cycle. Varpotili (1986) also studied female Olympiads from 10 different countries and the results showed that 92% of the subjects had a regular menstrual cycle, the length of the menses was not affected and their blood flow was regular.

Some health studies though have shown that most women experience some abdominal pains during their menses (Geber, 1974). Such women may find it difficult to participate in sports especially football which involves vigorous activity during this period after which they go on with their activities normally. LeUnes and Nation (1991) argue that pregnancy is another biological process that poses a big challenge to sports as pregnant women often find it difficult to participate in vigorous activities. However, after childbirth, most women may go back to sports but a few find it difficult usually because of the responsibility that comes with child. From this discussion, it is clear that menstruation and child birth is quite a challenge to women football players.

Women who may be struggling with excess weight and a big body form are presumed as heavy, inactive and are therefore, not able to cope with the strenuous activity associated with sports especially football which involves a lot of running (Yan & Thomas, 1995). Though the size affects both men and women, big women are more aware of themselves and often shy away from the field. While this may be true, players of a vigorous game may not struggle with excess weight as the exercise is enough to cause significant weight loss. This argument therefore poses a challenge to starters who may feel too heavy to play football and out of place in a football field. Geber (1974), notes that there are some physical differences in terms of strength between men and women. Gerber argues that a male is 20% stronger than the average female and that males also have 25% faster reaction time and they also have a cardiovascular capacity advantage of 25% to 50% over their female counterparts. Yan and Thomas (1995), argue that these differences mean males have more power, speed, strength, and traits that are very vital when it comes to playing football than women. Henderson et al. (1999) also argue that women lack the strength or the stamina to run, kick, or tackle. From this argument, one can conclude that the vigorous activity that includes running and kicking in the football field is a great challenge to women. This is probably why women football is perceived a slow game and seen to be boring because they are not as vigorous as their male counterparts.

(b) Socio-Cultural Factors

According to Fasting (1987) it is culturally accepted, in the world over, that a woman is subordinate to man. This is stronger in the African society, including Kenyan culture which is mainly patriarchal. He further argues that such cultural beliefs make women think that they will never attain the levels of their male counterparts where sport performance is concerned. 'A woman's place is in the kitchen' would appear to be still a common saying and many cultures still firmly believe in it. This argument is reaffirmed by Kiouvula (1995) who argues that the participation of women in sport has always been seen as the presence of women in a man's world. Therefore, women's involvement in sports is seen as a form of resistance that disturb the apparently already existing logic of male supremacy" as argued by Birrel and Cole (1989). As such, women who involve themselves with sports particularly football are therefore seen to oppose these beliefs. The society therefore refuses to accept them a fact that is a great challenge to them.

According to Bailey (1999) there are myths that discourage women from participating in sports, for instance, that girls may lose their virginity by practicing sports and that women who play football are bisexual. Though these are just myths, they still negatively affect to great extent the

participation of women in sports. Clothing is also an issue as many cultures do not tolerate tight clothes and bare limbs. For example, in a project of Women without Borders in India meant to teach women to swim in order to counter future effects of a disaster like Tsunami where a disproportionate number of women were drowned in the tsunami because they could not swim, women were only willing to take part in the swimming lessons after the clothing had been adapted to their specific wishes (UNICEF, 2008). Different religions and their ways of dressing may have effects on women's involvement in sports. The football attire usually shorts and jersey is still not accepted by many cultures and religions for women and girls as they are seen to dress like boys and men. It is, therefore, a challenge to such women as they feel and are also seen by others like they are half dressed.

According to Renold (1997), women sports and games involve a power relationship with coaches and sport leaders majority of who are usually men yet the culture in the African communities do not accept girls to be in the hands of men. As such, some parents feel unsafe when their daughters are in the hands of the coaches who are mostly males as they are prone to sexual abuse. The reputation of girls and women in sports may be damaged such that they are viewed negatively by the society at large for keeping the company of men for long hours. Brady (2005), asserts that the location and accessibility of the sports ground is yet another important factor to sports and women. For instance, if the playground is far, the parent may feel that it is unsafe for his/her daughter to be away from home for long hours. In Afghanistan, women and girls were largely confined to their homes unless accompanied by a male relative, a fact that kept many of them away from the football pitch (UNICEF, 2008).

A mapping exercise of safe spaces for girls in Kibera, Kenya found that less than 2% of an estimated 76,000 girls had a place they considered safe in which to meet friends (outside school) or family for a few hours a week. 92% of boys were far more likely than girls to report that they had a place outside home or school in which to meet same-sex friends (47% versus 13% for girls) (Brady, 2005). Although security risks for both boys and girls are more pronounced in poor regions such as Kibera, gender exacerbates this risk, causing girls to face compounded challenges. Apart from schools and other institutions, there are few socially sanctioned places for women to gather. Sport is being used as one way to create such spaces. Most of the training sessions are usually in the evenings and this means that women travel back to their homes when it is dark and are exposed to danger of rape and other forms of abuse. This is a huge challenge to both the women football players, their immediate family-parents and their husbands.

The belief that some sports belong to males is another social factor that greatly affects women's participation in sports. Prakasa and Overman (1984) assert that an athlete is supposed to be competitive, rugged, aggressive, tough, independent, dominant, assertive, achievement-oriented and self-controlling. Further, a 'real' woman is supposed to possess different psychological and physical characteristics thus implying femininity and possible fragility. In a research done by Caudwell (2003) on attitudes towards women footballers suggested that many female football players were labelled as 'butch', which implied an overt masculine, lesbian identity. Such arguments clearly disturb women in sports making them feel misplaced while some end up quitting. Sports especially football is one of few strongholds where men can still assert their dominance and supremacy (Birrell & Cole, 1994). For males, achieving success in sport

reinforces and promotes their masculinity; whereas for women achieving success in sport is often considered as having rejected feminine values. Therefore, women who are actively involved in football as participants are viewed as having failed in the feminine duties and, in a symbolic way had ‘become’ men (Mean, 2001). This kind of argument forces a number of women to keep off football and it also serves as a discouragement to those who play football.

According to Coakley (1986), the family prevails as the primary socialising agent which socialises and treats girls and boys differently and exposes them to different cultural expectations as soon as they are born. To a certain extent, the parental expectations may change, shape, or dominate their children's selection of sport, as demonstrated in the study by Yan and Thomas (1995). Parents are known to push their children to do things that they want and not what their children want. Sport is not an exemption with most of the parents expecting their boys to be actively involved in football while choosing for their daughters a more “softer game”. Rarely would a family influence a girl positively to get involved in sports. Those who are already in it get negative reactions from family members which pose a great challenge to them. Buffer (1996), argues that the socializing process at home for both sexes is different and that males and females are created as early as the child is born. According to Snyder (1976), boys usually get more support and encouragement to get involved in sports and are also offered more sporting opportunities while girls receive greater encouragement for certain sports which are seen to be more feminine. This may redirect girls with an interest in football to other sports which seem more feminine.

Lopez (1997) and Owen *et al.*, (2005) argues for most young girls the school is the most influential place for motivating them into sport participation and providing them with the opportunities to play in teams. Therefore, as the children get older and go to school, the socialization process shifts from home to schools. The teachers and peers in schools have a big role to play in influencing the participation of girls in football. In schools and other learning institutions the child is exposed to different types of sports. In their studies of the historical context of Physical Education offered in schools, Scraton (1986) and Hargreaves (1994) have both described how stereotypes dictate attitudes towards what activities are considered appropriate to females, and football has been widely considered as an undesirable activity for girls.

Renold (2000) and Skelton (1997) claim that the first real barriers for participation in football for girls have often occurred in the schooling system. They argue that while boys’ football is largely celebrated and have a huge number of fans, girls football is labelled as boring and rarely attracts any fans. Renold (2000) further wonders why girls football attracts only a few girls and boys as fans while a boys match “brings all other activities within the learning institutions to a “stand still” as the whole school rushes to the football field to watch the match. This kind of attitude encourages boys to play while it makes girls to feel out of place and awkward in a football match. Macbeth (2006), while looking at attitudes towards women football in Scotland noted that some women players experience positive attitudes towards girl’s football at school, while others, the majority attitudes are negative which threatens their participation in the sport.

(c) Economic challenges

According to Digest, (1998), lack of economic power, facilities and even time especially for women and girls due their other gender roles is a huge barrier that blocks women's participation in sports. Crompton (1995) argues that participating in any sports activities definitely requires some financial input; therefore, a child from a poor family is least likely to participate in sports as compared to one from a rich background. Football is an expensive game as it requires sports equipment and attire. They also need to access the playing ground and to pay for travelling expenses. Hargreaves (1997) indicates that low levels of physical activity are common for the disadvantaged groups because their family, parents and guardians cannot afford to finance expenses. Clearly, the funding aspect discourages a number of women to participate as they would wish in football activities. According to Skelton (2000), a lot of women often keep away from the football field as they cannot afford to cater for the expenses related to football activities.

Women's lack of involvement in football can be attributed to financial difficulties, unemployment and if employed, the number of hours they perform their gender roles. Women who have full-time or part-time jobs have to use their free time to take care of their families and perform the gender roles instead of attending sporting activities. Their young daughters are also disadvantaged as they have to look after the younger siblings or perform other minor roles thus makes it impossible for them to participate in sports. Digest (1998) indicated that some low-income group families also depend on the daughters to provide childcare for younger siblings after school, prepare family meals and run the homes when the parents are at work. Involvement of girls in sport would be perceived as comfort and luxury and at the expense of other important duties.

According to reports from WHO as cited in Van Deventer (1998), a decline in the participation of sport is most alarming in poor areas, especially in the densely populated inner cities of large and rapidly growing metropolises. The economic background dictates so much on whether females participate in sports or not in terms of finances, facilities and time. This is quite a challenge especially for women since men seems to have more free time, have more economic powers than women and have access to and control of resources. Among the many KFF failures, the saddest is the failure to invest in youth and women's football. The funds largely disappeared from the KFF youth and women's football levies at every KFF match as well as the funds sent by FIFA (Stakeholders' Transition Committee Final Report, June 2004). The KFF has failed to support and enter national girls' and women's teams in CAF and FIFA competitions.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. It was conducted in Gatundu North and Thika West. The target population for this study was the 8 and 6 women football teams in Gatundu North and Thika West districts, respectively. Focus group discussion guide, Interview schedule and Questionnaire were the instruments of data collection. The study mainly yielded qualitative data. This was sorted out, analyzed quantitatively and presented in tables.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

	Thika West		Gatundu North	
	Number	percentage	Number	Percentage
Age (years)				
Below 19	10	20	5	16.67
19-29	40	80	25	83.33
Education				
Primary	2	4	6	20
Secondary	21	42	19	63.33
Post-secondary	27	54	5	16.67
Age(years)				
Married	4	8	3	10
Single	46	92	27	90
Occupation				
Employed (formal)	7	14	1	3.33
Employed(Casual/self)	11	22	9	30
Unemployed	20	40	15	50
Students (college)	7	14	4	13.32
Students (secondary)	5	10	1	3.3

Majority of the women football players in the two districts were between the age of 19 and 20. Only a few of the players were below 19 years. Those who were aged below 19 were more in ThikaWest than Gatundu North. None of the respondents was aged above 30 years. Majority of women football players have secondary education while the number of those with primary and post-primary level of education varied across the rural and urban settings. However, those who have attained post-secondary education are more in ThikaWest (54%) than in Gatundu North (16.67%). Those who were married were slightly higher in Gatundu North than in Thika West. Further, the analysis revealed that that 4(8%) in Thika West and 3(10%) in Gatundu North were married while 46(92%) in Thika West and 27(90%) in Gatundu North were single. Most of the women football players are unemployed (40%) in Thika West and 15% in Gatundu North) with most of those who are employed being in casual employment. Only a few have formal employment (7% in Thika West and 3.33% in Gatundu North). The level of unemployment is high in Gatundu North than in Thika West. However, a good number of players in Thika West (24%) and Gatundu North (14.3%) are students in college and secondary schools.

4.1 Challenges faced by women football players in football leagues

4.1.1 Inadequate Funding

This was a major challenge that was noted from the findings since all the respondents agreed to it. The teams require money for registration with FKF whenever they want to participate in the league, to buy balls and sports attire and travelling expenses during the league and other forms of competitions. As confessed by some of the respondents, most of the teams do not have official

sponsors and therefore, they lack a consistent source of money. However, the problem is more acute in Gatundu North than Thika West.

....Last year, our MCA paid the registration fees but when we started, we realized that besides registration fees, we also needed to fund our travelling, and referee money was also required. We contributed among us twice but during the third match, we could not raise the amount required, so we eventually quit the league.

Mangu FC team member during a focus group discussion on 23/11/2014

The FKF official confirmed that this was a major problem that kept so many teams away from the league. He confirmed that it was quiet expensive to run the league especially because the national office does not pay for any of the expenses. Therefore, the participating teams fund the leagues all by themselves. He further argued that there is also misappropriation of funds and wrong budgetary allocations within the FKF such that women football receives minimum funding from the organization. In fact, according to the financial report of the 2013/2014 financial year, Ksh.101m was spent on Men football while only Ksh1.5m was spent on women's football. The NGO official also confirmed the same arguing that their goal is not to fund the football activities but they find themselves financing the teams in order to maintain the membership and also to push them to greater heights.

.....Our greatest challenge is money. Football is so expensive. For a team to participate in the leagues, they have to register with FKF which means registration fees are to be paid. The teams are also supposed to pay referees during the matches. This is usually too much since we do not have a source of money. We have missed the leagues twice because we couldn't pay.

Thika Rangers coach during an interview on 16/11/2014

According to Skelton (2000), lot of women often keep away from the football as they cannot afford to cater for the expenses related to football activities. Hargreaves (1997) also observed that low levels of physical activity are common for the disadvantaged groups because their parents cannot afford to finance expenses. Clearly, the funding aspect discourages a number of women to participate as they would wish in football activities. An NGO official had this to say about it:

...We are not here to fund football activities, we here to oversee income generating projects which would empower the women financially through football. However, when our teams cannot participate because of money, we are left with no choice other than to provide funding.

NGO official during an interview on 21/11/2014

Coaches also confirmed that it is very difficult for them to run the teams as they are sometimes forced to go back to their own pockets in order to run the various activities of the teams.

....It is quiet discouraging for me as coach as I sacrifice a lot to be with these women yet I get nothing in return. In fact, I find myself paying for some of their activities. When you go appealing for funds, people think that it is for your own benefit.

Nyamathumbi coach during an interview on 23/12/2014

A similar position was also arrived by Saavedra and Martha, (2010) and Gitonga, (2010) in their study that funding was an issue where the football organizations directed the little available money to the men football and literally ignored women football. This was supported by all the respondents who argued that while they really suffered so much, their male counter-parts seemed to be having fewer problems when it came to funding. They readily got sponsors and their leagues were partially funded. However, the problem of funding was felt much in Gatundu North where teams literally survived from players own pockets. In Thika West, some of the teams like Thika Queens, Thika Rangers and Angaza benefited from the good-will of well-wishers and NGOs.

4.1.2 Poor Governance

The respondents noted that there have been consistent conflicts and wrangles within KFK at national and grassroots level. This has led to continuous jostling of leadership positions and a lot of fighting within the organization. As a result, FKF has not been able to organize and manage grassroots and national leagues properly. It is the women teams that have suffered more as a result of the wrangles in the football organization. The NGO official complained on the same issue of the mismanagement of the leagues by FKF. He argued that the organization's mismanagement has continued to affect the women football. He had this to say about the organization.....

FKF has a long way to go. The politics are too much and unless this is stopped, then football will continue suffering. Instead of them helping us, they want to follow our activities and asking for money. Women football has not been accorded the importance that it deserves.

NGO official during an interview on 21/11/2014

One of the coaches a stated that, public wrangles for power, widespread mismanagement, ethnic antagonism and political intrigue have typified football in Kenya, leaving many industry players and the public disillusioned. The FKF official also agreed to this as a challenge arguing that there is always power struggles and immense corruption in the top leadership of FKF. As a result, the grassroots leaders suffer a lot as they are answerable to the community yet they have nothing to offer them. He had this to say:

We have continued to recycle leaders at FKF year after year. This has not helped the football fraternity in any way. In fact, the corruption, infighting and struggle for power is a cancer that has been eating the entire football family slowly. The leagues especially the women leagues have suffered the most since it's so difficult to organize them without proper leadership. Most of the times we start but they never see the end of season.

FKF official during an interview on 11/12/2014

The same sentiments were echoed in the Stakeholders' Transition Committee Final Report in June 2004. The report noted that, among the many KFF (now FKF) failures, the saddest is the failure to invest in youth and women's football. The funds largely disappeared from the KFF youth and women's football levies at every KFF match as wells the funds sent by FIFA. Nyanjom, (2010) also observed that, football in Kenya has suffered through the years from corruption, mismanagement and political intrigue resulting to the countries failure to make any

significant impact in regional, continental or global competitions. He further argues that the poor soccer administration in Kenya had always led to on and off sanctioning of FKF by FIFA due to political squabbles and government interference. Musonye, (2010) also observed that we cannot have strong national teams without strong leagues but we do not have strong leagues because too often the associations are run by wrong people, who get involved for politics or money not for football. Until we sort ourselves out, we will have the same old circus. Gitonga, (2010) also argued that, talented players, mostly from poor families, get little opportunity to exploit their full potential and escape poverty because of mismanagement and corruption at the KFF which undermines investment in youth and women's football.

4.1.3 Limited Access to Facilities

All the respondents agreed that access to playing ground is another challenge that affected women participation in football especially in Gatundu North. The playing grounds available are few and most of them belonged to schools. Therefore, the teams could only access the grounds only after schools where they had to share with men. All the women agreed that men always had the priority though sometimes they shared the playing grounds.

...We use the primary school field which is also used by men. We have to wait till evening when schools close. The grounds are only available to us if the men are not playing. Sometimes, they allow us to use half the field while they use the other half during training.

AGatundu North woman football player during a focus group discussion on 23/11/2014

The coaches argued that there was nothing they could do about the playing grounds and that they only could bear with the situation for now. The sports officer also agreed that this was a big challenge but accepted that it was his office that was supposed to manage and control the playing grounds within their region, something that the office had failed to do.

Alegi (2010) noted that the few public spaces available for sport activities have either been grabbed or are grossly mismanaged such that the few that are available and are in good condition are available to men first before they are available to women. Saavedra and Martha, (2010), also noted that in highly populated areas such as Kibera, it was difficult to secure a safe space for the girls to play since the open grounds were always occupied by gangs of young people. This problem could only be solved if the stake holders in the sports field came together and addressed the issue. However, the problem of the playing grounds in Thika West was not as serious as in Gatundu North since Thika being an urban district there were some community open spaces which were occasionally used for football activities. Since they were available the whole day, it was easier for both men and women teams to share. However, men still had priority especially during the weekends when they had competitions.

...we are very lucky to have this community grounds which is available to us the whole day though it is also used by many teams. We make a programme to decide who uses the grounds at what time. ...

Thika queens captain on 23/11/2014

The respondents also cited the availability of balls and proper football attire is another problem. Coaches confirmed this saying that balls and other sports attire are normally donations usually

awarded to the teams whenever they win a match. Some of the teams especially in Gatundu North rarely attended any tournaments and therefore, they missed out on such awards which included balls and sports attire. Such teams had to dig deep in their pockets in order to buy what they required.

One of the coaches explained.....

.....We have had issues acquiring the right balls, uniform and boots. Often, we get them as donations once we win a tournament. Of late, we have not participated in any so the attire and the balls we have are quite old and of low quality. It is not easy to buy on our own since they are so expensive and we do not have an official sponsor.

Mangu WFC coach during an interview on 23/11/2014

All the women football players involved in the focus group discussions complained that they usually lacked good quality balls which they needed for both training and competitions.

4.1.4 Lack of publicity

Majority of the respondents agreed that lack of publicity as a challenge that faces the women football players as they participate in the local football leagues. The women football players argued that there were limited efforts by the stakeholders to promote women football especially in rural areas. They complained that men's matches were well covered by the local media while women matches were given a total blackout. The FKF officials also gave little publicity to women football while they advertised men's matches. As a result, the women matches had only a few fans while men's matches were stormed by thousands of fans. The presence of fans increased gate collections and also boosted their morale as they played. There were no gate collection fees for women matches since if the few fans who managed to attend were charged, they would literally run away. One of the coaches had this to say.

....Only a few people are aware that there are women football matches going on due to lack of publicity. Those who come to watch only notice as they pass by. The media has totally ignored our matches and as a result, we get very few fans. This means that our games are usually boring as there is nobody to cheer the girls.

Penta girls coach during an interview on 9/11/2014

All the respondents also noted that the local media literally gave women football a "blackout" while it kept on reporting on men football. The lack of publicity and media blackout keeps away sponsors. As argued by Gitonga et al, (2010), the local media has given women a total blackout and this is a big blow to women football. Without proper publicity, women miss out on fans therefore low or no gate collection fees, sponsorship and even opportunities. Low publicity also makes the society to ignore women football and is usually less concerned whenever there is a women football match. The coaches and the other officials also noted that women football suffered lack of publicity, a fact that really affected the women football. The FKF official stated that it was beyond its mandate to publicise the women football though he also noted the Federation was greatly concerned with men's football and gave women football little space.

4.1.5 Societal Attitude towards Women Football

More than half of the teams agreed that the perception of society had towards them as women football players was negative. The coaches and other officials also agreed to this factor arguing that the negative attitude towards women football players discouraged them to an extent of making some to quit. Some were discouraged by their relatives who saw it as a waste of valuable time which would otherwise be spent with their families. According to Snyder (1976), boys usually get more support and encouragement to get involved in sports and are also offered more sporting opportunities while girls receive greater encouragement for certain sports which are seen to be more feminine. Football is obviously not one of them.

In a research done by Caudwell (2003) on attitudes towards women footballers suggested that many female football players were labelled as 'butch', which implied an overt masculine, lesbian identity. Mean (2001), also argued that women who are actively involved in football as participants are viewed as having failed in the feminine duties and, in a symbolic way had 'become' men. With this kind of notion, women football matches had few fans a fact that really discouraged them to play competitively. Renold (2000) and Skelton (1997), argued that while boys' football is largely celebrated and have a huge number of fans, girls football is labelled as boring and rarely attracts any fans. Sometimes the fans throw insults and bad comments whenever they watched them play. One of the players in Thika West had this to say.

.....Sometimes people, especially men talk so badly about us when we are playing football. Some say that our game is boring and that we only chase the ball. Others say that we are too heavy to run as expected of us or too weak to struggle for the ball. Such comments really discourage us.

A Makongeni woman football player during an interview on 7/12/2014

However, some are not bothered by such comments and they keep on playing regardless of the comments. The coaches agreed to this fact and confessed that they frequently encouraged the women not to bother much about such comments. As a result, their matches have very few fans, which make them miss out on gate collection fees as it is with men's matches. The FKF and NGO officials also were fully aware of such discouragements though they also encouraged the women to be strong enough and ignore such comments. However, the negative attitude towards the women football was greatly felt in Gatundu North than in Thika West. The society Thika being an urban district embraced women football to a great extent as compared to the society in Gatundu North.

4.1.6 Biological Factors

Majority of the respondents agreed that women's biological processes such as pregnancy and menstruation pose great challenge to women football players. They argued that it is almost impossible for a pregnant woman to play football since it is a vigorous activity which involves a lot of running and kicking. AsLeUnes and Nation (1991) argue, pregnancy is another biological process that poses a big challenge to sports as pregnant women often find it difficult to participate in vigorous activities. It emerged that women football players quit football activities whenever they got pregnant and found it difficult to join the teams later as they were faced by the responsibility of rearing the young one. One of the players had this to say.

...Due to the love of football, I tried to continue playing after I became pregnant. But I realized as time went by I couldn't move as fast as I was expected. So many times I let down my team and they really complained. I finally quit playing at six months. After the birth of my child, I wanted to go back immediately but had to wait for the baby to grow up. When I eventually came back, I had gained a lot of weight and therefore I took some time to catch up with the rest of the team members.

A Thika Rangers team member during a focus group discussion on 16/11/2014

Those who came back after child birth took a lot of time to adjust which has a great negative effect on the team. Menstruation is also sometimes painful and some women actually confirmed of missing out in the field when they had their menses. According to Gerber (1974), some health studies have shown that most women experience some abdominal pains during their menses. LeUnes and Nation (1991), also argued that pain during menses can be increased by heavy exercise and training. Therefore, women may sometimes miss out in the field during their menses. The coaches and the key informants also agreed to this factor but they stated that they encourage women to participate in football as it was a form of exercise which they really needed when they are pregnant and also to reduce pain during their menses. This was supported by Hargreaves (1997), carried out a research that proved and demonstrated that strenuous exercises did not negatively affect the menstrual cycle, nor did menstruation significantly affect physical performance. On the contrary, physical exercise can reduce the complications that may be experienced during pregnancy and menstruation. Therefore, the players are encouraged to continually participate in football whatever condition they are in as long they felt comfortable.

4.1.7 Gender Roles and Responsibilities

Gender roles and responsibilities is a major challenge as majority of the respondents in both districts agreed to it. The women argued that they have to work in order to support their families. After work, they are expected to attend to family matters especially those who have children. Therefore, most of them miss out in the evening training sessions as voiced by one of the respondents.

...My job is very demanding as it involves standing throughout. I leave work at 4 p.m., rush home to make supper because I have to attend training at 6 p.m. Sometimes I am too tired to attend the training, so I miss and my teammates are not very happy.

A Penta Girls team member during a focus group discussion on 9/11/2014

According to Fasting (1987) and Kiouvula (1995), an African woman, married or not is faced with a number of responsibilities which makes it extremely difficult for them to have any free time of their own. It is therefore not easy for them to avail themselves as it is for their male counterparts. Those who are not employed have household chores to run and even though they are available in the evenings, they are usually too tired to train normally.

One of the coaches had this to say...

.... *Women are not like men. When they come to the field they are already tired and it becomes hard to engage them in vigorous training. Therefore they take a longer time to learn.*

Nyamathumbi coach, during an interview on 15/11/2014.

The younger women who go to school leave late in the evening only to find household responsibilities awaiting them. They, therefore, report for the training late in the evening or they do not report at all. Digest (1997) indicated that some low-income group families also depend on the daughters to provide childcare for younger siblings after school, prepare family meals and run the homes when the parents are at work. So they barely have any time left to participate in football activities.

... *I leave school at five, rush home to do some chores and come back to the field at 6 p.m. for training after which I have to do my homework. It is very hectic for me as I am always in a rush. But I feel the need to sacrifice.*

Angaza team member during a focus group discussion on 23/11/2014

From the discussions, it is evident that some women attend the training or miss it altogether. As a result, it is quite difficult for the coaches to have all the team members in the field at the same time, so, coaching them as team becomes very difficult

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study revealed that inadequate funding especially in Gatundu North was the greatest challenge that faced women football. Access to women friendly facilities and equipment was also noted as a challenge especially in Gatundu North since they could not access safe playing grounds and they also lacked proper football attire such as boots and uniform. Women's gender roles and responsibilities left them with limited time to participate in football activities. Further, the negative societal attitude towards women football players was also noted to be a major challenge. Biological factors such as menstruation and pregnancy sometimes kept women away from football activities. It was also noted that there was little or no effort at all by the concerned officials to publicize women football and that the media also gave women football a total. Women football was also greatly affected by poor governance in the football organizations which often led to mismanagement of the leagues.

5.2 Conclusions

There were several challenges that faced women football players. Among them, funding was the main one. Others included; society's negative attitude towards women football which translates to poor participation of women in football activities in the area; biological factors such as menstruation and pregnancy; poor governance of the football organizations; limited access to facilities and equipment and women's gender roles and responsibilities.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, several recommendations have been made to both national and county government, Football Kenya Federation (KFF), non-governmental organizations (NGOS) and the media as follows:

(a) National Government

The national government is one of the key stake holders in the sports industry. It should therefore be keen on women football and give it the attention that it deserves in order to improve their participation in football.

These are some of the recommendations to the national government;

- Set aside funds to support women football leagues from the grassroots level to the national level
- It should oversee and control all including the women leagues through the ministry of sports at all levels in order to minimize mismanagement.

(b) County Government

The county government is an important body in the women football especially at the local level. It should therefore;

- Provide adequate funding for women football activities
- Organise and manage leagues, tournaments and championships at the county levels in order to provide more opportunities for women to participate in football
- Provide incentives and rewards to women football teams and individuals who excel in football.
- Involve the media in publicising and promoting women football at the county level.
- Work with Non-Governmental and other community based organisations to sensitize the community on the benefits of women football.
- Improve and manage the existing playgrounds to ensure that women have access to these facilities whenever they require them.

(c) Football Kenya Federation

The FKF main mandate is to organise and manage football leagues for both women and men from grass roots level to the national level. It should therefore;

- Ensure that women leagues are organised and run smoothly
- Consider introducing the leagues in secondary schools and colleges since most of the women football players are young and still in school.

- Manage and maintain the available playing grounds to ensure that they remain in good condition.
- Include women in their leadership position who would represent other women.
- Publicise the women leagues through the media and other avenues.
- Recognise and reward women who excel in football so that they can be role models to other women.

(d) Media

The can help promote a positive attitude towards women football through publicising and promoting it. This can be achieved through

- Screening women matches with a view of reporting in the local media
- Highlighting profiles of women football players who have excelled before
- Sensitising the community on the benefit of playing football in order to change the negative attitude towards women football players.

(e) Non-Governmental Organizations

NGOs have continued to play an important role in empowering women financially and socially. Sport is one of the avenues that have been used to do this. NGOs should therefore.

- Organise women football activities at grassroots level especially in poverty stricken areas.
- Offer rewards and incentives to women who participate in football
- Seek funds from sponsors and well-wishers to boost women football
- Organise sensitization meetings and exhibition matches at school and community level in conjunction with other stakeholders as a way of encouraging girls and women to participate I football activities.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the focus of this study and its findings, the following are the recommended as possible areas for further research:

- A study on factors that determine men's and women's participation in football activities in the entire county.
- Comparative studies on factors influencing women participation in football activities in different counties across Kenya.

REFERENCES

- Alegi, P. (2007). *The Political Economy of Mega-Stadiums and the Underdevelopment of Grassroots Football in South African*. Ohio. University Press.
- Alegi, P. (2010). *African Soccer Scapes: How a continent changed the world's game*. Ohio. University Press.
- Andre, N. (2010). *Football Fandom in Africa as a Popular Art. A Multidisciplinary Approach*. University of Yauonde. Cameroon.
- Bailey, K. (1999). *The girls are the ones with the pointy nails*. London, CAN: Althouse Press.
- Birrell, S. & Cole, C. (1994). *Women, Sport and Culture*. Champaign: Human Kinetics,
- Brady, M. (1998). Laying the foundation for girls' healthy futures: Can sports play a role? *Studies in Family Planning*, 29 (1) .79-82.
- Brady, M. (2005). Creating Safe Spaces and Building Social Assets for Young Women in the Developing World: A New Role for Sport. *Women's Studies Quarterly* 2005, 33, no.1&2, pp. 44-45.
- Brady, M. and Khan, A. B. (2002). *Letting girls play: The Mathare Youth Sports Association's football program for girls*. New York: Population Council.
- Brady, M., Assaad, R., Barbara, I., Salem, A., Salem, R. & Zibani, N. A. (2007). Providing new opportunities to Adolescent Girls in Socially Conservative Settings: The Ishraq Program in Rural Upper Egypt. New York: Population Council.
- CAF (2011). Annual Report. . www.CAF.com
- Caudwell, J. (2003). Women's football in the United Kingdom. Theorizing gender and unpacking the butch lesbian image. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 23 (4), 390-402.
- Coakley, J. (1986). *Socialisation and youth sport*. Human kinetics: Illinois.
- Crompton, J. L. (1995). Economic Impact Analysis of Sports Facilities and Events: Eleven Sources of Misapplication, *Journal of Sport Management*, 9 (1), 14-35.
- Digest, E. (1998). *The effects of socio-economic status on girls' sports participation*. Information Analysis. New York, US: Population Council.
- Dowling, C. (2000). *The frailty myth: Women approaching physical equality*. New York: Random House.
- Fahmy, M. (2011). *Increased participation and competitions: 5th FIFA Women's Football Symposium*. Frankfurt: Federation International de Football Association.
- Fasting, K. (1987). Sports and women's culture. *Women's international forum*. 10,361-368.
- Feldman, D. E., Barnette, T., Shrier, I., et al. Abenhaim, L. (2003). Is Physical Activity Differentially Associated With Different Types of Sedentary Pursuits? *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med.*, 157(8):797-802.
- Geber, N. (1974). *The American Women in sport*. Addison Wesley publishing co Massachuttes.

- Gitonga, E., Munayi, S., Mwangi I. & Ngetich, E. (2010). The grand coalition government in Kenya. A Recipe for sports development, *International Journal of Humanities and social science.vol 1 No.18. 12-13.*
- Greendorfer, S. (1993). *Gender role stereotypes and early childhood socialization in Cohen*, G.L. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, pp. 3– 14.
- Hardin, M. & Croston, A. (2012). The influence of gender-role socialization, media use and sports participation on perception of gender appropriate sports, *Journal of Sport Behavior, 32, 207-226.*
- Hargreaves, J. (1994). *Sporting Females*. London: Routledge.
- Hargreaves, J. (1997). Women's sport Development and cultural diversity. The South African experience. *Women's studies International Forum. (20) 2.191-209.*
- Henderson, K. A., Bialeschik, M., Shaw, S. & Freysinger, V. (1999). *Leisure of One's Own: A Feminist Perspective on Women's Leisure*. Oxford: Venture Publishing, Inc.
- Knoppers, A. (1994) "Gender and the coaching profession." Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- LeUnes. A. & Nation. J. R. (1991). *Sport Psychology: An Introduction (3rded.)* Wadworth USA.
- Lopez, S. (1997). *Women on the ball: A guide to women's football*. Scarlet Press U.S.A.
- Macbeth, J. L. (2006). 'Becoming a footballer: The socialization experiences of women footballers in Scotland', *Football Studies, 9 (1), 27-28.*
- Mean, L. (2001). Identity and discursive practice: doing gender on the football pitch. *Discourse and Society, 12(6), 789-815*
- Musonye, N. (20 IO).General Secretary, CECAFA,The Guardian, July 11,2010
- Mwisukha, A., Njorarai, W. & Onyvera, V. (2003). Contributions of sports towards national development in Kenya. *Global Media Journal Vol .5 . 34*
- Nyanjom (2010). "Foul Play". The Crisis of Football Management in Kenya. *Africa Centre for Open Governance. Nairobi. Africa.*
- Owen, P., Ryan, M. Weatherston, C., (2007). Measuring Competitive Balance in Professional Sports using the Hertindahl-Hirschman Index. Review of Industrial organisation. *Journal for Economic Educators. 11(2). 318-320*
- Prakasa, R. & Overman, S. (1984). Sex Role Perceptions among Black Female athletes and Non-athletes. *Sex roles. 11, 609-614.*
- Renold, E. (1997). All they've got on their brains is football. Sport, masculinity and the gendered practices of playground relations'. *Sport, Education and Society, 2 Scottish Affairs, 21 5-23.*
- Saavedra, E. & Martha, B. (2010). Women, sport and development. *International Platform on Sport and Development, vol. 1.23-30.*
- Scruton, S. (1986). *Images of femininity and the teaching of girls' physical education. Studies in the sociology of PE, 71-94* Lewes, UK: Falmer.

- Scraton, S. (1992). *Shaping Up to Womanhood: Gender and Girls' Physical Education*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Skelton, C. (2000). A passion for football: Dominant masculinities and primary schooling'. *Sport, Education and Society*, 5(1).
- Stuart, O. (1993). *Sport in Africa*. London: Macmillan.
- Talbot, M. (2001). *Playing with Patriarchy: The gendered dynamics of sports organizations*. London: Routledge.
- Tapp (2004). The changing Face of Marketing Academia. What can we learn from Commercial Market, Research and Practitioners. *European. Journal of Marketing*. Vol 8.
- UNESCO (2015). *International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport*. UNESCO.
- Xhakaza, E. (2005). *Psychological factors that influence female sports participation in secondary schools*. Johannesburg University.
- Yan, J. & Thomas, J. (1995). Parents' assessment of physical activity in American and Chinese children. *Journal of Comparative Physical Education and Sport*. 17 38-49.