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Jimoh Shehu

Governmentality and Gender Equality Politics in African Women's Football: A Discourse Analysis of Selected Media Texts

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Governmentality and Gender Equality Politics in African Women's Football: A Discourse Analysis of Selected Media Texts

Jimoh Shehu, PhD

Department of Sport Science

University of Botswana

Email: shehu@ub.ac.bw; shehu1362@yahoo.com

African women are increasingly participating in football at top levels such as the European and North American women's football leagues, the Summer Olympic Games, and the Women's World Cup finals. As more and more African women enter the local and global football circuits, football authorities in the continent are faced with the challenge of promoting gender equality. This raises the questions: How are gender equality issues understood, experienced and politicized by African women footballers? What gendered notions, norms and rationality are invoked, evoked, normalized, reproduced and dispersed in the football governance techniques, regulations, practices and official rhetoric in the selected locales? Recognizing the notion of gender equality as a contested concept, and using Foucauldian and intersectional feminist lenses, this paper analyses selected online media texts (interviews, narratives, testimonies, news reports, policy documents) in English for governmentality and gender equality discourses relating to the top four African women's football teams: *Indomitable Lionesses of Cameroon*, *Black Queens of Ghana*, *Super Falcons of Nigeria* and *Banyana Banyana of South Africa*. The paper contributes to the comparative literature on women football governance (dis)order and resistance, and their implications for policy.

Introduction

While football has become an empowering source of agency, social mobility and possibilities for skilled African women, it has also emerged as a site of gender inequality (Salaudeen, 2019). The problematic of gender inequality is reproduced through interwoven oppressive structures and disciplinary techniques (Foucault, 1990, 1995; Hirschmann, 2003) that are embedded in the discursive framing of female football policies, politics and practices (Hong & Mangan, 2004; Engh, 2010). Recurrent attention to the power relations engendered by this discursive framing alongside the voice and agency of the female footballers can reveal the kind of structural and ideological changes needed to assure social justice for these women and protect their human rights. Blending Foucauldian and intersectional feminist discourses, Bourdieu's notion of habitus, Butler's theory of gender as performance and Rich's concept of compulsory heterosexuality, this paper analyses selected online media texts (interviews, narratives, testimonies, news reports, policy documents) in English for gender the equality politics relating to the top four African women's football teams: *Indomitable Lionesses of Cameroon*, *Black Queens of Ghana*, *Super Falcons of Nigeria* and *Banyana Banyana of South Africa*. The reason for selecting these four cases is to engage in 'comparative checking' (Dickovick & Eastwood, 2019, 19) of the similarities and differences in the discursive representations and regulation of the lived experiences and contestations of the female footballers from these four countries. The two main questions addressed in the paper are: (1) how are gender equality issues understood, experienced and politicized by African women footballers? (2) what gendered notions, norms and rationality are invoked, evoked, normalized, reproduced and dispersed in the football governance techniques, regulations, practices and official rhetoric regarding these four teams?

Conceptual Framework

The Foucauldian notion of 'governmentality' or "conduct of conduct" (Foucault, 2007:88; Foucault, 1994:237) is the overarching framework used in this paper to problematize how African women footballers govern themselves and are governed by state and non-state agencies. Rose (1996:32) defines governmentality as "the deliberations, strategies, tactics

and devices employed by authorities for making up and acting upon a population and its constituents to ensure good and avert ill ...", while Dean (2010:28) conceptualizes it as,

the organized practices through which we are governed and through which we govern ourselves, what we shall call here *regimes of practices or regimes of government*. These regimes, however, involve practices for the production of truth and knowledge, comprise multiple forms of practical, technical and calculative rationality, and are subject to programmes for their reform.

Thus, governmentality encompasses the rationality, processes and power relations involved in constituting specific human agents or subjects and managing all their possible activities and behaviours at a distance (Foucault, 1995; Foucault, 1997; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 2003). The of techniques and practices for conducting self and others are numerous. They include rhetoric, myths, values, laws, policies, routines, ritual, drama, healthcare, reading, education, training, inquiry, mass media, bureaucracy, testing, evaluation, officiating, policing, confession, reward, penalty, risk management, spatialization, privatization, self-help, self-care, self-surveillance, self-improvement, exercises, wearable technologies, etc. (Foucault, 1990 & 2007; Merry, 2001; Gordon, 2017). Governmentality has been productively used as an analytical framework to study the techniques of governing the thoughts and actions of agents in various domains such as criminology, healthcare, housing, civil service, education, social welfare, and social work (Mckee, 2009). In sport studies, for example, governmentality has been used to analyze governance (Grix & Harris, 2016), doping (Burke & Hallinan, 2008), national sport organizations (Mick & Houlihan, 2006), and Olympism (Cupan, 2017). The concept is particularly relevant to this paper in the sense that "the beautiful game" is one of the various rational, ethical and political techniques used by states and non-state agencies such as football federations and the media to regulate the thoughts, spaces and conducts of specific populations (for example, players) in order to (re)produce disciplined, rational, competent, healthy, resourceful, patriotic and self-reflective subjects in private and public spheres.

Moreover, Foucault's repressive hypothesis is used to examine how the assemblage of power in football governance deal with the presumed transgressive sexuality of African women footballers in order to control and deploy their sexuality towards productive ends. In his *History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, (Foucault, 1990) drew parallels between modern and Victorian eras, especially the similarity in fusion of power and knowledge around sexuality in visual and performing arts, laws, policies, curricula, ethic, mass media, seminars, research reports, medical texts, literature, official publications, scriptures, etc. towards engendering or rationalizing certain sexual dispositions, liaisons, experiences, imaginations and practices in specific cultures and contexts. He opposes the notion that sexual repression and prudery were rife during the Victorian era, and demonstrated that the Victorians constructed a diverse range of knowledge about sexuality in order to better study, discuss, teach, regulate, police, sanction and direct it. He argued that ever since, different institutions (embodied power) have been systemically configuring and circulating diverse ideas (discourses/knowledge) about sexuality for self-regulation and social control. In this context, the paper examines how African women footballers' lived experiences of surveillance and control, how their sexualities are discourses and governed towards reproduction and productivity, and how they use or resist the knowledge/power created for their normalization and self-discipline (Foucault, 2007).

The paper also draws on Butler's (1990) poststructuralist notion of gender performativity which emphasizes the role of social conventions, cultural standards and dominant discourses in the control and regulation of the individual's performance of their gender identities. According to this perspective, gender distinctions are socially inscribed and performed according to existing power relations and normative procedures. Butler agrees with the arguments of Foucault (2002) and Bourdieu (1990) that bodies and identity practices are socially constructed. As a result, individuals may exercise their agency to affirm, resist or negate hegemonic gender practices. In light of Butler's argument, this paper examines how African women footballers are constrained to reproduce femininity and "compulsory heterosexuality" (Rich, 1980), and the creative ways by which they "enact a performativity of embodied agency...." (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013: 178). The paper also draws crucial attention to how the intersection (Collins, 2011) of sex, gender,

sexuality, race, nation and class mediate African women footballers' situated experiences of football politics and power relations.

Method

The sources analyzed in this paper comprise online news, articles, interviews, reports, and documents, texts and comments (obtained via Bing and Google search) containing themes relating to African Women's Football in general and the top four African women's football teams in particular: *Indomitable Lionesses of Cameroon*, *Black Queens of Ghana*, *Super Falcons of Nigeria* and *Banyana Banyana of South Africa*. The selected documents were analyzed for discourses or discursive resources (Foucault, 1972; Lemke, 1995; Howarth, 2013; Williams, 2005) - that is, the authoritative, constitutive and contingent rhetoric, narratives, valuation, imageries, vocabularies, truth claims, and assumptions) used to construct, represent, position the selected teams and their associated players with respect to gender, sexuality, performativity, equality, and social justice issues. In terms of coverage, this paper sampled sources published between 1991 and 2020, a period overlapping the inaugural editions of women's football championship in Africa (1991 CAF Women's Championship) and the 1991 FIFA Women's World Cup as well as the subsequent editions up till the 2018 Africa Women Cup of Nations and the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup. Although local and international, sources have been sampled, they are limited mainly to electronic print media in English that address the key questions undergirding the paper.

The paper is divided into six parts. First, it outlines the homophobic laws used to discipline and control African women footballers in the selected countries. Second, it examines how the women players are expected to perform gender and how the issue of their sexuality has been spoken or not spoken about to exercise knowledge/power over their bodies and manage their resistance to normalization. Third, it offers a feminist and materialist perspectives on how unequal gender relations are enacted and reinforced through manipulation of funding for travel, camping, friendlies and bonuses. Fourth, it scrutinizes the representation of these women in the media, especially the discursive practice of projecting derision on them by those who regard them as a threat to social order. Fifth, it analyses the female footballers' counter-conducts, that is, how they

exercise their agency in contexts shaped by classism, sexism, racism, homophobia and economic exploitation. Lastly, it draws policy implications for FIFA and other governmental agencies for assuring social justice for, and protecting the rights of, African female footballers.

Homophobic Red-Baiting

According to the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA)'s 2019 report, 32 African countries presently criminalize same-sex relationships. Homophobia is rife in Africa for ethnocentric, fundamentalist, colonial and political-economic reasons (Søgaard, 2016; Ssemugooma, 2018). For instance, Mohamed Bechir Khalfallah, the then Vice-Chairperson of African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights asserted in 2015 that "LGBT+ people are an imported virus that will spread across Africa and have no place in this human rights body" (Lishivha, 2020, para. 7). This pathologic rhetoric is not uncommon. As Smith (2014, para. 4-5) reported:

.... Last week Gambian president Yahya Jammeh declared: "We will fight these vermins called homosexuals or gays the same way we are fighting malaria-causing mosquitoes, if not more aggressively." This is not, however, merely the hate-filled bile of politicians. They make such statements because they know they will strike a popular chord in swaths of Africa....

South Africa is the first out of 54 African countries to decriminalize homosexuality and legalize same-sex partnership. Comparatively, Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Cameroonian governments have been blatant in their deployment of anti-gay rhetoric, rejecting homosexuality as Western and antithetical to African norms, values and cultures. For instance, in 2001 when the Prime Minister Cameron threatened to cut UK aid to African countries with homophobic laws, the Ghanaian President John Evans Atta Mills responded:

"No one can deny Prime Minister Cameron his right to make policies, take initiatives or make statements that reflect his societal norms and ideals but he does not have the right

to direct other sovereign nations as to what they should do especially where their societal norms and ideals are different from those which exist in Prime Minister's society." "I as president of this nation will never initiate or support any attempt to legalize homosexuality in Ghana." (Quartey, 2011, para. 5-7).

President Mills's response is an example of the discursive construction of national security and sexual citizenship. His retort racializes homosexuality as alien (British/Eurocentric), imperialistic and a violation of the Ghana's sovereignty and heterosexual moral order. The following homophobic laws reveal implicit assumptions about sexuality in Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon:

Table 1: Same-Sex Regulations

| Country | Code | Legislation |
|----------------|---|--|
| Ghana | Chapter 6 Section 104 of the Ghana's Criminal Code (1960) | (1) Whoever has unnatural carnal knowledge – (a) of any person of the age of sixteen years or over without his consent shall be guilty of a first-degree felony and shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of not less than five years and not more than twenty-five years; or (b) of any person of sixteen years or over with his consent is guilty of a misdemeanor; or (c) of any animal is guilty of a misdemeanor. (2) Unnatural carnal knowledge is sexual intercourse with a person in an unnatural manner or with an animal. |
| Nigeria | Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (2013) | 1. A person who enters into a same sex marriage contract or civil union commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of 14 years imprisonment. |

| | | |
|------------------------|---|--|
| | | <p>2. A person who registers, operates or participates in gay clubs, societies and organization, or directly or indirectly makes public show of same sex amorous relationship in Nigeria commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of 10 years imprisonment.</p> <p>3. A person or group of persons who administers, witnesses, abets or aids the solemnization of a same sex marriage or civil union, or supports the registration, operation and sustenance of gay clubs, societies, organizations, processions or meetings in Nigeria commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of 10 years imprisonment.</p> |
| <p>Cameroon</p> | <p>Law No. 2016/007 of 12 July 2016 Relating to The Penal Code</p> <p>(Article 347-1 is based on an Ordinance issued in September 1972)</p> <p>(ILGA, 2019:312)</p> | <p>SECTION 263: Public Indecency Whoever publicly offends against decency shall be punished with imprisonment for from 15 (fifteen) days to 2 (two) years or with fine of from CFAF 10 000 (ten thousand) to CFAF 100 000 (one hundred thousand), or with both such imprisonment and fine.</p> <p>264: Corruption of Moral. Whoever a) publicly utters any immoral song, cry or speech; or b) draws the attention of the public to any occasion of immorality, shall be punished with the penalties provided for in Section 263 above. (Republic of Cameroon, 2016: 96)</p> <p>SECTION 347-1: Homosexuality Whoever has sexual relations with a person of the same sex shall be punished with imprisonment for from 6 (six) months to 5 (five)</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | | <p>years and a fine of from CFAF 20 000 (twenty thousand) to CFAF 200 000 (two hundred thousand). (Republic of Cameroon, 2016: 133)</p> <p>Article 83 of the Cameroon's Law on Cybersecurity and Cybercrime (Law No. 2010/12 of 2010) specifies that: Section 83.</p> <p>(1) Whoever uses electronic communication devices to make sexual proposal to a person of the same sex shall be punished with imprisonment for from 01 (one) to 02 (two) years or a fine of from 500,000 (five hundred thousand) to 1,000,000 (one million) CFA francs or both of such fine and imprisonment.</p> <p>(2) The penalties provided for in subsection (1) above shall be doubled if sexual proposals are followed by sexual intercourse. (Republic of Cameroon, 2010:23).</p> |
|--|--|---|

Importantly for this paper, legal discourse is implicated in the process of socially constructing and sorting same-sex partners and heterosexual into categories for suppression and reproduction. The power that could be exercised by the local network of actors based on the knowledge of these homophobic laws is simultaneously prohibitive and productive. On the one hand, the resultant power relations promote people's self-identification, self-monitoring and self-regulation. On the other hand, they engender gendered and sexual red baiting. Construct and enable certain kinds of truths or discourse about sex, sexuality, gender while disabling alternative and fluid conceptions of subjectivities and social relations. They function to invade privacies and intimacies, and to encourage sexual discussions and disclosures in order to subject deviations from heteronormativity to regulation and persecution. The hegemonic understanding of virtuous sexual activity embedded in these legal provisions re-inscribes the fixed gender roles of the opposite sex in the private sphere and gives the police and other regulatory authorities an extensive power to control individuals' lives by means of surveillance,

violence, harassment, blackmail, arrest, detention, seizure, arraignment, and incarceration. In particular, they have empowered repressive football officials and other members of the public to seek, spot and purge women footballers suspected to be lesbians.

On June 11, 2016, the First Vice President of the Nigeria Football Federation, Seyi Akinwunmi, brazenly told to a chapter of the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria that lesbianism was the main reason the Super Falcons of Nigeria finished fourth in the 2015 All Africa Games in Congo Brazzaville and failed to qualify for the Rio2016 Summer Olympics. He described the players and their coaches as embodiments of transgressive, disruptive and destructive sexuality,

“Lesbianism kills teams. People are afraid to talk about it. The coaches take advantage of the girls, so there is much more to build in female football.” (Atoyebi, 2016, para. 5)

Three days later, he doubled down on his allegation, claiming that,

“Many potential sponsors have shied away from supporting the women's game because of the misconception that it is synonymous with lesbianism,” he said in a statement on Tuesday to clarify his comments at the meeting in Nigeria's southwestern Oyo state. (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2016, para. 5)

An anonymous Super Falcons player angrily reacted to the rampant moral panic and homophobic stereotypes swirling around female footballers in Nigeria, a country where homosexuality is criminalized and severely punished with 14-year imprisonment,

"I'm tired of answering this silly and dumb issue. It's pathetic to say the least how a person of such status will come out and brandish female players as lesbians. But then again it goes a long way to show you the kind of leaders we claim to have in charge of our football," she said. "It's really a shame. Maybe now they will get sponsors for the teams by this act so they can cover their mess. Personally, if I could I would have sued him." (Ahmadu, 2016, para. 13-15)

As noted by Akwei (2016, para. 5-7), homophobic stigmatization of the Nigerian women team is common,

In June 2011, the coach of the Super Falcons, Eucharia Uche, was condemned by FIFA for saying that homosexuality was “dirty, spiritually and morally reprehensible” while admitting that she had dismissed lesbian players from the team. Three years after, local media reported that the former President of the Nigerian women’s football league, Dilichukwu Onyedinma, announced the official ban on female homosexuality in Nigerian football teams, which led to an investigation by FIFA.

Dilichukwu Onyedinma, reportedly warn her players against lesbianism,

“Any player that we find is associated with it will be disqualified,” Onyedinma was quoted as saying. “We will call the club chairmen to control their players, and such players will not be able to play for the national team,” she added. (Reuters, 2013, para. 4-5)

It is in the context of homophobic culture that Yusif Basigi, the head coach of the Black Queens would warn his team to desist from lesbianism whenever they are in camp Football Ghana (2016); and the police would invade a football training camp to arrest three teammates who were,

.... jeered at by a crowd, intimidated by police, kicked out of the camp, and rejected by their families. All for being suspected of homosexuality. (Stewart, 2018, para. 6)

Moreover, these homophobic laws help us to understand how the politics of sexual regulation intersects with the repression of women footballer as a distinct sporting class who have little legal recourse once arrested as the following report illustrates:

Two women have been beaten and arrested in Cameroon and are facing years in prison for allegedly engaging in sexual relations together in the privacy of a home. The women, identified as Viamie, aged 22 and Emanuella, 24 belong to a football team known as The Young Indomitable Lionesses, coached by Ngoh. We have been informed that the women

have “been suspected of this act for a long time due to their close relationship, displayed during their participation on the football team,” according to a source. Apparently female soccer teams in Cameroon have been under investigation for a long time as authorities seek to identify team members who are perceived as lesbians. Suspected lesbians are then targeted for surveillance. The women are often followed and so called “intelligence” is gathered by police, members of the community, and sometimes even team members. In this instance we have been informed that the 2 women were followed to a home after a soccer training session by police under instruction of the local police Commissioner, Billong Solange Aba. They were followed to a room at the Malingo residential area in Buea, where it is alleged, they were “seen bathing and making love together.” The women were at home when they received a knock at the door. They opened the door and the police arrested them. It is alleged that they were beaten by the police and taken to the Buea Central Prison where they await trial. (Nathan, 2014, para. 1-5).

Section 9 (3 & 4) of the Constitution of South Africa (1996) clearly prohibits any unfair forms of discrimination by the state and individuals:

3. The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.

4. No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3). National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination.

Despite these constitutionally guaranteed rights to dignity and equality, homosexuals, especially lesbians, in South Africa, continue to suffer harassment, violence and rape. South Africa has been dubbed the rape capital of the world on account of its “frighteningly high levels of rape” (Wilkinson, 2014, para. 14). According to a South African

Constitutional Court Judge Edwin Cameron: “Lesbians remain a vulnerable group in South Africa. Vulnerability as a woman and as a lesbian is a particularly lethal combination in our community.” (News24 Correspondent, 2016, para. 6-7). Openly gay women footballers in South Africa, especially those perceived as butch lesbians (Fihlani, 2011) routinely suffer in the hands of patriarchal moral police bent on enforcing “compulsory heterosexuality” (Rich, 1980), that is, forcibly regulating the conduct of lesbians through subordination, sexual abuse and corrective rape (Cornelissen & Grundlingh, 2012; Cogswell, 2010; Engh & Potgieter, 2018). For example,

On 28 April 2008, Banyana Banyana midfielder Eudy Simelane was found in a ditch in the outskirts of her home township KwaThema, Gauteng. She had been raped, robbed and murdered. Her rape was a reaction to her sexual orientation as Simelane was an out lesbian woman.... The violence against her was particularly brutal as she had been gang-raped and then stabbed over 25 times. ‘Corrective’ rape is a common threat to black lesbian women in South African townships, the idea being that raping a lesbian woman will ‘cure’ them of their homosexuality. (South African History Online, 2008, para. 1).

The moral police and corrective rapists feel threatened by the presumed deviation of women footballers from the dominant model of sex, gender and sexuality. Consequently, these footballers are Othered and dehumanized as monstrous beings who are prone to perversion and must be harshly reformed. FIFA is part of assemblage of power – nations, sport federations, inter-governmental organizations, etc. “putting sex into discourse” (Foucault, 1990: 21) in order to integrate self-regulation and self-responsibility with external regulation of sexuality. According to *General Provision 4: Non-discrimination, Gender Equality and Stance against Racism* (FIFA, 2019a:7):

Discrimination of any kind against a country, private person or group of people on account of race, skin colour, ethnic, national or social origin, gender, disability, language, religion, political opinion or any other opinion, wealth, birth or any other status, sexual orientation or any other reason is strictly prohibited and punishable by suspension or expulsion.

FIFA's avowal of non-discrimination situates football as a liberating (and neo-liberal) site for diverse and overlapping social identities. The 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup in France was remarkable for its discursive support for the LGBTQ community, players and their supporters. About 40 lesbians and bisexuals reportedly participated at the tournament, compared to "three known openly gay professional male soccer players in the world" (Compton, 2019). While FIFA's statutes and guidelines (FIFA 2016, 2018b, 2019b) enable conversation about homophobia, human rights, inclusion, anti-discrimination, they also emphasize the need for self-regulation and respect for social norms, as "*FIFA remains neutral in matters of politics and religion. Exceptions may be made with regard to matters affected by FIFA's statutory objectives*" (FIFA 2019a:7). This second part of General Provision 4 of FIFA's Statutes glosses over the political nature of football, sexuality, religion and discrimination. It also signals to those at risk of religious and political victimization that they need to manage themselves, as their protection cannot be assured by FIFA in order not to offend concerned member nations or organizations.

Compulsory Heterosexuality

In January 2004, former FIFA president Sepp Blatter - the self-styled 'godfather' of women's football (The Guardian, 2005, para. 5) – opined that an effective way that women footballers could help boost their sport brand and following is by donning hot pants,

Let the women play in more feminine clothes like they do in volleyball. They could, for example, have tighter shorts. Female players are pretty, if you excuse me for saying so, and they already have some different rules to men -- such as playing with a lighter ball. That decision was taken to create a more female aesthetic, so why not do it in fashion? (BBC, 2004, para. 2-5).

Apart from speaking in bad faith regarding the weight of women's football, Blatter glibly reduces women's game to a parade for sexualized performance of femininity. By

politicizing and elevating being aesthetic over being athletic, Blatter reveals patriarchal assumptions about women's normative relationship to football, their bodies and their audience. His statement taps into the discourses that feminine sexuality is essential to doing gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1988) and the disciplining of transgressive embodiment within and outside the football arena is key to achieving neoliberal ends. The discursive framing of the appropriate ways that women footballers, as opposed to their male counterparts, should dress or conduct themselves is central to both sexual and gender equality politics in African football governance. What follows is how African women footballers have acted to maintain or disrupt normative gendered regulations and the cultural assumptions behind them. Reminiscing about her initiation into playing football with boys, Jermaine Seoposenwe, the South African football forward, was quoted by Nnadiębulam (2016, para. 5) as saying,

My mum had a dream that I was going to be a boy before I was born. I feel like it is destiny for me to act more like a boy than a girl. For me in my mind the boys always have more fun, always got to play outside, run around in the dirt and do fun stuff like playing with the soccer ball, whereas girls will always play in the yard with dolls.

Jermaine recognizes early in life that compared to boy, girls are social constructed as inhibited beings who are expected to perform gender within a limiting and limited space. She sees in football manifold possibilities to subvert this gender order. She decides to perform as a boy and as a footballer to destabilize the normative ideology that there is a fixed gender identity. By so doing, she demonstrates a performative resistance. On the other hand, the Super Falcons' goalkeeper Ann Chiejine wanted to be represented in the media as conforming to the heteronormative norm:

As the only wife and mother on the Nigerian team -- she has two daughters, ages 5 and 3 -- Chiejine serves as a powerful rebuttal to those who believe that sports sabotage motherhood, her teammates said. "Some feel that when you get married, that is the end of your career, and that if you play football, you won't be able to have children," Chiejine said. "I am showing that you can still play and it will not disturb you." (Longman, 1999, para. 18-19).

Due to a strong cultural tendency to sexualize and judge women's bodies, any deviation from the feminine ideal arouses anxiety and moral panic around women footballers. Media narratives about married African women footballers simultaneously allay fears about their sexual deviance and infertility, while reinforcing the notion that marriage for them is natural and inevitable, and not constrained by personal, social and other contextual factors.

Two former *Super Falcons*, Cynthia Uwak and Chici Igbo who have well-defined muscles have been labelled transgender, manly, dangerous and steroid users by commentators (Kisenge, 2015). Skilled, single, strong, powerful, and ripped women footballers are rarely seen as deconstructing the prevailing gender norms and presenting different ways of being a girl or woman. Instead, they are encouraged or pressured to embody and parade as attractive, procreative, marriageable and heterosexual objects. To be sure, women footballers may prefer or desire to dress and look sexy and beautiful as a demonstration of personal, political and moral performances or transformation. It is the insistence that they must embody certain feminine, maternal, or sexual standards that holds them hostage to patriarchal categorizations and expectations. It also raises the vexed issues of gender inequality especially that there are no gendered concerns or emphases about how African men footballers dress, look, love and organize their lives. For instance, while the men's hairstyles are often described as stylish, creative, distinctive, experimental and peculiar, they are never seen as impeding their gender or soccer performance (Cox, 2016; Highest Paid Soccer Player; 2019; Online Editor, 2008). Conversely, there are oppositional narratives of African women footballer's hairstyles and lifestyles as attractive and disruptive (McCann, 2019; Naptu2, 2019). For instance, Francisca Ordega was blamed by a twitter user for Nigeria's 3-0 loss to Norway in the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup in France, reproaching her in pidgin English for playing a crucial first match with annoying make-up, painted nails and long hair which supposedly retarded her speed and led to her team's poor performance,

Na this girl on attachment vex me pass for that game.... you dey do make up come field...paint nails...that long hair no dey make her run well.... we played well but we defended poorly....

(Drizzy of Lagos, 2019, para. 1)

Francisca donned a different hairstyle for the Nigeria-France match played two days later. When asked whether she changed her hairstyle to stem further criticisms, she responded,

“Nah, I needed something new. In fact, I want them to talk more,” she texted me, saying that she was bored of having the same look for all three group games. “If we qualify for the next round, I will have something different then as well.” (McCann, 2019, para. 24)

In addition to having to stress over their tresses and dresses in order to perform normative gender, African women footballers are also challenged to continually debunk the notion that football is for dykes (Bindel, 2014; Guilbert, 2016; Binley, 2019; Herzog, 2019) by underscoring their maternal, marital and heterosexual bona fide. Lesbian labelling is used by the assemblage of families, neighbours, detractors, coaches, mass media, sponsors, spurned suitors and sexual predators as a technique of reproducing women footballers as straight and sexually adequate. The label is often deployed to frighten and corral them; discredit their performance, and stifle their recreational and professional aspirations. The lesbian discourse makes the women footballers more visible and amenable to governance by the social system, whether in the form of coaches, police, rapists, family, policy makers or journalists. The women’s constant need to forswear lesbianism can be read in two ways: as an attempt to categorize and reproduce themselves as normal and desirable women, and as a resistance tactic – a pushback against misclassification, surveillance, threats, shame, harassment and possible loss of life or livelihood. For example, the former and current *Black Queens* captains Elizabeth Addo had had to deny the charge of lesbianism in their ranks. Responding to the accusation of homosexual relations in camps and tournaments, Elizabeth objected,

"We don't engage in lesbianism acts; it has never happened in our camp." "This perception is borne out of how female footballers dress and walk but trust me, I have not seen any Ghanaian footballer who is a lesbian." (Appiah, 2016, para. 4-5)

The former Black Queens captain Grace Adjoa Bayor also dismissed the lesbian label and went further to draw attention to her moral, marital and sexual identities for social exoneration,

"none of my colleagues expressed interest in me. I was never confronted in that regard. I want to also deny claims that female footballers are lesbians. That is false. Throughout my career as a footballer, I never witnessed any acts or relationship between any of my colleagues." She also disclosed she broke her virginity at age 32 and allowed her fiancée to have sex with her after dating him for five years. (GhanaWeb, 2018, para. 4-5)

The belief that the appropriate performance of gender by women footballers should embody female sexuality puts players and their entourages at political odds. For instance, a legendary South African female footballer Portia Modise announced that she needed to truncate her footballing career due to ideological conflicts with her coach who was notorious for sexual harassment and homophobia,

In 2008, Modise announced that she would be quitting Banyana Banyana because of a rift with then coach August Makalakalane. "It's a difficult thing when you have to turn your back on your country, but it was something I had to do for my own sanity," she explains. "We didn't see eye to eye tactically, but he was also such a homophobe and I just couldn't do that to myself. This is women's soccer and here we were being told by this guy what to do and how to act. It wasn't right." (Mthembu, 2017, para. 25) .

As one of Makalakalane accusers, Nthabiseng "Moemish" Matshaba narrated,

"I was fired for refusing to sleep with the coach," she says. "He tried on several occasions to fondle me but I stopped him. I wouldn't give him the chance to do that." Matshaba says

Makalakalane would wait for everyone to go to sleep when they were in camp. “He would then call me to his room but I let him down by refusing to sleep with him. That led to our differences and he started making derogatory remarks about me in front of my colleagues.”

Another player, Linah "Jomo" Mosebo recounted that,

Makalakalane treated lesbians in the team very badly. Mosebo, who was fired from the squad - she alleges because she was "too close" to Portia Modise - says Makalakalane wanted only young, straight girls in the team. She says in an SMS to the paper: "The coach says he doesn't want lesbians in his team, just young, straight girls. (Mmegionline, 2010, para. 1-7)

Clearly, essentialist understanding of women footballers' gender and sexuality poses a problem for the players, as it situates their embodiment, orientation and self-expressions as transgressing sexual and gender boundaries – a transgression that sexual predators in African football and other social spaces are hell-bent on correcting and exploiting. Given the men's domination of football governance in Africa, women footballers are particularly vulnerable. An Indomitable Lioness who requested anonymity during a media interview lamented the material effects of pernicious sexuality discourses in African women's football:

Without hesitation I say that suspected or real lesbians are victims of all sorts of discriminations. The leaders of the clubs had even decided to kick them out of the clubs or, by all means' change them. Women themselves do not complain about female homosexuality. Cases of violence are frequent. I would take as an example the case of the rape of two women soccer players at Mfandena in Yaoundé. I didn't see any president of club moved by this drama. Even the managers of the clubs where they were affiliated turn a deaf ear. Neighbors didn't move a single hand (I wonder if it was planned!). It is not rare that the managers of clubs sexually harass women. Sleeping with a manager or publicly hooking up with a man is the way women avoid being victim of blackmail linked to homosexuality. I believe discriminatory policies make us loose many talents. Some

women are abused either by their managers or members of the clubs and when they found themselves pregnant the same managers help them to have an abortion (clandestine) in fear to lose a player. On the other hand, girls are spied on (after games; during the training; in night clubs; in school in sum everywhere). Some men are sent to date girls and in case it doesn't work they threatened them. These threats sometimes reach relatives and family life becomes unbearable. (Nyeck, 2003, para. 8)

Perverse attempts to sexually discipline assertive and resistive girls and women in football as demonstrated in the preceding narrative epitomize the complex intersection between gender, class, age, sexuality and nationality (Crenshaw, 1991; Ratna, 2013). Most African women footballers come from poor backgrounds and regard football as a means for upward social mobility, making success in the game very important to them. Consequently, they train diligently with the hope of advancing and pulling themselves and their families out of poverty. Sadly, football officials capitalize on the social subordination of working-class women in general, and under-privileged women footballers in particular, to frustrate the players' efforts, talents and aspirations for social improvement. Instead of living up to their duty of care, African women's football coaches and managers are notorious for perpetrating and condoning sexual stigmatization, harassment and exploitation of players in their charge. Acknowledging this allows us to see how approaches to rationalizing and regulating ways of doing gender is central to gender equality politics and policies in African women's football.

Distributive Injustice

Gender equality politics in football governance entails contestations about access, participation, welfare, representation, remuneration and the biopolitical process of sorting footballers according to age, sex, sexuality, gender, race, space, class, ethnicity and colour in order to decide who gets what, how and when. In other words, it involves the issue of distributive justice (a fair, proper and transparent allocation of resources and benefits to meet the needs of national footballers and enhance their welfare) (Rescher, 2002). It underlies debates over football federations' budgeting, spending and accountability. Moreover, it has implications for teams', players' and civic outcomes. With respect to African women footballers, their lived experiences of football governance

cannot be adequately discussed without touching on how resource allocations have affected their welfare, identity, dignity and ability to train, camp, travel, compete, access services and flourish professionally. Female footballers protesting over non-payment of their allowances and bonuses is relatively common in Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa. On 20 November 2018, the Black Queens of Ghana exited from the group stage of the 2018 Women's Africa Cup of Nations held in Ghana. Ghana's head of delegation at the tournament, Cudjoe Fianoo, attributed their painful exit to the players' devious agitation over unpaid bonuses, implying the exploited and short-changed women had put money over country,

Some of the players wanted to use this tournament as a basis to demand old outstanding bonuses due them," Fianoo said in interviews with the local media. When we spoke to them and looked at the documentation, we realized that some of the bonuses dated as far back as 2014 and 2016 and came up to about \$500,000 [€443,046] in total. So, the [Ghana football] Normalization Committee and the Sports Ministry spoke to the girls to keep their focus on this tournament while they worked with Finance and Accountant General to sort out the outstanding bonuses. However, the ministry gave the girls some money as a form of motivation and I can tell you that even the bonuses they were supposed to get for this tournament were doubled. But the truth is the money issues made the team lose focus. (Yawson, 2018, para. 7-12)

On June 23, 2019, the Nigerian Super falcons refused to leave their Mecure Hotel in Grenoble France in protest over non-payment of their outstanding emoluments. The team had exited the 2019 Women's World Cup after losing 3-0 to Germany. One of the players reportedly told *ESPN*. "*Part of that money is from two years ago; the other is from three years ago. And they are also owing us five days' daily allowance here in France.*" (The Telegram, 2019, para. 4). The players have had to stage protests in the past to demand payment of their rightful claims. For instance, after winning the African Women Cup of Nations trophy for the 8th time in 2016, the players had to protest at the gate of the Nigerian National Assembly. The leader of the protest told the media:

"This is unfortunately a regular occurrence to female football in Nigeria, we treat our victorious girls with disdain and total disrespect as all the time...disgraceful really. "It is

inconceivable that the NFF/Federal government are unwilling to pay the players their dues after winning the trophy. This has to stop and the girls must be paid their dues," she said. She added: "We are going to protest the unfair treatment meted out to these champions who have won the tournament eight times, making them the most successful football team in Nigeria, and we hope the federal government will listen to their plea." (Obiajuru, 2016, para. 5-7)

Similarly, Banyana Banyana, the South African national women's football team, had had to protest over late payments and gender pay inequities. Before the 2019 decision by the South African Football Association to close the gender existing pay gap, the women reportedly earn twelve times less on match bonuses relative to their male counterparts (Arderne, 2019, para.2). A day before their international friendly match with Sweden in Cape Town, the team's striker, Jermaine Seoposenwe, had this to say regarding late payment of their dues:

"There was a large amount of unhappiness due to the late payment. We felt disrespected as players, as there was no communication. As players, we don't want to go into games of this magnitude with unhappiness." (Feltham, 2019, para. 6).

Another player who spoke to the Mail & Guardian and expressed fear of being victimized for speaking out said:

Some of the players are breadwinners and depend on this money to provide for their families and themselves. No one wants to lose their place in the team because of this." (Feltham & Mokwena, 2019, para. 12-13).

Foucault's (1990) genealogy on ethics is particularly helpful for explaining the power relations behind the delayed, precarious and unequal payment experienced by the African women footballers. By trivializing their claims and frustrating their aims of earning livable salaries and accumulating human capital through training and playing for their national teams, the women and their dependents are being conditioned to engage in

ethical work on themselves by exercising financial self-discipline and pursuing employment and entrepreneurial activities outside the national team participation. The pay frustration and disparities serve as a form of neoliberal subjectification, minimizing the players' reliance on state-funded emoluments, and nudging them towards freedom to migrate, moonlight, invest in a business or do whatever necessary to enhance their upward mobility and social security. Paradoxically, their male counterparts are usually treated differently. This confirms Foucault's (1995) point on the use of differential governmental strategies to regulate the conducts and values of individuals and populations at different sites to achieve ideological and disciplinary objectives.

Gendered Umbrage

Following the Indomitable Lionesses' 3-0 loss to England in a Round of 16 match of the 2019 Women's World Cup campaign in France, the Cameroonian coach, Alain Djuemba, accused the referee of "miscarriage of justice" and racism:

"There was just a miscarriage of justice. Why should I talk about anything else? A game and a sport and the referee made a lot of mistakes. "We might have had a moment to walk off. Thanks to God I was able to remain calm. I was able to keep my cool. There was a lot of passion out there. I have to thank God for keeping calm."

Cameroon midfielder Raissa Feudijo echoed the views of her coach, claiming that Ellen White was offside when she scored England's second. "But the referee did not even go to check the goal. She gave the goal," Feudijo said. VAR proved White was onside. VAR also proved Cameroon's Gabrielle Onguene was offside in the build-up to their disallowed goal, albeit marginally. Feudijo said most of the team did not want to carry on after that. "We didn't want to play anymore. We just wanted the game to be over. But because we were playing for our country we decided to go on." Feudijo added: "We were really disappointed, the coach said: 'Don't worry, the referee wants England to win today.' Don't worry about this. Your job is to represent your country. So, you have to go back out and play." (White, 2019, para.14-20)

The furor following this incident co-opted the language of normalization, deviancy amplification and mortification of indignation, portraying the Cameroonian players as uncouth, embarrassing and disorderly, and re-inscribing in them the tropes of angry black women. The England manager Phil Neville reportedly said:

"I came to this World Cup to be successful, but also to play a part in making women's football globally more visible, to put on a show that highlights how women's football is improving. But I sat through 90 minutes today and felt ashamed. I'm completely and utterly ashamed of the opposition and their behaviour. I've never seen circumstances like that on a football pitch and I think that kind of behaviour is pretty sad. Think of all those young girls and boys watching. This is going out worldwide. I didn't enjoy it, the players didn't enjoy it. My players kept their concentration fantastically, but those images are going out worldwide about how to act, the young girls playing all over the world that are seeing that behaviour. For me, it's not right. My daughter wants to be a footballer and if she watches that, she will think, 'No, I want to play netball'. I've got to tell the truth and say that I've never seen behaviour as bad as Cameroon's on a football pitch before. It was like being a kid, when you lost and you went home, crying, with the ball. Arsene Wenger once told me the team mirrors the manager - their team mirrored the manager. If that was my players, they would never play for England again." (Francis, 2019, para. 4-12).

Such patriarchal admonishments are meant to legitimize social control, inform collective disciplinary responses and produce subjects who will internalize docility, thereby colluding in their own regulation. In her riposte, McCauley (2019, para. 812), aimed to provide some context and complexity to the judgmental discourse:

Men do catch criticism for misbehaving on the pitch. Luis Suárez, for instance, was rightfully taken to task for biting opponents on three separate occasions. But Suárez was never accused of damaging the reputation of the entirety of men's football, nor was he ever told to think of all the little boys who might go play cricket instead after seeing his disgusting display. Leaving aside this double standard for a moment, the circumstances that might have led to Cameroon becoming so emotional about calls going against them should also be explored and placed in the proper context. Most of Cameroon's players are not full-time professional footballers, and this was the biggest match almost all of them

will ever play in. The team was completely inactive in 2017, and the federation scheduled just one friendly match in 2018. Cameroon has gotten to this point despite many of its players having little to no opportunities to improve as footballers or advance to the professional level. If England had lost this match, its players would have returned to a league growing in both quality and financial muscle. Each member of the squad is a full-time professional making a living wage playing the game, and most will receive significant raises in the immediate future. Cameroon's players are not as lucky. Many will go home to, as Cameroonian journalist Njie Enow describes it, an "underfunded domestic championship staged in appalling conditions." But the problems with the discussion around Cameroon aren't the criticisms of their behavior. One major issue is the complete failure to contextualize why Cameroon might be more emotional than the English press would consider "normal" or "acceptable." The other is assigning Cameroon more responsibility to act a certain way than we'd ever burden a misbehaving men's team with....

Importantly, within the governmentality construct, the disciplinary proceedings instituted against the conduct of the team by FIFA attempts to define the Indomitable Lionesses as deviant whose transgressions needed to be managed to produce disciplined players and secure the global football order.

Counter-Conducts

Central to the enactment of governmentality is what Foucault (2007:191) calls "counter-conduct" – resistance or dissent - against being conducted or governed in certain ways. Thus, governmentality isn't just about the rational use of power/knowledge/techniques to regulate, produce, normalize, optimize, and reinforce socially desirable conducts, capabilities and identifications in particular individuals or populations. It is also about ethical contestation and problematization of the social order and the transformative possibilities and subjectivities engendered by the relations between power and resistance (Foucault, 1982, 1990& 2002; Dean, 2010; Hekman, 1996; Rose, O'Malley& Valverde,

2006; Davidson, 2011). Consequently, this section of the paper examines how the African women footballers contest their subject positions and exert their embodied agency in the face of the regulatory discourses and interventions circulating across multiple assemblages (DeLanda, 2016). To be sure, the African women footballers got to qualify and compete on the global stage because they have acquired certain dispositions or habitus shaped by football structures and tournaments. Over their footballing careers, their bodies have been subjected to training, camping, scouting, testing, ranking, selection, officiating, sanctioning, medicalization, competition and so on, based on coaching power/knowledge or discourses such as athletic training, motor learning, kinesiology, biomechanics, sport pedagogy, sport medicine, sport psychology, sport management exercise physiology, match analysis, and sport nutrition. Concurrently, the women footballers have volitionally invested in their own sport development, and disciplined and distinguished themselves in order to constitute their national teams. However, they have also identified opportunities for resistance. Their narratives featured in this paper suggest a number of Foucauldian counter-conducts which are analyzed next.

The women's resistance is characterized by a critique of the notion that football should be governed by unequal gender relations. They have railed against the neoliberal tendencies in their football federations to expropriate their labour, shrink allocations to their welfare and breach financial bonds. Instead of valorizing the self-sacrifice, self-denial and docility usually projected onto women, the footballers have asserted their rights to play football and get their fair share of the associated risks and rewards. They have refused to indorse hegemonic sexual and gender categorizations by reaffirming their dignified individuality. They have protested against the tenets of neoliberal exploitation, gendered wage gap and patriarchal oppression. They have gone on strike and engaged in sit-ins to counter distributive injustice. They have refused to be complicit in the devaluation of women football. They have rejected the sexist assertion that athleticism or footballing is unfeminine. They have challenged their essentialist stigmatization as lesbians. They have told their stories to inspire other African girls and women wishing to play football, and to counter stereotypes and sexist discourses produced by multiple cultural assemblages. They have reported abusive coaches and refused unwanted sexual advances. They have played their matches with great passion, chalking up successes locally and internationally.

They have promptly protested their material dispossession regardless of their locations, organizing and standing up for themselves in host cities. Thus, the women have been performatively resisting oppressive power relations and discourses while working on their own self-improvement.

Conclusion

Foucault's governmentality has been used in this paper as an overarching framework to examine the rationalities of football governance and related gender equality discourses with respect to four African women's football teams: *Indomitable Lionesses of Cameroon*, *Black Queens of Ghana*, *Super Falcons of Nigeria* and *Banyana Banyana of South Africa*. Like other biopolitical tools, football divides the players into age, sex, sexuality, gender, race, space, class, ethnicity, colour and ability in order to produce healthy, disciplined and enterprising subjects who can govern themselves. Thus, gender equality politics and power relations are central to the football governing practices. While it is crucial to understand the administrative, legal, technical and corporate dimensions of football, it is equally essential to pay attention to the subjectification of footballers and the ethical work they do to govern and transform themselves. This paper contributes to the literature in that regard. The lived experiences of the players narrated in this paper reveal salient issues around stigmatization, rights violation, normalization, exploitation, pay disparity, repression, securitization, misrepresentation, autonomy and resistance. The issues highlighted in this paper have implications for the conduct of African women football assemblage - governing bodies, team officials, families, sponsors, mass media, government, and law enforcement agents. First, the historical underrepresentation of women and other minorities in the football administration in Africa invisibilizes intersectional inequities. Thus, there is a need to promote inclusion and diversity in the composition of football officials. Second, equity metrics and implicit bias inventory are needed to identify needs, promote distributive justice and gauge levels of transcultural competence among football officials and players. Third, national team players need to be paid equitable salaries, bonuses and grants to enable them thrive, invest and accumulate

different forms of capital for their retirement and well-being. Fourth, there is a need for regular community outreach and focus groups to gauge normative attitudes and knowledge/discourses thwarting the creation of an equal playing field for all footballers. Fifth, African women footballers are often subjected to harassment, homophobia, lesbian name-calling and discrimination due to their athletic embodiment. Consequently, there is a need for football federations to set up a network of support line to enable the players access counseling and legal services. Sixth, there is a need for continual normative and empirical research to understand how women and other groups experience the outcomes of football structures, policies and processes. A contextualized understanding of the complex neoliberal and patriarchal institutional logics underpinning the governance of the “beautiful game” will help inform the creation of inclusive and equitable football spaces for everyone.

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