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Causes of Football Hooliganism in Stadiums with Particular Reference to Ethiopian Premier League in Addis Ababa

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Research Article

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Abstract

This study investigated the causes of football hooliganism in the Ethiopian Premier League in Addis Ababa. Using a mixed-methods approach, data was collected via surveys, observations, document analysis, and key informant interviews with federation officials, referees, journalists, and fans. The analysis revealed that the primary drivers are club rivalries mirroring deep-seated ethnic and regional political antagonisms, and the general politicization of the sport. Match-day triggers include biased refereeing, ineffective policing, poor team performance, alcohol consumption, and provocative chanting. The study concludes that the fundamental solution lies in depoliticizing the game and “de-ethnifying” clubs by banning ethnic names and symbols to dismantle the core narratives fueling violence.

1. INTRODUCTION

The safety and integrity of football games are threatened by football hooliganism, which is still a problem in many parts of the world. Determining the root causes of football hooliganism is essential to creating treatments and preventative strategies that work. Using data from recent scientific studies, this introduction seeks to give a general overview of the reasons of football hooliganism worldwide.

Numerous factors have been found through research to contribute to football hooliganism. The impact of group dynamics and social identity is one important component. According to studies, people may act like hooligans to display their support for and allegiance to a specific team or fan club. Intergroup conflicts and rivalries can be stoked by this sense of identification and belonging, which encourages violence and disorder (Stott & Pearson, 2018).

Furthermore, a major contributing factor to football hooliganism is socioeconomic status. Studies have indicated a connection between increased levels of hooliganism and socioeconomic deprivation. Social isolation, opportunity gaps, and economic inequality can foster an atmosphere where people turn to violent football games as a way to vent their frustrations or feel empowered (Dunning, 2016).

Likewise, Football hooliganism is also influenced by psychological issues. According to Marsh (2014), some people may be driven by a need for thrills and excitement, a desire for dominance, or a sense of power. Furthermore, aggressive conduct in football stadiums can be exacerbated by variables like alcohol use and crowd dynamics (Stott et al., 2020).

In Ethiopia, football violence was sporadic, however; these days, it is becoming a growing concern and it extended even outside the stadium. Spectators are reserved to go stadiums in afraid of violence related injuries, this violence damaging the sociocultural and economy of the country, and it also affects the image and development of football as a whole. Despite this, studies were scanty and not properly done (Alemmebrat, 2020).

Therefore, although some research has been conducted on football hooliganism in Ethiopia, its breadth and depth have been constrained. Previous research has predominantly concentrated on the broad causes and expressions of football hooliganism in Ethiopia, without investigating the particular elements that give rise to this phenomenon in the Addis Ababa-based Ethiopian Premier League. Furthermore, there is a dearth of

empirical study on the subject of football hooliganism in Ethiopia that examines the viewpoints and experiences of supporters, football authorities, and other stakeholders. The lack of information prevents from fully comprehending the underlying reasons of football hooliganism in Ethiopia, which impedes the creation of interventions and preventative measures that work.

To address this gap in knowledge, this study aims to examine the causes of football hooliganism in Ethiopia, specifically on the Ethiopian Premier League in Addis Ababa. By conducting a comprehensive analysis of the factors that contribute to this phenomenon, the study aims to identify evidence-based strategies that can promote a culture of sportsmanship, respect, and peaceful enjoyment of football in Ethiopia. Thus, this paper argues that football hooliganism in Ethiopia is primarily a manifestation of deep-seated ethnic and political antagonisms, which are exacerbated by match-specific factors like poor refereeing and fan behavior.

2. Review of Related Scientific Literature

Various research findings indicated that the causes of football hooliganism are complex and multifaceted. In their study, Akindes and Kirwin (2011) explored the causes of football hooliganism in Africa, specifically focusing on fan identities in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. They highlight the role of social identity and group dynamics in fueling hooliganism, emphasizing how fans align themselves with specific teams and engage in violent clashes as a means of expressing loyalty and affiliation. Similarly, Spaaij (2006) was analyzed comparative analysis of football hooliganism in six Western European football clubs offers insights into the causes of hooliganism beyond Africa. The study highlights the role of socio-economic factors, such as unemployment and social exclusion, in contributing to hooliganism. It also explores the influence of crowd dynamics, alcohol consumption, and inter-group rivalries.

Moreover, Giulianotti and Bonney (2007), examined supporter activism and hooliganism in European football. Their research sheds light on the socio-political context and cultural factors that contribute to football hooliganism. They emphasize how political ideologies, historical rivalries, and societal norms can shape fan behavior and fuel violence. Additionally, Stott et al. (2007) analyzed the variability in football crowd behavior and policing across different national contexts. Their research highlights the importance of understanding the specific cultural, social, and historical factors that contribute to hooliganism in different regions. They emphasize that effective interventions should be tailored to the unique characteristics of each context. Likewise, Adisa and Oladipo (2021) were proposed a conceptual framework for understanding the causes and consequences of football hooliganism in Nigeria. Their framework highlights the role of socio-economic factors, political tensions, and cultural influences in contributing to hooliganism. They also emphasize the importance of addressing the consequences of hooliganism, such as public safety concerns and damage to infrastructure.

While not specific to football hooliganism, Kavussanu and Boardley (2018) focused on the review of the literature on moral disengagement is relevant to understanding the causes of hooliganism. They highlight how individuals may use cognitive mechanisms to justify their aggressive behavior, such as blaming the victim or minimizing the harm caused. Grix and Lee (2013) also explored the role of sports mega-events in emerging states, highlighting how these events can contribute to social tensions and political conflicts.

While not specific to football hooliganism, their research sheds light on how sports can be used as a platform for expressing national identity and promoting social change, which may contribute to violent clashes among fans. However, Nauright and Parrish (2012) made a comprehensive analysis of sports around the world offers insights into the cultural and historical factors that contribute to football hooliganism. They highlight how sports can reflect broader social and political tensions, emphasizing the importance of understanding the unique context in which hooliganism occurs.

3. Material and Methods

3.1. Description of Study Area

Addis Ababa is the capital city of Ethiopia. It is located on a plateau high in the central

mountains of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa is the highest city in Africa and located at 8,000 feet (2,450 meters) above sea level. Amharic is the working language of the city administration. Addis Ababa is the diplomatic capital of Africa. More than 92 embassies and consular representatives cluster in the city where the Organization of African Unity and the UN Economic Commission for Africa have their headquarters. Addis Ababa is located in the heart of the country surrounded by Oromia state region. Addis Ababa covers about 540 Km2 of which 18.2 Km2 are rural. It is also the largest city in the country by population, with a total population of 3,384,569 according to the 2007 census.

According to the 2007 census, the city of Addis Ababa has a higher population of female residents than male residents. Of the total population 51.6% are females while 48.4% are male. Almost one-quarter of all people in Ethiopia that live in urban areas live in the capital city.

3.2. Study Approach

In order to achieve the study objective, the researcher used a mixed research approach. By adopting the mixed research approach and method, the study was tried to uncover the emic perspective that fans and spectators have towards football hooliganism. The researcher employed a qualitative research approach with the assumption that qualitative research approach enables the researcher to explore and understand multiple meanings the individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell 2009). So, it was helpful to explore the complex subjective understandings and lived experiences of football supporters and football fans, trouble makers, coaches, journalists and referees. Also, the quantitative method helps the researcher top assess the beliefs of fans and spectators.

Although football related violence is widely been studied in elsewhere, football hooliganism in Ethiopia, is less researched phenomena. Therefore, qualitative research approach according to (Creswell 2009) is applicable to little researched phenomena or concept.

3.3. Participant Selection for the Study

In order to gather the data, informants were selected by using both random sampling and purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is used in situations in which an expert uses judgment in selecting cases with a specific purpose in mind. Therefore, informants considered appropriate for this study such as clubs

officials, Ethiopian football federation officials, spectators, football fan association officials, stewards, and football journalist was selected purposively by the researcher due to lack of an established database which could be used as sampling frame for the random sampling. While coaches and referee were selected by the random sampling.

3.4. Methods of Data Collection

In order to properly address all the objectives of the study, survey, key informant interview, observation and in-depth interview methods were employed.

3.4.1. Survey Questionnaires

The survey questionnaire was utilized as tool of data collection for this study. The survey questionnaires were distributed and collected data from football supporters and football fans. The questionnaire was prepared in English and translated in Amharic language. Thus, the researcher purposively selected 26 respondents from football supporters and football fans.

3.4.2. Key Informant Interview

Key Informant Interview method is quite essential whereby the well informed informants provide the researcher with rich and detailed information on the subject of inquiry. For this study purpose, fourteen (14) individuals considered having a good knowledge and understanding regarding the issue under study was interviewed. To this end, key informants from clubs officials, Ethiopian football federation officials, coaches, football fan association officials, stewards, football journalist and referee was interviewed to get detailed information about the causes of football hooliganism in the study area.

3.4.3. Observation

For this study, the researcher made field visit to the stadiums, fan zones, public places and restaurants during football match events to have some insight about the causes of football hooliganism by observing the physical and social behavior in the stadiums. Thus, the researcher was attended and observed five (5) football matches in Addis Ababa stadium (St. George FC and Ethiopia Coffee FC, Fasil Kenama FC and Mekele 70 Enderta FC, Wolaita Dicha FC and Sidama Buna FC, Adama City FC and Hadiya Hosaina FC and Dedebit FC and Fasil Kenema FC). Observation guide was prepared and direct observation and observation along with interview was undertaken to observe the social interaction, chanting, jeering, competition, fighting and the way fans support their team, the action and behavior of fans and supporters both inside and outside the stadiums in Addis Ababa. Hence, the researcher observes fighting and insults and chanting and recorded videos, audio photographs while observing the matches in stadiums.

3.4.4. Document Analysis

Hence, in order to meet some of the objectives of the study and substantiate the data which was obtained through other data sources, document analysis was employed in this study. It was included review of Ethiopian football federation documents and reports. Besides, an assessment of different media reports and press release related to the issue under study was also executed.

3.5. Instruments of Data Collection

During the collection of the data, questionnaire, interview guide and observation checklist was used by the researcher. Besides, Mobile phone camera and tape recorder was also used to record important points during the interview session.

3.6. Sources of Data

The study was employed both primary and secondary data sources with the aim of addressing the various issues central to the study.

3.6.1. Primary Sources

For the study purpose, the researcher used football supporters, football fans, stewards, federation officials, club association officials, club officials, coaches, journalists and referees as primary sources of information.

3.6.2. Secondary Sources

In order to substantiate and supplement the data that was obtained from primary sources, the researcher used secondary sources of information as well. Thus, secondary sources from books, previous research works, journal articles, magazines, newspapers and media reports about the causes of football hooliganism were employed in order find gaps not filled by other researchers.

3.7. Methods of Data Analysis

For quantitative data analysis, descriptive statistics particularly simple frequency distributions were used. Also, the researcher employed searching and defining themes to code and analyzes the qualitative data. Thus, the researcher found patterns or themes for the data that was obtained from informants in line with the specific objectives of the study, and in accordance with concepts which have a resemblance. Thus, the qualitative data which were generated from the in-depth interviews, observation and key-informant interviews was analyzed through careful interpretation of meanings and contents.

3.8. Data Quality Assurance

The whole procedure was examined under the following key elements of data quality

assurance. Thus, to assure reliability records were checked to make sure that it does not contain obvious mistakes made during transcription and being careful to avoid a drift in the definition of codes, or a shift in the meaning of the codes during the process of coding.

Likewise, to assure the validity of the data, the researcher was used of multiple strategies to assess the accuracy of findings, such as triangulate different data sources of information, and member checking and peer debriefing to enhance the accuracy of the account.

3.9. Ethical Considerations

From the very beginning of the study, the researcher tried his best for the approval of the study by his advisor. Before the collection of the data, the researcher was obtained a permission letter from the department of Sociology, Hawassa University. At the time of data collection, the researcher started the interview by explaining the objectives and importance of the study to informants and securing the consent and cooperation from them were taken in to account throughout its process. Additionally, the researcher protected the respondents' right and also their safety from any possible danger as well as tried to ensure their confidentiality to collect accurate information. Likewise, the researcher explained to the informants the right to withdrawal or refuses to participate as well as keeping their actual name in secret throughout the research process.

4. Result and Discussions

4.1. Causes of Football Hooliganism in Ethiopia

The causes of football hooliganism cannot be mono-causally explained. Some of the factors are related with the social and political landscapes of the country while others are football actors and match specifics triggers. Based on the data gathered from informants, the following are the major causes of football hooliganism in Ethiopia premier league particularly in Addis Ababa.

Table 1
The extent to which poor and impartial refereeing contributes to football hooliganism

Reason	Football fan		Spectators		Coaches,		Referees		Journalist		Total	
Poor and Impartial refereeing	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
	8	80	10	83	6	75	4	100	6	100	34	75
N = 40												

According to the data from Table 1 shown, 80% of fans, 84% of spectators, 75% of coaches, 100% of referees and journalists responded that poor or impartial refereeing is the causes of football hooliganism in stadiums Ethiopian premier league.

Table 2
The extent to which politicizing football contributes to football hooliganism

Reason	Football fan		Spectators		Coaches,		Referees		Journalist		Total	
politicizing football	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
	10	100	10	83	7	87.5	4	100	6	100	37	92.5
N = 40												

According to the data from Table 2 shown, 100% of fans, 83% of spectators, 87.5% of coaches, 100% referees and journalists responded that politicizing football is the causes of football hooliganism in stadiums Ethiopian premier league.

Table 3
The extent to which extreme ethnic nationalism contributes to football hooliganism

Reason	Football fan		Spectators		Coaches,		Referees		Journalist		Total	
Impartial refereeing	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
	8	80	5	50	6	75	2	50	6	100	27	67.5
N = 40												

According to the data from Table 3 shown, 80% of fans, 50% of spectators, 75% of coaches, 50% of referees, and 100% of journalists responded that extreme ethnic nationalism is the causes of football hooliganism in stadiums in Ethiopian premier league.

Table 4
The extent to which biased policing contributes to football hooliganism

Reason	Football fan		Spectators		Coaches,		Referees		Journalist		Total	
Impartial refereeing	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
	9	90	9	75	5	63	3	75	5	83	31	77.5
N = 40												

According to the data from Table 4 shown, 90% of fans, 75% of spectators, 63% of coaches, 75% of referees and 83% journalists responded that extreme ethnic nationalism is the causes of football hooliganism in stadiums in Ethiopian premier league.

4.1.1. Football Actors

1. Football Club Leaders and Coaches

In Ethiopia, club leaders and coaches are the cause of football hooliganism. Unethical, undisciplined, corrupt and incompetent coach sometimes instigate violence inside the stadium to win at all costs as well as to blame others for his/her weakness. Coaches insult fans, referees and players so as to incite disorder inside the stadium. The informants asserted that in Ethiopia, the majority of club leaders and coaches lack proficiency. Club leaders and coaches of a number of teams in the country are incompetent.

According to the informants, in Ethiopia, team leaders and coaches do not accept defeat easily. If they lose games, they often lead their players to wreak havoc and violence on opposing teams and match officials.

Many people still remember the scene of a violent attack at Addis Ababa Stadium (May, 2018) when the football team leader led his players in assaulting the defenseless referee after his team conceded the second goal to opposing football clubs.

2. Football fans

Football fans are both the cause and victim of football hooliganism. The football fans of many teams play a major part in the chaos and disorder that is taking place inside the stadium in the country. Thus, unethical and dissatisfied fans create trouble and serious disorder both inside and outside the stadium. They insult, intimidate, mock and even attack opposing fans, referees, coaches and players of the opposing teams. According to informants, there are politically motivated football fans that were used by politicians as proxy warriors to propagate ethnic disgust for their own political interest. One key informant (club official) articulated it as follows:

Football fans support their beloved team by walking long distances. They want to see good performance of their team in the field and finally to win the competition. However, sometimes when their favorite players and their team shows poor performance in the playing field or if their favorite team exhibits below their expectation, they would be dissatisfied and show their contempt and disappointment via shouting loud, insulting the players and coaches of their own team, and sometimes by throwing coins, stones and plastics to hurt the players and coaches as well as opposing fans. This dissatisfaction of fans sometimes escalates in to aggression and serious confrontations.

As the above informant said, when teams and players exhibit below expectations, the fans become dissatisfied and disappointed. Thus, they express their aggression through shouting loud, insulting their players and coaches and sometimes by throwing coins, stones and plastics to hurt the players, coaches as well as opposing fans.

3. Club structure and Team Leaders

In Ethiopia, politicians are administrators of football clubs. There are strong links between team leaders and extremist politicians in the country. In Ethiopia, politicians are football leaders in Ethiopian premier league. Therefore, lack of ethical and professional leadership in Ethiopian football causes of serious football incidents in the country. One informant (football analyst in a private media and program producer in Addis Ababa) asserted about the structure of football clubs in the following way:

In Ethiopia, football clubs are constructed in line with ethnic identities. The sources of budget and funding of the clubs are generated from city administration of particular region and government. Football clubs are governed by politicians. Leaders are not professionals who know well the rules, values and principles of football. They are not well trained and lacks expertize. Clubs are administered by non-ethical and non-professional leaders. This creates problem. The problem also emanates from lack of club sponsorship other than government.

According to the above football newsperson, football stadiums are the source of ethnic violence in Ethiopia outside the stadiums. In addition, clubs are used as a political catalyst for ethno nationalists. Thus, some team leaders work closely with extremist politicians and coordinate criminal activities that would take place

inside and outside stadiums. The recent embarrassing and disgraceful crime that took place in Hawassa before a football match (may, 2019) was carefully orchestrated among the team leaders, extremists, police and the thugs who beat football fans inside the stadium. Also, according to the above informants, in Ethiopia, since the sources of budget and funding of football clubs are generated from city administration of particular city administration and government, football clubs are easily used by politicians for their own political interest. According to the informants, football clubs should find sponsorship to be free from government interference.

4. Biased Policing

In Ethiopia, there are incompetent, inexperienced and biased policing which was frequently causes football hooliganism at football matches. One informant [football fan], who have been wounded and annoyed by the action of security officials forwarded his view as follows:

In our country, police forces are biased. They do not work for all fans equally. They are incompetent and do not have a skill of handling crowd behaviour. Their action is annoying. They simply take inappropriate measures inside the stadiums. They attack innocent fans by using forceful suppression. Rather than calming down the disturbance, they aggravate the situation.

Another key informant argued that security official's particularly regional police forces including "regional special police forces" are working in favor of the home clubs and fans against away clubs. This is because such police forces are supporter of their own regional based clubs; their action was biased and unfair. Thus, regional police forces use excessive coercion and suppress rival football fans. One key informant, who is also a well-known football club coach in Addis Ababa, asserted in the following way:

Police forces particularly regional special police forces are working in favors of home fans and clubs since they [regional special police force themselves] are supporter of their own regional based clubs. As a result, they suppress away team fans even sometimes they are the main actor and instigator of violence and also, they start the fighting.

According to the above informants, instead of controlling the crowd and calming down the acute rivalries between opposing fans, the police force themselves begin the fight with away fans in stadium.

4.2. Match Day Triggers

4.2.1. Refereeing

One of the causes for football hooliganism in Ethiopia is lack of fair and impartial refereeing. There are also incompetent referees that instigate disorder inside stadiums. Sometimes, referees decide incorrect, unfair and biased decision intentionally due to corruption or due negligence that may cause disruption inside the stadium. Thus, in Ethiopia, referees are also the cause of football hooliganism. One key informant [a referee, international arbiter who officiated for long years both Ethiopian premier league and international games] explained it in the following way:

In Ethiopia, referees are the cause of football violence. Sometimes, they trigger violence due to their wrong decisions. But most of the time violence was broken out due to fans lack of awareness about the rule and regulation of the game. Thus, sometimes football fans provoke violence by opposing the decision of a referee in order to refuse the result but not his/her [referees] incorrect decision. Also, in addition to football fans, players often refuse to accept referee's decision that he was wrong as a result the whole spectator would trigger violence. Accordingly, football fans, player and even coaches and team leaders blame that they lost due to referee's incorrect decision to hide their weakness even if the referee was correct.

As the above informant explained, referees' wrong decision can trigger violence in stadiums. However, even if referees are correct in their decision, fans perception of referees biased decision against their favorite club may also instigate football violence in stadiums.

4.2.2. Performance of Players

Football players are sometimes the cause of serious disorder in stadiums. When the team loses, there is a huge potential that the supporters are frustrated and some get angry. The dissatisfaction is the primary cause of violence among the football fans. One informant [football fan], who support his favorite club for years in Addis Ababa, articulated in his own words as follows:

You know football fans support their beloved team with great sacrifice. They need money to pay for the club monthly, to buy club T-shirt and others such as for tickets. You sacrifice your time. You may go long distances to give support for the team. This needs commitment and devotion to support the team to win wherever and whenever without any reservation for your favorite clubs. Even you may give your lives. Football fans hope that their team will be winning. However, when players show below your expectation or when your favorite team you are devoted to give your every-thing loses the game, you will be angry.

Therefore, football hooliganism has been witnessed in the country with regard to dissatisfaction of football fans due to poor performance of the team and their losses. Thus, fans reaction to play, for example poor team's performance on the pitch and their style of play, as well as fans' expectations of their team sometimes cause football hooliganism.

4.2.3. Fan Rivalries and Aggression

The rivalry between football fans is a contributing factor to violent and antisocial behavior in the field. Thus, the aggression that feeling of rivalry may generate, particularly when the team loses a match. Unlike various European countries where the rivalries can be based on socio-economic, political or religious cleavages, football club rivalries in Ethiopia are mainly attached in ethnic and/or regional divisions. In Ethiopia, extreme ethnic nationalists propagate division along with ethnic lines for the sake of political goals.

In addition, while some follow center-periphery logic (an opposition between the regional clubs against Addis Ababa based clubs), other are more rooted in an opposition based on performance, or as a result of historical rivalries dating back to the clubs' inception. For instance, Addis Ababa city football clubs are derby clubs and their rivalries are mostly centered on performance and their ability to shine as the leaders in the capital city of Addis Ababa for gaining reputation and status.

4.2.4. Chanting and Chant Leaders

In Ethiopia, chanting and chant leaders of the particular club are also the cause of football hooliganism in stadiums. Thus, chant leaders sometimes use offensive and provocative languages that instigate disorder. They insult, intimidate and mock rival fans, players and club officials in order to annoy and ridicule the opponent group. Occasionally, they also use chauvinistic and ethnocentric words that praise some clubs and ethnic groups while derides the others. As a result, there would also similar response from the opposing groups. Finally, these verbal confrontations sometimes escalate in to serious physical confrontation between opposing fan groups.

4.2.5. Alcoholism

In Ethiopia, alcoholism is also an important cause of football hooliganism. Even if it is not the major cause, drug use pushes fans to act violently and aggressively. As one club officials said, football fans usually enter in to the stadium by consuming alcohols. The above informant stated it in the following way. “Football fans usually take alcohol and enter in to the stadiums. They take drug before the match was started while they wait in different bars, cafes and restaurants (they also take alcohol after the matches). As a result, excessive drinking cause addicted fans to react violently and aggressively inside the stadium.”

4.2.6. Inadequate Stadium Facilities

Insufficient infrastructure and inadequate security measures at stadiums is another factor which contributed to the occurrence of football hooliganism in Ethiopia. Poor crowd control and the lack of effective safety measures in and around the stadiums, the quality of stadium itself, close proximity and seating as well as absence of fence between rival fans allow the escalation of conflicts among fans.

4.3. Structural Causes of Football Hooliganism

4.3.1. Naming and Logos of Football clubs

In Ethiopia, the structure of football clubs was constructed around regionalism and in line with ethnic identities. Naming football teams after ethnic identity has aggravated the situation in the stadiums. In Ethiopia, majority of the football clubs are established in line with ethnic names to refer specific regional/ethnic identity. As many experts argued, it is against the rule and regulation of FIFA and CAF. One key informant football analyst in a private media and program producer in Addis Ababa) football analyst well-articulated in the following way:

We can see majority of the football clubs in Ethiopia are established in line with particular regional/ethnic identities. This naming of football club with specific regional/ethnic identity is against the rule and regulation of FIFA and CAF. FIFA and CAF discourage the establishment of football clubs in line with ethnic identity, race, political and religious affiliation. However, in Ethiopia, football clubs are established in contrary to the principles of FIFA and CAF in particular and football in general.

Thus, naming of football clubs in line with specific regional /ethnic/ identity in Ethiopia creates strong feeling of antagonism and regionalism which were also the main sources of social unrest in the country.

Here people develop a feeling of “we” and “they” between each other and developed stereotypes and prejudice. As a result, when their team loses a match, many fans think as if their tribe/ethnic group has lost the game.

Similarly, another key informant stated that ethnic politics and naming of football clubs after ethnic identity worsen the situation in Ethiopian premier league. There is a tendency of attaching football clubs with ethnic identity. Some people even attach football clubs with religion. The key informant (club administrator, who is also the clubs’ media and public relation official) articulated his view in the following way.

Ethnic politics and naming of football clubs after ethnic identity worsen the situation in Ethiopian premier league. Since the name of football clubs and their logo expresses specific local or regional /ethnic groups, people attach them with those ethnic groups. Even some people [non-Christians] started to question the name of our club and its symbol [logo]. But the club was established long decades ago without the intent of prejudicing of people with their religious affiliation. But now, they feel that the club is attached to certain religious affiliation. So, it is better to eliminate such epicenter of antagonism.

In addition to naming football clubs with ethnic identity, some football clubs also use political manifestation (even politicians/rulers etc) as their symbol (logo). This club symbols (logos) equally becomes as a source of antagonism and conflict mostly ethnic conflict in and around the stadiums. Thus, in Ethiopia, since ethnic politics is the norm and ethnic hatred has been preached for years, there were mistrust and stereotype among themselves. Also since politicians and ethnic entrepreneurs even use false propaganda for their own sake, there were different understanding and reading of history, has different attitude about different ethnic groups, Kings/rulers and politicians. This hate and prejudice creates ethnic tension in and around the stadiums. According to one informant (fan association official, who is also former chant leader of the clubs in Addis Ababa) explained in his own words as follows:

In Ethiopia, there are football clubs which were established with the use of real political signs in their symbol (logo). The clubs use the symbol (logo) for mass mobilization of fans. However, they were a source of political antagonism and ethnic tension in the country. So, some clubs use political expressions as their club symbol. Thus, the use of club symbols (logos) with political manifestation as like naming of football clubs with regional/ethnic identity becomes a source of disorder inside and outside the stadiums.

Hence in Ethiopia, the establishment and naming of football clubs are in line with ethnic identity and also their symbols (logos) indicate bold political manifestation which becomes a source of disorder inside and outside the stadiums.

4.3.2. Weak Institutions

The existence of weak institutions, for instance the weakness of Ethiopian Football Federation in implementing the rule and regulations of football effectively also plays apart in lawlessness of football stadiums in Ethiopian premier league. In Ethiopia, clubs are established in line with ethnic identities in contrary to the rule and regulation of FIFA and CAF. However, in Ethiopia, clubs are boldly indicating certain locality/ethnic identities. Another weakness of the federation is lack of giving fair, appropriate and immediate response for the problem. According to the informants, the federation is impartial and biased.

4.3.3. Extreme Ethnic Nationalism

Ethnic divisions have a destructive effect of on various aspects of socioeconomic development. In Ethiopia, ethnic cleavage is used as a fault line to propagate division along ethnic lines. Thus, football has also become a venue for promoting narrow ethnic agendas. Ethnic entrepreneurs have hijacked it to advance their political agenda by sending unemployed youth to stadiums to attack football fans. One key informant, a famous football analyst with long experience on Ethiopian football and former producer of Sport News Paper and currently hosting his own football show and serving as a match day live soccer analysis in one of the a private radio station in Addis Ababa, discussed as follows:

Extreme ethnic nationalism is the cause of the current stadium violence. People even ask the ethnicity of referees even his wife, if the referee is from other ethnic group [even his wife], fans blame that they lost [will lost] result due to the referees ethnic identity than their teams performance. As a result, if they lost the result, the referee is responsible for that and he/she will be kidnapped including the opposite club officials and fans. This was seen in different regions of Ethiopia where players and football fans were kidnapped for hours inside the stadiums.

Moreover, the relationship between football, nationalism and football hooliganism is not new, and it is not exceptional to Ethiopian context. In Ethiopia, the relationship between football, nationalism and football hooliganism were started in 1960s when Eritrean secessionist movement began. According to Solomon Addis (2009), during the imperial period, until 1960s, football matches were a symbol of national struggle and beyond ethnic and religious affiliations. However, after the rise of secessionist movements in Eritrea in the 1960s, football was infected with hatred of ethnic nationalists. During that time, there were confrontations between supporters of Eritrean secessionism (ethno-nationalist) and Ethiopian nationalism. Solomon describes in his own words as follows:

In most cases, the annual football matches between teams of the provinces and from within the provinces became venues for loyalties that transcended ethnic and religious differences, it also began mirroring ethno-nationalist aspirations. This was so, especially after the rise of secessionist movements in Eritrea in the 1960s. A football matches between one of the Eritrean clubs and the non-Eritrean clubs, the match becams highly political. In such occasions, the audience in the Asmara stadium was roughly divided between supporters of Eritrean secessionism and Ethiopian nationalism, while the football field became the battlefield for competing nationalisms. If the Eritrean clubs scored a goal, the stadium was electrified with Tigregna beats which was always accompanied with a drum and a claps. Supporters of the army or navy, who were mainly drawn from civilian government employees, members of the armed forces and some Eritreans, would chant 'Amaressa' a well-known battle cry of the Ethiopian army.

Similarly, at the present time, football was usually changed into an arena where one celebrates and observes the depth and bounds of extreme ethnic nationalism. Singing bigoted songs, waving the Ethiopian tri-colors (prohibited by government), or wearing a hat and T-shirt that expresses specific ethnic groups and coming to the stadium adorned with specific ethnic group cultural dresses were and are some of the symbols of expressions of extreme ethic nationalism.

4.3.4. Politicizing Football

In Ethiopia, the beautiful game has routinely been an arena where politics are played out. As historian Getahun (2009) articulated in his publication entitled "*A History of Sport in Ethiopia*," it began in the 1930s, when Italy was trying to colonize the country. And that relationship continued through Ethiopia's modern history. As Solomon Addis describes it, during the Derg regime, certain teams were linked with the military and police and others, like St. George, were associated with the people. So, during the Derg regime, the civil-military confrontations of rival football clubs in the 1970s and 1980s have bold political manifestations.

Similarly, now a days, Ethiopia is seeing some of the same things happened long years ago. Football and football stadiums have turn into political antagonism playing field. Spectators are shouting anti-government chants and there have been violent clashes between fans and with police. In the 1980's, during the Derg regime, football again provided an outlet in a country where freedom of speech was prohibited. Likewise, now these days, since ethnic federalism and identity politics is the norm of the ruling system, football has been a place where ethnic hatred and political antagonism has been propagated by ethno-nationalists.

In Ethiopia, banners and posters were used during football matches in favour, for instance, of political parties and ethnic group's even prohibited and illegal flags (banned by government). Accordingly, the present political turmoil that is prevalent in Ethiopia transformed football stadium once more into political arena, as they were seen as symbols of the state's failing authority and ideology. To this end, football stadium once again became arenas for political agitation and social unrest. During the last few years, it had caused the deaths of people, with major and minor injuries, property damage and total destruction.

4.4. Discussions

This study looks into what causes football hooliganism in stadiums, focusing on the Ethiopian Premier League in Addis Ababa. The finding from Table 2 shows that a total of 92.5% of all the respondents responded that politicizing football is the causes of football hooliganism in stadiums Ethiopian premier league. The findings of study indicated that ethnic and political tensions significantly contribute to football hooliganism. Specifically, the study indicates that ethnic nationalism and politicization of football clubs serve as key causes of disorder in Ethiopian stadiums.

Similarly, the finding from Table 3 shows that a total of 67.5% of all the respondents responded that politicizing football is the causes of football hooliganism in stadiums Ethiopian premier league. The study underscores that ethnic nationalism and political manipulation significantly contribute to football violence, with clashes often rooted in identity conflicts, ethnic symbols, and politicization of clubs. Weak institutions and inadequate security further exacerbate the problem allowing ethnic tensions to manifest violently in stadiums.

Likewise, Adisa and Oladipo (2012) noted that in Nigeria, football hooliganism is intertwined with ethnic, regional, and political rivalry, often reflecting broader societal divisions. There was also another study that supports this finding in West Africa. The study by Akindes and Kirwin (2018) revealed that in West Africa, club rivalries are frequently magnified by ethnic and regional identities, with violence sometimes serving as a manifestation of political competition and social fragmentations.

Moreover, in Algeria, as the one-party system collapsed, the old (regional) names of sports clubs re-emerged, along with regional and cultural identities so that stadia became arenas for political mobilization, demonstrations of strength for electoral campaign meetings by political parties and a space to display symbols in favour of political and cultural claims (Amara 2015). Also, according to Doric (2014), with the collapse of Yugoslavia, cheering took on the nationalistic markings and it becomes a tool for the political conflicts. Members of the two biggest fan groups in Serbia, Partizan and Red Star, who are divided into smaller fractions, fight against each other.

Thus, football hooliganism in Ethiopia was spontaneous. This supports the findings of Pannenborg (2010) who asserted that with a few exceptions, football hooliganism in Africa was not organized but rather spontaneous and most of the anger was directed at referees and players, coaches and club officials of the opponent team. Likewise, Burnett (2002) has also argued that soccer hooligans in South African are not organized but rather spontaneous and were the products of a society scarred by chronic poverty, in which some groups were marginalized in the social, political and economic spheres.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusions

This research is attempted to present the causes of football hooliganism in Ethiopia. To this end, the study set out to investigate the root causes that instigate football fans and spectators to be violent and aggressive in and around the stadiums. The causes of football hooliganism in Ethiopia, particularly in the context of the Ethiopian Premier League in Addis Ababa, are complex and multifaceted. While limited research exists on this specific topic, several factors can contribute to the occurrence of football hooliganism in Ethiopia.

In Ethiopia, social and political factors are the main cause of football hooliganism in stadiums. Thus, the key causes of football hooliganism in Ethiopia are ethnification of football clubs and politicization of football. Hence, the causes of the football disorder inside stadiums are not only football related but also it exhibited certain political interest and ethnic antagonism. Thus, the current ethnic based political predicament that is prevalent in Ethiopia also transformed football stadiums once more into political arena. To this end, football stadium once again became arenas for political agitation and social unrest.

Additionally, atmospheric events in the pitch have also influenced the spectators to be violent and aggressive. However, these factors are the immediate cause of violence in stadiums. Historical club rivalry, biased and incompetent refereeing, biased and ineffective policing, lack of competency and discipline and ethics among coaches, team leaders and managers, poor performance of players, chanting and chant leaders, alcohol consumption and violent behavior of football fans are the factor that trigger violence inside the stadium. These factors are not the basic and most important factors but rather they are secondary factors that exacerbate violence during the match event.

5.3. Recommendations

To effectively address the issue of football hooliganism in Ethiopia, it is crucial to develop evidence-based preventive measures and interventions. Thus, based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded.

- In Ethiopia, football hooliganism is primarily associated with the expressions of ethnic identity and “ethnification” of football clubs. Thus, “de-ethicize” the game (i.e. banning of ethnic club names and symbols is given the priority to solve the problem.
- Football should be separated from politics: In Ethiopia, there is a tendency of politicizing of football. To minimize this tendency, clubs administrators should not be politicians.
- Segregating rival groups of supporters: the segregation of home and away fans is mandatory since close proximity and seating has a potential impact on football hooliganism in Ethiopia.
- Strengthening security measures at stadiums, including improved crowd control and surveillance systems.
- Promoting positive fan culture and sportsmanship through awareness campaigns and education programs.
- Fostering dialogue and cooperation between fan groups, encouraging peaceful rivalry and mutual respect.
- Prohibiting the introduction and restricting the sale of alcoholic drinks in and around the stadium.
- Clubs should be strict on giving proper penalty and teachable punishment for trouble makers (fans, players and coaches) who may instigate disorder in and around the stadium.
- Football referees should at least make the right decisions while officiating matches without bias and any form of impartiality which would reduce football violence in stadiums.
- It is better to ban situational instigators of violence such as offensive hats, T-shirts and banners.
- Improve the quality of stadiums and its facilities such as fences

Declarations

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Clinical Trial Number: not applicable.

Ethical Approval and Accordance

Ethics Statement

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Addis Ababa University, College of Social Silences, Art and Humanities. All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Accordance Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the relevant guidelines and regulations of Addis Ababa University and the Ethiopian Ministry of Education.

Consent to Participate

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Participants were assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses, and they were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated and analysed during the current study are not publicly available due to confidentiality agreements with research participants and the sensitive nature of the qualitative data, but anonymized excerpts may be available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declares that there are no a known competing financial interest or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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