

Football Snap Poll Report

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1.0 Introduction

The English premiership has been very popular among football fans in Africa since the seventies. First as a source of betting through the Pool Agencies and later because of the inroads made by notable African footballers, like Salako, Owubokiri and so on, who plied the round leather trade in England.

Today, it seems most Nigerians are fanatical about football; the English premiership and to some extent the Spanish La Liga and Italia Serie A. This is largely due to the on field heroics of illustrious Nigerians such as Kano Nwankwo, John Mikel Obi, Peter Odemwingie, Yakubu Aiyegbeni and Austin Okocha amongst others who have brought Europeans leagues into prominence in Nigeria and Africa as a whole.

At present, we hear many stories that attest to the football 'madness'; street fights between fans of opposition clubs; persons dying of heart attack after betting heavily on 'his' favorite club among others. In fact, the worst of revelations are the cases of governors of states in Nigeria where sports are grossly underdeveloped jetting out to European countries to witness live matches involving their clubs.

However, the once exciting Nigeria local league, that produced household names like Segun Odegbami, Adokie Amaesimeka, Christian Chukwu, Stephen Keshi, Rashidi Yekini among others, has become a shadow of itself. The Nigerian premier league is dying despite huge sponsorship deals and incentives being offered by companies to boost interest in it. The sponsorship deals rather than foster and engender development have been creating and promoting stagnancy and regression indices. The administrators now fight one another as individuals and in groups to have a fair share of the sponsorship cakes at the peril of local league development.

Against this background, NOI Polls, an opinion polling and research organization, conducted a nationwide poll to establish the average level of interest and passion of the average Nigerian towards foreign football leagues, the leagues/teams supported and suggestions about how to reform the Nigerian premier league.

2.0 Survey Methodology & Data Analyses

The opinion poll was conducted from August 7th to 9th. It involved telephone interviews of a random nationwide sample. 1,176 randomly selected phone-owning Nigerians aged 18 years and above, representing the six geopolitical zones in the country, were interviewed. With a sample of this size, we can say with 95% confidence that the results obtained are statistically precise - within a range of plus or minus 3% of what they would have been if the entire population had been surveyed.

The questionnaire was designed in English and the survey was conducted in English, Hausa, Yoruba, Ibo, and Pidgin, to ensure coverage of relevant geographical and demographic groups.

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used for data entry and analysis. Descriptive statistics, mainly frequencies and percentage distribution, charts (pie, component and bar) and cross tabulations were used in data analysis.

This poll is part of an ongoing exercise conducted by NOI Polls to rapidly assess public sentiment following various social, political or economic events. NOI Polls is a Nigeria based opinion research organization which works in technical partnership with Gallup (USA), to conduct periodic opinion polls on various socio-economic issues in Nigeria.

3.0 Demographic Distribution of Respondents

A high proportion of both male and female respondents were sampled. However, only 19% of females completed the survey, compared with 81% of males who did. In Addition, majority of respondents (45%) interviewed were resident in the North Central geopolitical zone, followed by 28% resident in the South West and 15% in the North West. Both the South east and South-South had 5% each, while the North East had 2% only.

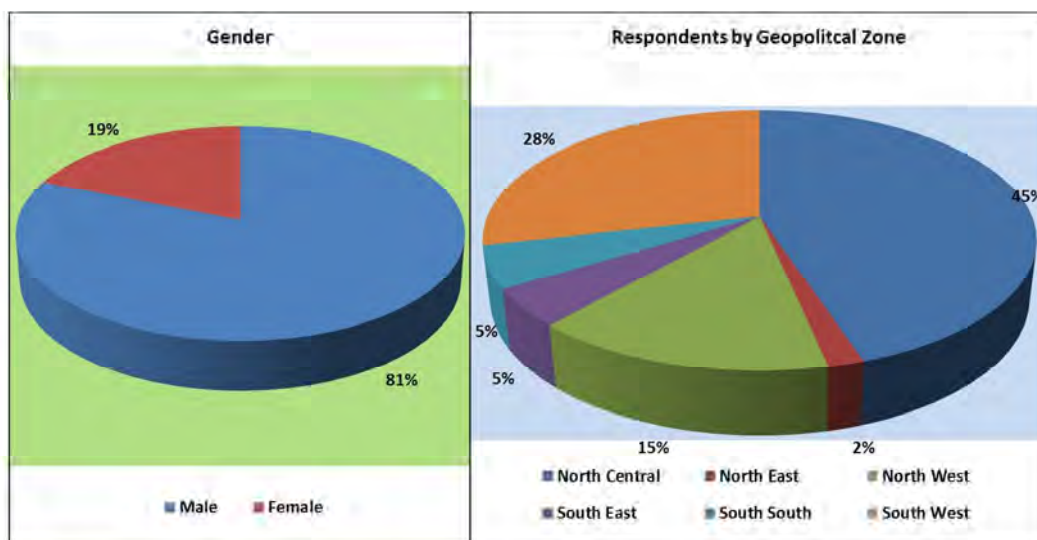


Figure 1: Distribution by Gender and Geo-Political Zone

In addition, majority of respondents were aged 30-45 (46%) and 22- 29 (37%). 9% of the respondents were aged 46-60, while 7% were aged 18-21. The age category with the lowest frequency of respondents was 60 and above (1%).

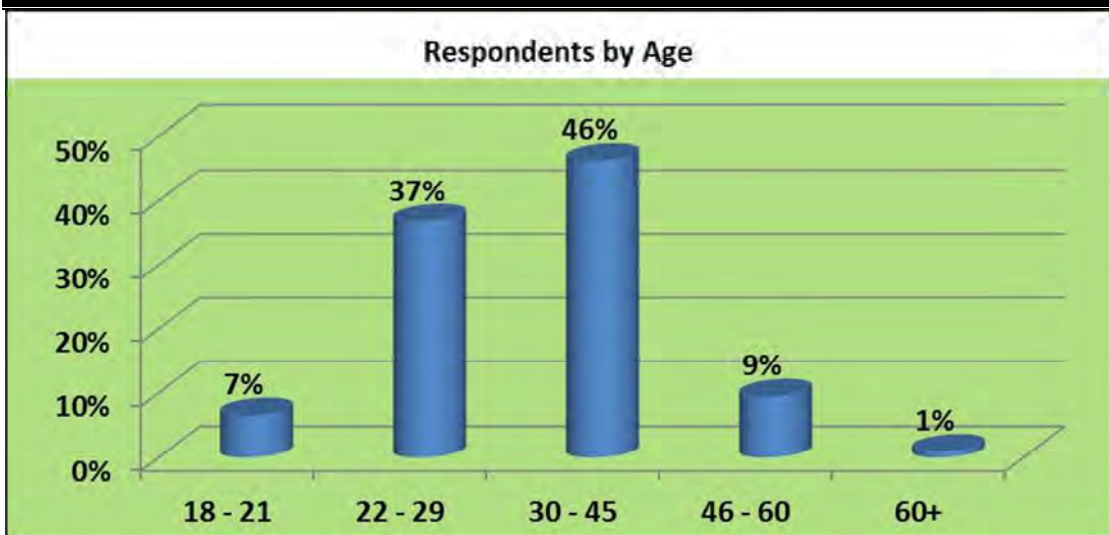


Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by Age

The majority of the respondents (24%) of respondents classified themselves as students, followed by business man/woman (18%) and self employed trader (17%). Artisans and professional workers represented 14% and 12% of the respondents respectively while 8% said they were government workers.

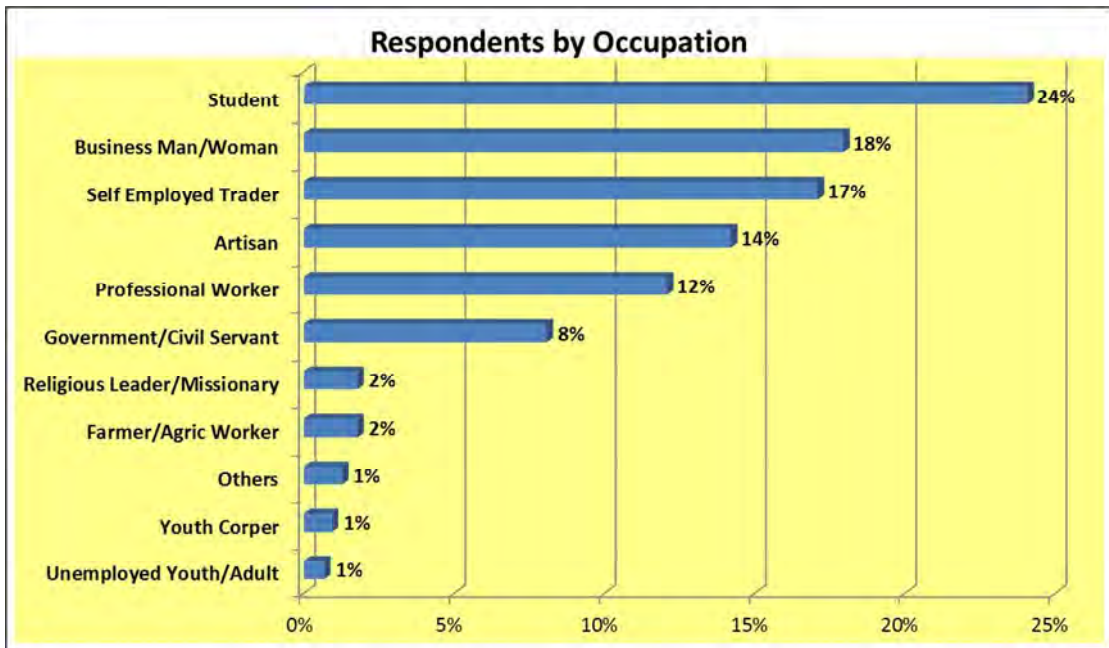


Figure 3: Distribution of respondents by Occupation

4.0 Survey Results

Twelve questions in total were asked to respondents and the following sub-sections discuss the responses received:

4.1 Are you a football supporter?

Interestingly, the poll results showed that all respondents interviewed responded affirmatively to this question, answering yes.

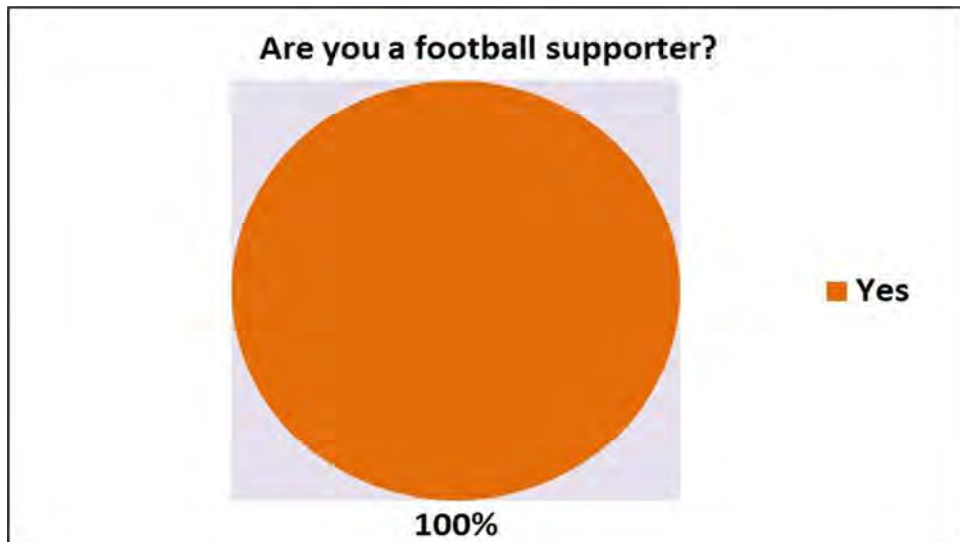


Figure 4: Are you a football supporter?

4.2 Do you follow any foreign football league?

When respondents were asked if they follow any foreign football league, the overwhelming majority (89%) responded positively while only 11% responded negatively.

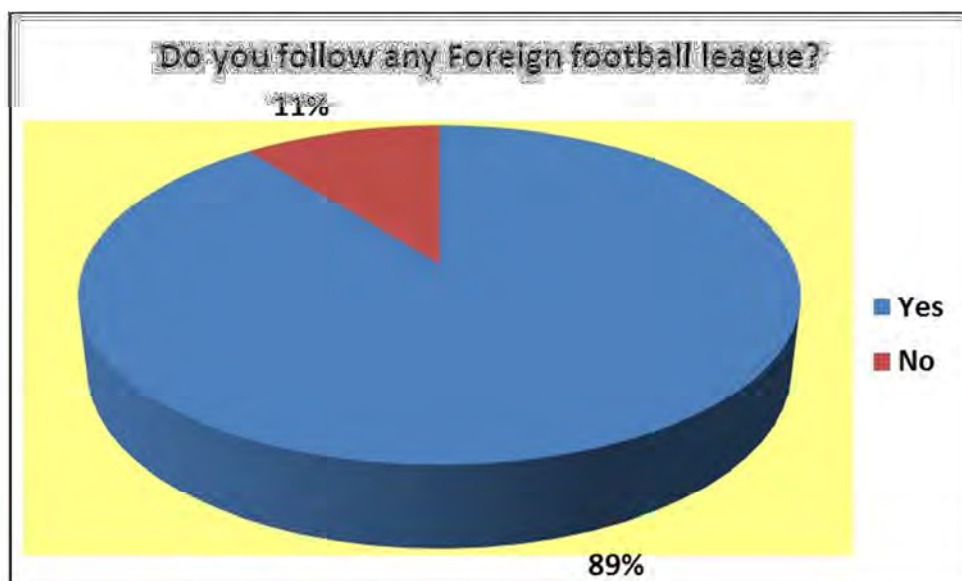


Figure 5: Followership of foreign football league

4.3 Which football league do you follow?

Respondents that stated that they followed a foreign league were asked which foreign football league they followed. The great majority (74%) said they most frequently follow the English Premier League while 17% said they mostly follow the Spanish La Liga. Only 1% said they follow the Italian Seria A most frequently.

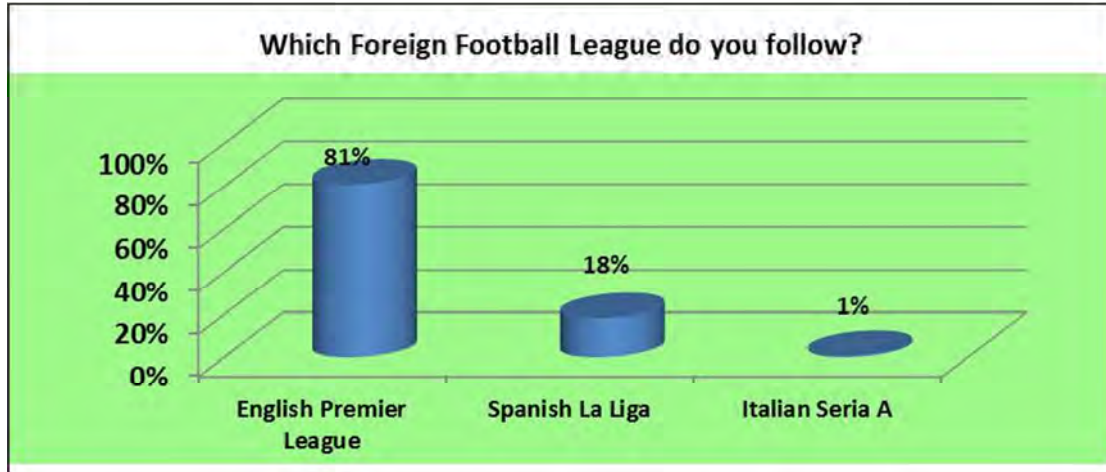


Figure 6: Foreign football leagues followed

4.4 Which club do you support?

Considering the fact that the great majority of football supporters follow the English Premier league, it is not surprising that the top 3 clubs in terms of fan base are from the Premiership. Manchester United has the slight majority (31%) followed closely by Chelsea (30%) then Arsenal (14%). Barcelona follows with 12% and Real Madrid with 6%. Only 3% and 2% are supporters of Liverpool and Manchester City respectively. Only 3% and 2% are supporters of Liverpool and Manchester City respectively.

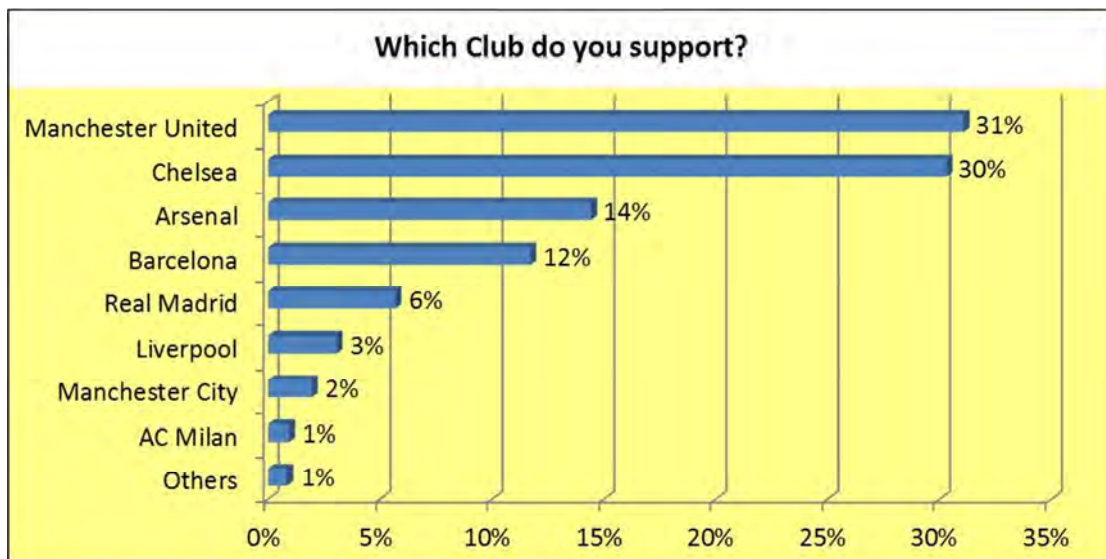


Figure 7: Club supported by fans

4.5 Reasons for supporting their clubs

When asked for the reason why they support their clubs, most respondents (28%) simply said they just like the club; this implies that their reasons are mainly sentimental. This is followed by 20% who support their club because it is the best and 18% because they have the best players. 15% support their clubs because they are champions or former champions while 11% support their club because of a particular player. 6% support their club because of others, 1% because of their coach and 1% because they are the richest club.

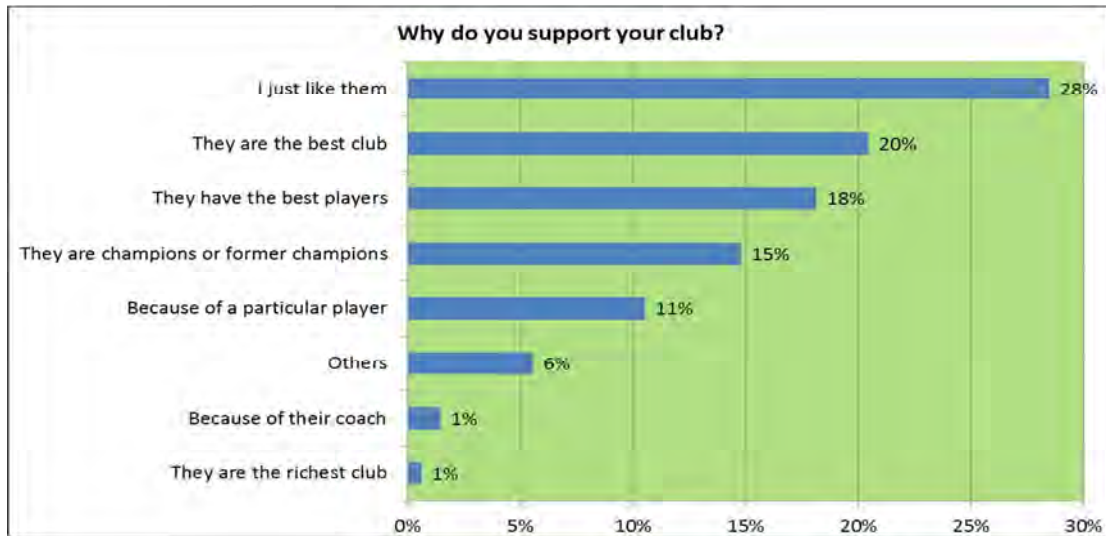


Figure 8: Reasons for supporting their clubs

4.6 Length of time that they have supported their clubs

When quizzed on the length of time they have supported their clubs, the majority (30%) said they have supported between 3 to 5 years. This is followed by 26% who have supported for between 1 to 3 years and 24% for between 5 to 10 years. 13% of the respondents are long term supporters of 10 years and above and only 7% have been supporters for less than a year.

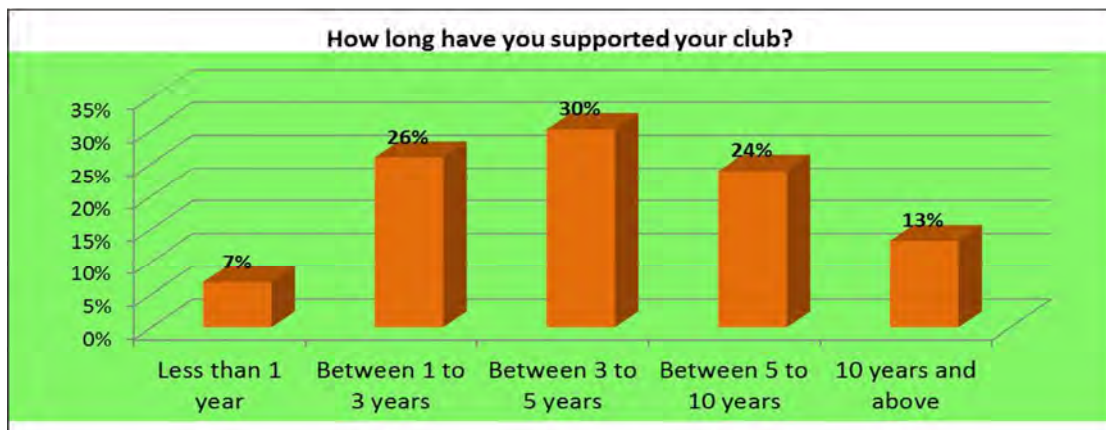


Figure 9: Length of time they have supported

4.7 Awareness of the Nigerian Premier League

When asked if they are aware of the Nigerian Premier League, the clear majority (71%) said they are aware of it while only 29% said they are unaware.

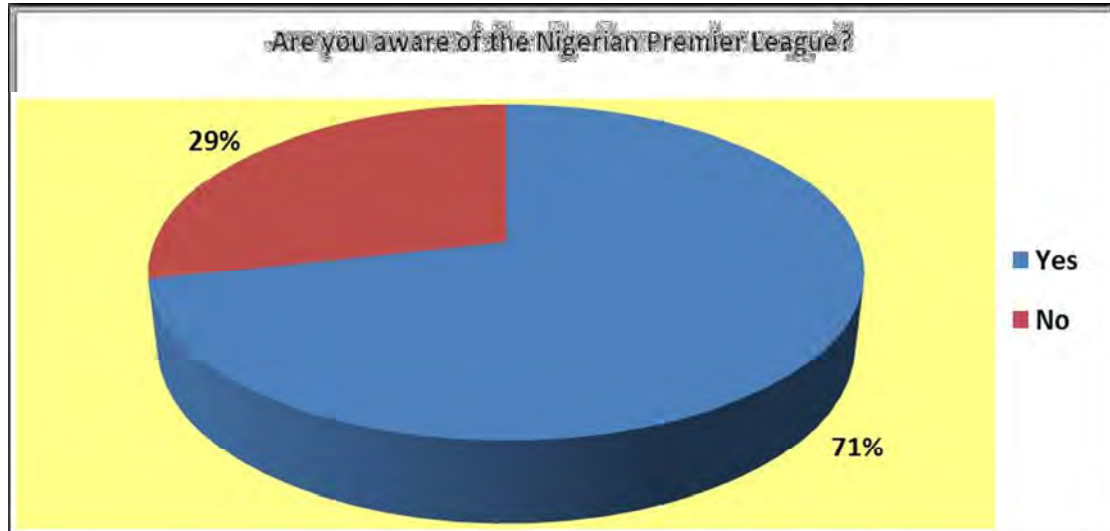


Figure 10: Awareness of the Nigerian Premier League

4.8 Followership of the Nigerian Premier League

Respondents that said they are aware of the Nigerian Premier League were then asked if they follow it. The slight majority (52%) said they do not follow it while 48% said they follow it.

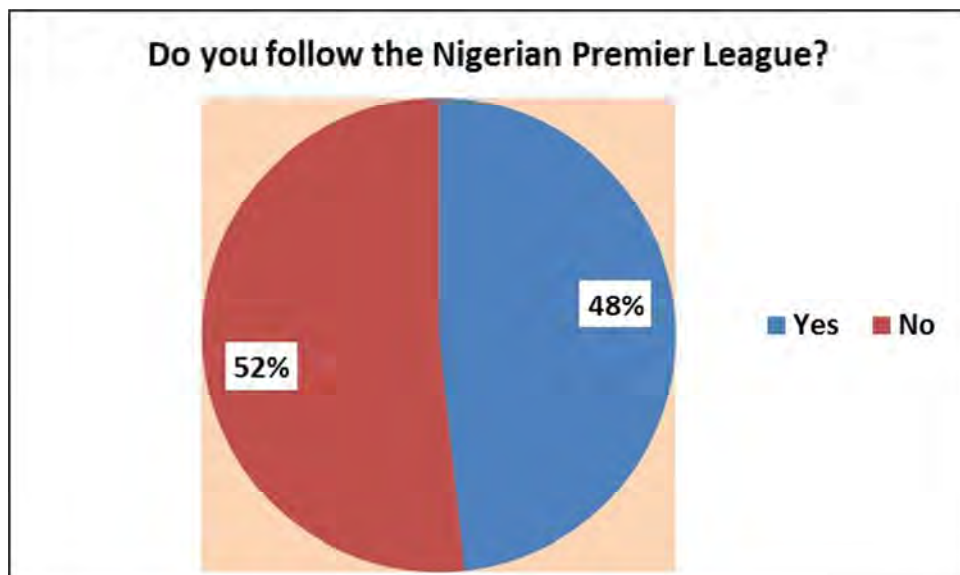


Figure 11: Followership of the Nigerian Premier League

4.9 Nigerian Premier League club followed

Respondents that follow the Nigerian Premier League were further asked for the club they supported. The results indicate that clearly Enyimba is the most popular with 34% of the respondents saying they are supporters followed by Kano Pillars with 26%. There is a wide gap between these top 2 clubs and the rest with Shooting Stars, Enugu Rangers, Lobi Stars and Dolphins having 6%, 5%, 3% and 3% respectively.

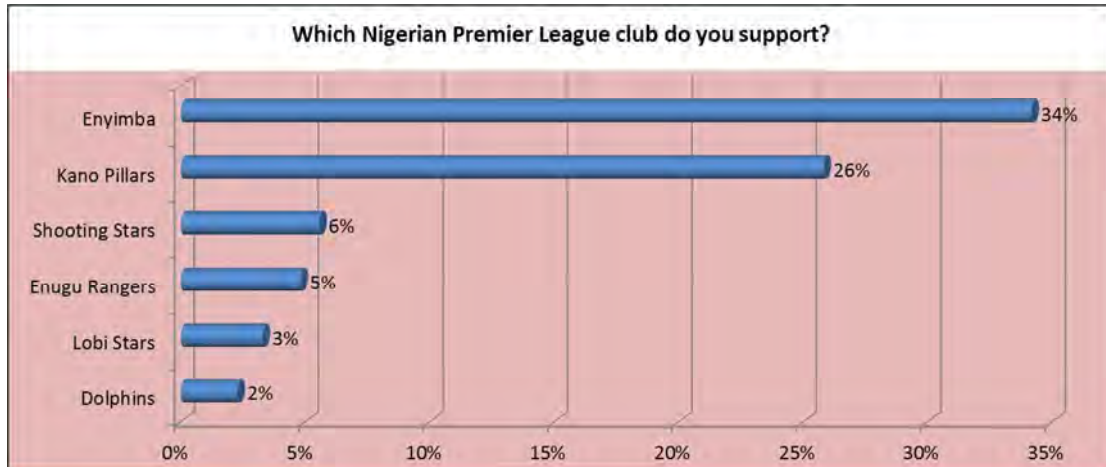


Figure 12: Nigerian Premier League club followed

4.10 Reason for following the Nigerian Premier League

Respondents that said they followed the Nigerian premier league were asked for the main reason why they do so. The overwhelming majority (70%) said they follow the league simply because it is Nigerian. Only 13% said they follow because of the clubs and 7% because of the players. A further 4% said they follow it because it is the best league in Africa.

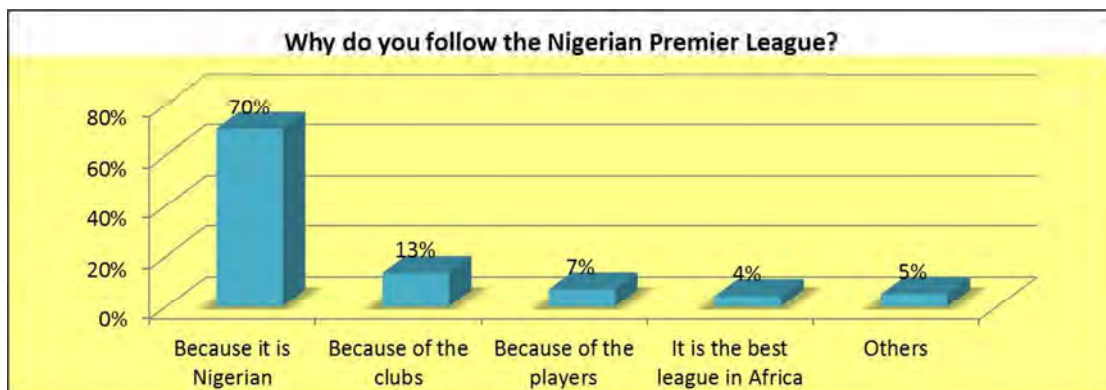


Figure 13: Reason for following the Nigerian Premier League

4.11 Reason for not following the Nigerian Premier League

Respondents that are aware of the Nigerian Premier League but not following it were asked for the reason why. About 5 in every 10 respondents (47%) said they do

not follow it because it is not interesting. Another 36% said they do not follow it because the quality is poor. 12% said they do not follow because the games are not shown on television while 5% said its because the players are not good.

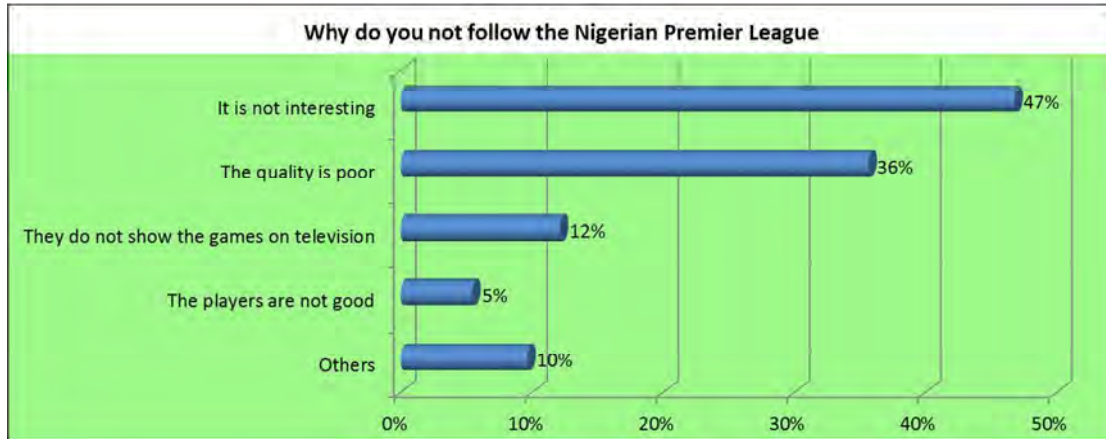


Figure 14: Reason for not following the Nigerian Premier League

4.12 Things that can improve the Nigerian Premier League

Respondents that were aware of the Nigerian Premier league were asked for their opinion about things that can be done to improve the standard of the league. The majority (19%) said better quality players will help improve it while 18% think the sponsors should spend more money. Other popular suggestions are better pitches and training facilities (16%) and 15% said that football administration should be improved. 10% said better officiating and 6% said match fixing should be stopped. Only 5% said the league can improve with better marketing or televising



Figure 15: Suggestions to improve the Nigerian Premier League

5.0 Conclusion

The results of the survey clearly indicate the football obsession in Nigeria particularly for the English Premier League and not for the Nigeria Premier League. The fact that all respondents (irrespective of gender, age and other demographic indicators) consider themselves football supporters shows just how pervasive this phenomenon is in Nigeria.

Manchester United, Chelsea and Arsenal are the top 3 foreign clubs with a large followership in Nigeria. Sentiment and not logic seems to play a large part in choosing teams to support and could explain why most fans stick with their clubs through thick and thin.

Survey results also clearly highlight the problems in the Nigerian Premier League. Even though 71% of the respondents are aware of the existence of the NPL, only 42% follow the NPL. The main reason for following the NPL is simply patriotic and the need to support the NPL. The survey also highlights the need to improve the NPL as this would invariably increase the followership.

The main suggestion for improving the Nigeria Premier League is to improve the quality of players in the league closely followed by the suggestion that the Sponsors of the League should be spending more on the League. The English Premier League is sponsored by Barclays Bank for a value of £40m (N10bn) for 2013/14 to 2015/16 (three seasons)¹ whilst the NPL is yet to get a sponsor for the new season (2012/13) as Globacom pulled out last season (the value was worth over N900m).

There is a huge need to build the NPL as this will also feed into the National Football teams and create the much needed success Nigeria needs in this global arena.

¹ The official website of the Barclays Premier League