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## AFCON 2017 Hairstyles Fashion Identity Construction of Selected Players

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### **Abstract**

*Art forms play varied roles in the game of football. Of the art forms engaged during the game, one that has received little academic attention is the hairstyle of the players fielded. This article is an attempt at creating a photo-documentation of eccentric hairstyles of selected players and examines the use of these hairstyles in negotiating individual identity construction and as maker of self-actualisation in the AFCON, Gabon 2017. Descriptive research tool under the qualitative research approach constituted the research design for the study. Eleven players were purposively sampled for the study. In addition, forty-four (44) professional footballers were also sampled using simple random sampling technique. Instruments used in gathering data were photographs, observation checklist and questionnaire for the purpose of triangulation. Simple descriptive analysis and photographic analysis were the data analysis methods used. The study revealed that African football players use their eccentric hairstyles to construct their individual fashion identities, signal self-actualisation, become fashion role model to the youth, and eventually influence hairstyle fashion.*

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**Keywords:** AFCON, African football players; hairstyle; fashion; identity construction

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### **Introduction**

Football is one of the popular games in the world and seemingly the most patronised competitive sports in Africa. Due to the popularity of football and the participatory support it receives in the African continent, other less patronised sports have been tagged as *lesser known sports*. These sports include, sprinting, badminton, volleyball, weight lifting, judo, taekwondo, tennis, rugby, squash, basketball, beach soccer, cricket and the throws. The phraseology *lesser known sports* casually suggests that many do not know about these sports. However, the reality is that these sports are known on the continent but the absence of the state-of-the-art infrastructure, other accompanying logistics and administrative leadership to promote these sports have rendered them less attractive to receive increased participation of the youth in Africa.

In many parts of Africa, it is common to see youthful males playing football at their leisure time or passionately arguing for their supporting local or foreign teams. The passion behind the game is as strong as its economic benefits. Football promotes peaceful co-existence; creates employment for the players, officiating staff, and managements of the teams; it boosts economic activities and helps to alleviate poverty. Some African states, as part of their Independence Day celebrations, used football as a tool to preach patriotism, promote national unity among her multiethnic population. For instance, football competition was part of the activities used in marking the 1957 independence celebrations of Ghana. Supporting national teams became a symbol of love for country and patriotism.

Art plays a major role in the game of football. From the design and construction of stadia, the demarcation of the pitch, interior decoration of stadia, costumes of supporters and the technical team, jerseys of players and officiating staff, art is used. Art forms are used before, during and after the game of football. Though the laws of the game restrict all items of jewellery (necklaces, rings, bracelets, earrings, leather bands, rubber bands, etc.), (FIFA, 2016, p.70), the laws are silent on certain body art forms such as hairstyle, tattoos, scarifications and cicatrix. The beauty of the game has shifted scholarly attention from the role of the art forms used during the game. Of the art forms engaged during the game, one that has received little or no academic attention is the hairstyle of the players fielded. This article is an attempt at creating a photo-documentation of eccentric hairstyles of selected players, and examines the use of these hairstyles in negotiating individual identity construction and as maker of self-actualisation in the recent AFCON, Gabon 2017.

### **Brief history of AFCON**

The origin of Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), otherwise known as Cup of African Nations (CAN) or African Nations Cup came about because of the 1956 seven-member delegates meeting at Lisbon, Portugal, which led to the formation of Confederation of African Football (CAF) (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2016; Napito.co.uk, 2015). The maiden edition of the tournament was played by three countries namely Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia at Khartoum, Sudan, in February 1957, which Egypt won (Napito.co.uk, 2015). There was gradual increment of national teams' representation from three, four, six, eight, and twelve to the current 16. Since 1996, the numbers of teams that qualify have been purged at 16 (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2016). Qualifiers are played based on upon which teams that qualify are selected to participate in the competitive continental association game. CAF began to organise the tournament biennially in 1968 due to increased participation, which has become the status quo. Since its inception from 1957 to present (2017), 14 countries have won the competition. Of the 14 countries, Egypt is a seven times winner (1957, 1959, 1986, 1998, 2006, 2008 and 2010); Cameroon has won for five times (1984, 1988, 2000, 2002 and 2017) while Ghana has won for four times (1963, 1965, 1978, 1982) (Kalumba, 2017; Wikipedia, 2017; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2016; Ghanasoccer.net, 2015; Football Bible, 2015). Nigeria has had three wins (1980, 1994 and 2013); Ivory Coast is a two times winner (1992 and 2015) and DR Congo has two wins (1968 and 1974). Eight countries namely Zambia (2012), Tunisia (2004), Sudan (1970), Algeria (1990), Morocco (1976), Ethiopia (1962), South Africa (1996) and Congo (1972) are one time winners of the championship (Wikipedia, 2017).

### **Hairstyle fashion in AFCON**

The 2017 AFCON marked the diamond jubilee of competitive association football in Africa. The excitement, anxiety and the entertaining quality of the game has soaked the scholarly attention that needed to be focused on the fashionable hairstyles featured by the players. It may be argued that supporters would pay to watch and cheer up their respective competing teams to victory and not necessarily to celebrate their fashionable hairstyles. Supporters pay to watch matches for various reasons: show love for country, express their personal admiration for particular players, for entertainment purposes and **leisure**, among others. Since its inception, AFCON seasons have become a platform for display of attention-grabbing hairstyle, though that is not the main focus of the tournament. Giving scholarly attention to these hairstyles fashion featured in AFCON may sound unacademic to some scholars, since it might be a new vista. However, doing so would help to explore the hairstyle dynamics of the African players and how they use it in creating their unique identities on the

field of play. The influence of the hairstyles of the African players on popular culture also needs critical scrutiny.

### **Individuality in Fashion**

Fashion may be informed by individual or collective behavioural traits. A particular fashion practised by small group of people or individuals may trickle-up or trickle across for gradual acceptance by larger section of peoples and even become global. Generally, the trickle-up theory deals with fashion emanating from the streets, which is assimilated by people of higher social class. The proliferation of technological inventions and innovations including the internet has made rapid dissemination of new fashion easy with the tap or click of a button. Designs spread easily to all class of people in the society. This phenomenon explains the operation of the trickle-across theory. Widespreadness of new fashions in nanoseconds due to technology does not wipe out individuality in fashion.

People may wear same dress fashion designs but the difference in body type, its fit and stylisation would show the individuality of each wearer. Moreover, many people try to look eccentric in fashion to satisfy their quest to be unique reflected by the personal values, ideas and ideals. Afro-cultural societal art were generally communalistic, functional, symbolic and had strong affinity with everyday life of the people, however, it breeds ingenuity that showed its contemporary uniqueness and varied aesthetical interpretation incongruent with Eurocentric aesthetical cannons. These unique features of African arts including her beauty culture propelled by their physiognomy does not make it inferior to any aesthetical predilection of non-African cultures. These traits applied to Afro-cultural hairdo for religious and other socio-cultural events or for art sake. The hairdos in the African sense may have performative importance, semiotic power, gendered identity characteristics and status-defining orientation. African footballers wear hairdos that may draw more attention to themselves on the field of play. Their preferences for particular hairstyles are shaped by individual idiosyncrasies, cultural nuances, personal values and psychologisation. African football players who wear eccentric hairstyles to announce their individualistic inclinations, in my view, do so for many reasons, such as showing creativity, self-esteem, independence of style and aesthetical exploration of the self. Such players are non-conformist, though are usually influenced by their cultural nuances yet they look distinctive and novel in appearance. They may borrow non-African hairdo culture but appropriate them for African artistic language and beauty culture.

The ERG theory (Alderfer, 1969) and Maslow's pyramidal hierarchy of needs share some common theoretical perspectives that give insight into the hairstyle identity construction and self-actualisation of African players. Alderfer's theory is categorised into three: Existence needs, Relatedness needs and Growth needs while Maslow's has five hierarchical needs. Central to this context is the third category of Alderfer's theory (growth needs) which corresponds to Maslow's fourth and five hierarchy of needs. It deals with the internal esteem and self-actualisation, which Alderfer explained as one's desire to be creative and productive in completing substantial task. This has implication for the creativity and eccentricity in the hairstyles of the players as a tool for achieving fame and gaining popularity.

### **Hair structure**

Hair in Africa could be kept short or long, braided or modelled, lengthwise or crosswise, oiled or dyed, rubbed with different pigment (Sieber & Herreman, 2000). Human hair grows from large cavities or sacs called follicles that extend from the surface of the skin through the stratum corneum and the epidermis into the dermis (Robbins, 2012). Hair is structurally composed of the cuticle (outer layer), cortex (middle layer) and medulla (the

centre of the hair shaft). The cortex is composed of keratin, moisture and melanin. The melanin cell contains black pigment that determines the colour of the hair. The quantity of the black colourant determines the tonal qualities or degree of hair colour whether black, brown or blond.

Hairs serve as protective covering, object of sexual attractiveness (Robbins, 2012) and element of beauty. Hair may be classified by their racial origin into three main groups namely, Caucasian, Oriental and African. These racial hair groups differ mainly in their appearance, geometry, mechanical properties and water content (Tanus, Vilarreal, Dias, Oliveira & Sanchez, 2015). Caucasian hair is circular under the cross-section view (ellipticity of 1.25) with usually thin and fine characteristics, and may have waves while the African hair type (wavy to curly) has a larger diameter, with a slightly oval cross-section (ellipticity of 1.75) (França, Dario, Esteves, Baby, & Velasco, 2015). Characteristically, Black African hair type has fine to medium coarse texture and tighter curly patterns. Ageing affects the hair density of humans due to change in hormonal production in the body and the relaxation of hair root making them less productive (Vetica, 2009). Hair density refers to the amount of hair per square inch in humans. Diet and cosmetics applied to hairs may also affect its growth. The environment, personal health, body hormones, vitamin deficiency and hair products may affect hair texture (Vetica, 2009).

Hair colourants or dyes may be classified in relation to its degree of colour resistance. It could be temporary, semi-permanent and permanent. It becomes temporary when already dyed molecules act through dye deposition on the cuticles. Semi-permanent dyes penetrate partially into the cortex, which may make the colourant to disappear gradually within few washes. Permanent dyes are composed of oxidation dye agent that makes intense diffusion of the molecules into the cortex, which promotes a longer colour resistance (França, Dario, Esteves, Baby, & Velasco, 2015). Hair has protective, cosmetic, physiologic and aesthetic functions, therefore, its disorders have a deep impact on the patient's self-confidence (Rossi, Barbieri, Pistola, Bonaccorsi & Calvieri, 2003; Harrison & Sinclair, 2004).

### **Hair politics**

In contemporary times, hair may be dyed for change in natural colour for fashionable reasons or to delay the onset of grey or to re-pigment already grey hair (Harrison & Sinclair, 2004). The use of hair cosmetics to modify the appearance of hairs for the purpose of aesthetics dates back to antiquity. There are historical evidences that show the existence of the practice before the Common Era in many parts of the world including ancient Egypt, Roman and Greek. For instance, ancient Egyptians were 'the first to cultivate beauty in extravagant fashion and to use cosmetics as part of their personal beautification habits' (Botero et al, 2011, p.4). They practised hair dyeing or colouring. Amongst the women of ancient Roman, hair colouring was a status-defining practice. A particular colour suggested a woman's status in society. Red-coloured hair suggested noblewoman, blonde-coloured hair suggested middle-class woman and black-coloured hair, for poor woman (Botero et al, 2011). Linking the hair colour black to poverty in ancient Roman may be cultural devoid of racial inclinations. Nonetheless, similar negative references to Black African hair by the Caucasian race became common during the slave trade and persist till now. When the slaves arrived in the Americas, their stylistic hairdos were shaved to rob them of their identities (Bankhead & Johnson, 2014; Agabond, 2010; Watkins, 2016) since the *slave masters* considered black hair as inferior and unattractive (Thomas, 2013). This was evidenced by the pejorative terms used by the Caucasians in describing Black hair. Some of these unpleasant words used to describe black hair were peppercorn, matted, kinky, nappy, coarse, brittle and woolly (Bankhead & Johnson, 2014). The slaves had to conform to European hair ideals for employability purposes, and to gain entry into academic institutions. This has generated counter-inured

perception in the African American community that, treating hair with artificial chemicals and thermal treatments to straighten or relax them is white mainstream ideals of beauty (Bankhead & Johnson, 2014) contrary to African concept of aesthetics. For this reason, they wear their natural hair to show pride of their African identity.

Mercer (1987) was of the view that Africans' inculcation of Caucasians hairstyling attributes to their repertoire of hairstyling showed how they were able to combine hairstyling elements from different sources – black or white, past or present – in creating new and innovative configuration of hair beauty cultural expression. To him, this is something to be proud of since it testifies the valuable inventive and improvisational aesthetic of the African. Sieber and Herreman (2000, p.57) buttressed this view in their African hair exhibition catalogue. They testified that 'hairstyles are always changing. What was popular a week, a year, or perhaps as long as a generation ago gives way to new forms, which themselves will one day be replaced.' Hair gives its wearer an important body image, which has immense psychological importance for social life (Rossi, Barbieri, Pistola, Bonaccorsi & Calvieri, 2003; Harrison & Sinclair, 2004). 'Hair can be straight, wavy or curly, blonde, black, brown or red. These natural variations are ... important part of our identity that can be manipulated according to the dictates of fashion, culture or society' (Harrison & Sinclair, 2004, p.180; Sinclair, 2007). The gross resort to hair stylistic mutations by African players adds to their desire to achieve fame and their creative contribution to hairstyling.

### **Social-cultural significance of hairstyles in Africa**

The social, cultural, religious and aesthetic importance of hair in Africa is very pronounced. In precolonial Africa, hairstyle defined the leadership role, gender, personal taste (Sieber & Herreman, 2000), ethnic orientation, religious affiliation, social status and emotional state of its wearer. For instance, Amongst the Akans (the most populated ethnic group) of Ghana, it was easy to detect a widow by her hairstyle and costuming. Hairstyle also indicated the marital status, the age group and role in society. It was a symbol of cultural identity, a tool for submissiveness and symbol of beauty. It is disgraceful for a woman or girl to parade through the streets with unkempt hair. African women consider their hair as a crown of glory. The Akans say *obaa n'enyimyam nye ne tsir hwin*, which literally means the pride of a woman is her hair. Due to this notion of hairs, African women and girls tend to spend more time on their hair as beauty culture practice since the head is considered as the seat of wisdom. It was an indigenous Akan tradition that when one lost a parent, or a relative of royal status, one must cut his/her hair such that little or no hair is left on the scalp. For instance, when a chief's mother dies, he will cut his hair to the scalp to symbolise that he has indeed lost an irreplaceable treasury. Hair cut to the scalp, in this context, is used to show melancholy and mourning disposition. In contemporary times, shaving depicting no hair on the scalp is an act of fashion.

Some scholars (Thomas, 2013; Sieber & Herreman, 2000) share the view that Black males are subjected to Western standard of hair beauty culture. Black males might use artificial chemical product for hair treatment. But as Mercer (1987) indicated, the practice was influenced by their curiosity to practice hair beauty culture of their taste whether it comes from Africa or outside Africa. Generally, few black males would apply Caucasian hair products to change the natural state of their hairs. Rather they resort to varying stylistic haircuts that are in vogue. The haircut of male adults differs from young males or adolescents. Amongst many male adolescents in Ghana, the prevalent haircut is the *peacock style* or *down cuts*.

## Methodology

Descriptive research tool under the qualitative research approach constituted the research design for the study. The population for the study consisted of the sixteen teams that qualified for the AFCON, Gabon 2017 tournament. Eleven players were purposively sampled for the study. The sampling criterion for the selection of eccentric hairstyles of the players included the structure of their hairdos, its eccentric and artistic merit, creative intent, and attention-getting construct. In addition, forty-four (44) professional footballers were also sampled using simple random sampling technique. Instruments used in gathering data were photographs, observation checklist and questionnaire for the purpose of triangulation. The researcher watched all telecast matches in all the weekly fixtures of the tournament, and with the help of the observation checklist booked names of the players with *eccentric* hairdos. After each match, the researcher watched recorded footage again and captured images of hairdos of the booked players. Due to the low quality of sharpness of the images captured, the researcher surfed the internet for better images of the players booked within the tournaments as replacements where necessary. These images were retouched to improve their quality, and juxtaposed using Adobe Photoshop. The retouching of the images was done with circumspection in order not to mar its originality. Simple descriptive analysis and photographic analysis were the data analysis methods used.

## Results and Discussion

### Photo-documentation

#### A. Intense blond-dyed hairs with rasterised effects.

Based on the stylisation and colouration effects of the hairstyles selected, they have been grouped into three namely: intense blond-dyed hair with rasterised effects, less-intense blond-dyed hair and undyed hairstyles. Players with hairstyles depicting intense blond-dyed effects were Aristide Bance (Figure 1), Bakary Sako (Figure 2), Ibrahim Ndong (Figure 3) and Junior Kabananga (Figure 4). The treatment of the blond dyeing effect on the natural black hair, the tactile hair texturing and architecture of the shapes occupied by the blond colourant in the hairstyles of the players in this category added to their outward beauty on the field of play. For instance, Bance's hairstyle starts from the front through to the central position of the crown regions and narrows to the back of the head to form a V-shape-like design, which allows more black hair portions at the sides of the head to feature. This effect creates a striking sharp contrast of his hair colour and shape. The rasterised effects of the crown regions stand more grown and pronounced than the back of the head. This also adds to the contrast in hair texture and appearance. Sako's (Figure 2) style is fitted on the crown regions, forming a circular shape distinctively demarcated by the shaved portions which reveals his built up fleshy skin on his head. The patchy blond-dyed upshot that characterised the circular-shaped haircut creates multiple impressive mimetic visual effects. The patchy blend of blond colour and the natural black hair colour of the player, at a glance, gives a visual illusion of porcupine quills or a bunch of brown oil palm fruit. Another interesting impression generated by the brown colourant is irregular spots of splattered dots. This overt visual sensation of Sako's hairstyle has a rasterised and thorny textural characteristics that makes it difficult for the eye of the viewer to eschew. There is a sharp contrast in texture of his hairstyle and shaped beard. His beard complements his stout physique and confidence in style on the field of play. At a casual glance, Ibrahim Ndong's rasterised hairstyle is eye-popping (Figure 3) and resembles a veil wig on his head. It looks thick, *peacock-styled* and richly textured. It has predominant and outstanding bright blond-dyed style sided by down-cut sprouting of black hairs. His hair is highly textured due to the rasta style. By the contrasting nature of his hair colour and shape, it is easy to locate him from a reasonable distant on the field of play. Junior Kabananga's (Figure 4) hairstyle is blond dyed. The lineal

juxtaposition of blond colourant from the front to the back of the head creates an implied line of black hairs traversing from the front to the back of his head. The sides of the head show down-cut hairs that expose the skin. Kabananga's hairstyle stands erect, thorny scaled and rastarised. Rasta effects armours his style with strong texture.



Figure 1. Aristide Bance of Burkina Faso Squad. AFCON, Gabon 2017.  
Image courtesy: <http://www.fourfourtwo.com/news/burkina-faso-2-tunisia-0-super-sub-bance-helps-seal-semi-final-berth>



Figure 2. Bakary Sako of Mali Squad. AFCON, Gabon 2017 [motion picture]. Image courtesy: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q\\_QFIBogkLY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_QFIBogkLY)

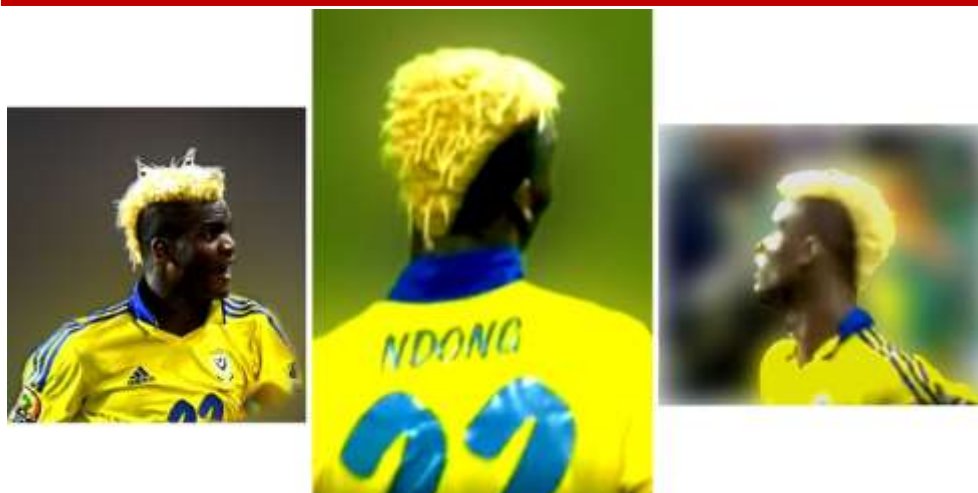


Figure 3. Ibrahim Ndong of Gabon Squad. AFCON, 2017. Image courtesy: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/AFCONMulti/2017/256671/Multimedia.aspx>



Figure 4. Junior Kabananga of DR Congo Squad. AFCON, Gabon 2017. Image courtesy: <http://www.bbc.com/gahuza/imikino-38649393>

### **B. Less-intense blond-dyed hairstyles.**

Clinton Njie (Figure 5), Neeskens Kebano (Figure 6), Tendai Ndoro (Figure 7), Paul-José M'Poku (Figure 8) and Serey Dié (Figure 9) wore less-intense blond-dyed hairstyles. Njie's hairstyling technique uses the power of lines. Two lines, broad and narrow in blond, occupy the middle portions of the head, from the front to back of the head. Hairs of the middle portion covered in broad stroke of blond has higher plane and received more attention. The blond-on-black hair styling gives his hair much contrasting details. Kebano (Figure 6) kept only a crubby stroke of hairs on the crown with no hairs at greater portions of the head. The only remaining lineal stroke of hairs is blonded. Sweats lubricate the skinny regions and the forehead to give it more sheen effect. His style is simple yet interesting. Tendai Ndoro (Figure 7) displays a similar hairstyle to Kebano. Nevertheless, his relatively broad stroke of hairs start from the front to the back of the head and remains blackened. It receives subtle decorative treatment of blond at the sides of the strokes and across. Sweats enrich the glossy effects on the *skinny* haircut. Paul-José M'Poku also wore a style similar in appearance to Ndoro's. What differs in treatment is the introduction of additional lineal strokes in blond at the sides, but the characteristic *skinny* nature is central to both M'Poku and Ndoro. Serey Dié's (Figure 9) hairstyle shows an outgrown blond lineal stroke from the front to the back of the head. Hairs at the sides remained subdued and the hair shape of the facial regions clearly demarcated with sharp edges. The sideburns join the beard and the moustache. From the side



view, the blond coloured hairs that visually halves the head into two, has idealised serrated textural quality.



Figure 5. Clinton Njie of Cameroon Squad. AFCON, Gabon 2017. Image courtesy: <http://www.sportal.co.nz/football/news/cameroon-v-guinea-bissau--broos-urges-new-heroes-to-emerge/11gqr72muwh01mxq4g0tywvda>



Figure 6. Neeskens Kebano of DR Congo Squad. AFCON, Gabon 2017. Image courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o75KStlymjM>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_HZyFgZWU0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HZyFgZWU0s)



Figure 7. Tendai Ndoro of Zimbabwe Squad. AFCON, Gabon 2017.  
Image courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dshfuSeJh8>

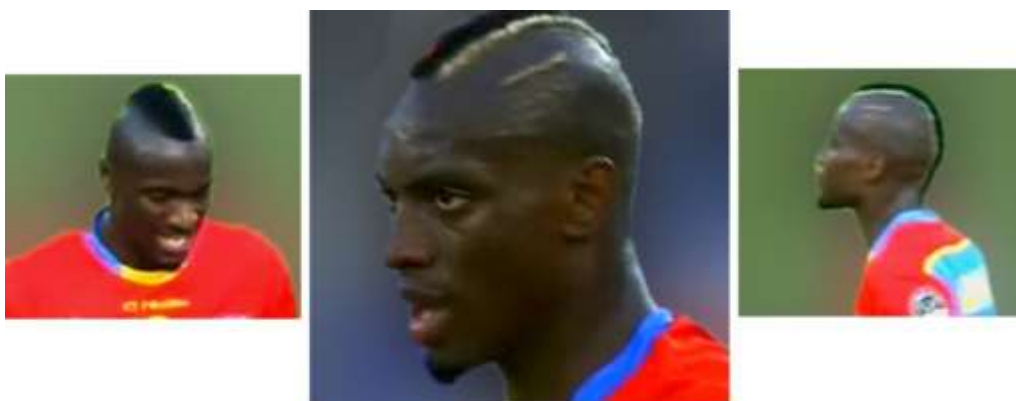


Figure 8. Paul-José M'Poku of DR Congo Squad. AFCON, Gabon 2017. (Image courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMq0xxCjzBg> )



Figure 9. Serey Dié of Ivory Coast Squad. AFCON, Gabon 2017. Image courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lJY55fq->

### C. Undyed hairstyle.

Bertrand Traoré (Figure 10) and Khama Billiat (Figure 11) featured undyed hairstyles. Traoré wore rasta style with no colourant agent to maintain the black naturalness of his hair. The hairs at the sides of his head are cut to the skin. The hair density of his rasta hairdo is great. The rasta is secured on the crown while some gather at the back of the head. Securing

part of the rastarised hair on the crown adds more height to the hairstyle. Khama Billiat has romanticised arc-shaped hairstyle. From the front, the implied arc-shaped line moves through the middle of the crown and diverts to the direction of the left ear (Figure 11). To heighten the intensity of the curvilinear arc-like line, hairs at far and near it have been cut almost to the skin. A thin line demarcates the peripheries of the line. His style is distinctive and awesome.



Figure 10. Bertrand Traoré of Burkina Faso Squad. AFCON, Gabon 2017.  
Image courtesy:<http://english.ahram.org.eg//AFCONMulti/2017/256672/Multimedia.aspx>



Figure 11. Khama Billiat of Zimbabwe Squad. AFCON, 2017.  
Image courtesy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gz-d7XExD0>

The varying hairstyles of the players be it rastarised, braided, haircut, dyed, or a combination of two or more hairstyling techniques, contributed to give simulated coarse texture. When these textual qualities are achieved, it stirs up viewers' attention. The power of lines was also used to give multi-directional interest in their hairstyles.

To examine the use of hairstyles in negotiating individual identity construction and as maker of self-actualisation in the AFCON, Gabon 2017, forty-four professional footballer-respondents responded to questions relating to what informed their choices of hairstyles, importance of hairstyle to them as footballers and the roles of hairstyle on the field of play. The responses of the players revealed that they are informed by a number of factors. In

responds to what informed their choices of hairstyles, they admitted that they borrow from varied African hairdos (45%); trending hairstyles of the youth (36%), news media such as television, newspapers and magazines (27%); peers and relatives (23%); and from personal creative inclinations (9%). Many of the players drew much of their hairstyles from their Afro-cultural roots, among others. When they adapt *foreign* hairstyling techniques, they used it in a peculiar stylisation in the African sense (Mercer, 1987).

A vast majority (86%) of the respondents considered the hairstyles they wear in their career as important psychological element while the remaining few (14%) deemed it unimportant. The majority considered it as important because it attracts attention of spectators (50%); creates unique player identity for fame and for self-actualisation (77%); serves as a tool for personal beautification and gives confident urge (27%) and help them to become role models by way of influencing fashion. In the three categories of hairstyles identified in the study, it is evident that the players sought to construct a unique identity (Sieber & Herreman, 2000) for themselves and show self-actualisation. All the players from the three identified categories showed unique individuation of style derived from their personal internal standards, dictates of contemporary fashion and societal cultures as Harrison and Sinclair (2004) and Sinclair (2007) theorised. The variation in hairstyle, according to Harrison and Sinclair (2004), is a tool for identity construction and fame, personal beautification, hence the creativity in style. Rossi et al (2003) confirmed that hair identity construction has huge psychological importance for social life. In an interview with E. O. Sarpong, a licensed coach and sport educationist, he confirmed that hairstyle gives good feelings to players who appreciate and wear them to naturally deliver to some extent (Interview, August 3, 2017).

The respondents admitted that on the field of play their hairstyles contribute to winning the admiration of spectators (55%); and make them appear fashionable and make a fashion statement that create visual impression about their body image (82%). They added that the hairstyles they wear are ways of showing their pride of being part of the team, and to announce their unique presence. To be selected to play for a team (national or club level) is an enviable opportunity that may elevate the players to iconic stature. Players by their unique hairstyles accentuate this notion of iconic nomenclature. As a result, hairstyle has been one of the art forms portrayed by the players to announce their presence in their teams. Being iconic, the players easily influence new fashion and many youth love to identify with these iconic players. Some youth aspire to become better players to step in the shoes of their preferred football icons. This psychology about iconic football players triggers fashion influence. Contrary to the case of the enslaved Blacks who were robbed of their identities through shaving of their hairs against their will (Bankhead & Johnson, 2014; Agabond, 2010; Watkins, 2016), the players selected their personalised hairstyles, which reinforced the social purpose of identity, fame and self-actualisation. The hairstyles presentation of the players on the field of play was, therefore, intentionally and creatively orchestrated to feel confident, iconic and self-actualised. Of the three categories, the first two (Intense blond-dyed hairs with rasterised effects; and less-intense blond-dyed hairstyles) resorted to artificiality of their hair stylistics using common cosmetics – blonde dye to create high contrast for more attention. The blond colourant also created emphasis by showing the planes in their hairdos, demarcating the perimeters to get attention of viewers. The third category (Undyed hairstyle) also depicted individuation of style but made use of no hair colourant, instead, the players concentrated on the black naturalness of the hairs. Although they used no blond colourant, their hairstyles still attract attention due to its rasterised and curvilinear details.

By the nature of football games, which are characterised by speedy motions, panting moments and fatigue, one may assume that the eccentric hairstyles of players helps in inter-positional play and accurate passing of the ball to teammates. However, all the respondents

(100%) disagreed that hairstyles help in inter-positional play, and easy identification of teammates to make instant scoring decision in seconds of time on the field of play in compelling playing circumstances. This implies that hairstyles have no linkage to accurate passing to teammates on the field of play.

## Conclusions

Hairstyles of football players on the field of play have received little or no attention in the academic circles to know how it contributes to the construction of individual player identity, its role as marker of self-actualisation and power to influence fashion lifestyle. This article contributes to making scholarly impact on African football players' hairstyle identity and its implications on fashion influence. To this end, the study presented a photo-documentation of eleven selected eccentric hairstyles of players in 2017 AFCON. Of the eccentric hairstyles selected, nine resorted to the use of blond colourant to create emphasis by showing the planes in their hairdos whilst two used no blond dye or any hair colourant. Though they used no blond colourant, their hairstyles still attract attention due to its rasterised and curvilinear details. Hairstyling techniques commonly used among the players were rasterised hair, braiding, haircut, hair dyeing, or a combination of two or more hairstyling techniques. The study revealed that on the field of play African football players feature interesting hairstyles that call attention to themselves; communicate their individualistic fashionable accents; and signal their identity and pride to be part of their respective teams (national or club level). By virtue of being part of their national teams, they are iconised, and through their eccentric hairstyles, they accentuate their notion of iconic nomenclature. Their rich Afrocultural roots inspire their hairstyles, and they occasionally adapt hair beauty culture from non-African roots, and manipulate its design structure to suit their Afrocultural aesthetics. As observed in the 2017 AFCON, the hairstyles of the players are used as marker of individualistic identity construction and as a tool for self-actualisation. Coupled with their style of play and individual eccentric hairstyles, they become fashion role model to the youth and eventually influence hairstyle fashion. The players considered their hairstyles as important since it has psychological identity and fashionable implications to them. It is also clear that hairstyles of players have no significant impact on helping them to make accurate passing decisions in compelling playing circumstances.

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