

Perceived Effect of Gambling and Sports Betting On the Economic Status of Youths in Southeastern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Southeastern youths' perception of the effect of sports betting and gambling on their economic status. It x-rays youths' participation level in sports betting/gambling and how it affects their economic status. The study was hinged on perception and the empowerment theory. The study adopted the survey research design. Out of the youth population of 2,264,990 in southeastern Nigeria, the online Australian sample size calculator was used to arrive at a sample size of 398. The study adopted multi-stage and random sampling techniques. The study used questionnaire instrument for data collection. Findings from data analysis revealed that 51.3% of youths in southeastern Nigeria participate in sport betting and gambling. It was also revealed that at an average mean of 2.6 (N=390), youths perceived sport betting and gambling as an activity that has negative effect on their economic status. Yet, they engage in it due to the economic promises. It is safe to conclude that most youths who live in southeastern Nigeria view sport betting as an economic opportunity, even though they are negatively affected economically.

Keywords: Perceived, Influence, Gambling, Sport Betting, Economic empowerment, Youths

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sports betting and gambling have come to be part of the economic opportunities sold in different communities. As it stands today, sports betting has become part of human activity (Derevensky, 2015). It did not start today, the people of old placed bets on horse races and gladiators (Gambling, 2020: Cormack, 2018). Gambling and sports betting has become a global game that has so many fans in different centuries and countries. It exists in most developed countries of the world and developing countries. Nigeria is not left out among the countries where sports betting exists. Some of the gambling centers include sports betting and pools, charity-based lotteries and selected land casino games (Gambling Africa, 2020).

The sports betting and gambling sector as at 2018 was worth over US\$60 million. Although the sector is not heavily regulated in Nigeria, it seems to have been allowed to thrive by government due to the amount of money they collect through tax revenue. (Desert Herald, 2020; Buzz Nigeria, 2020; Naira Metrics, 2019).

More gambles that take place in Nigeria. Prominent among this gamble is sports betting, which is now legal in all 36 states of the country. As at 2014, around 60 million Nigerians were estimated to be placing sports bets per day around the country. Amongst those placing sports bet per day are youths. Youths are higher and consistent in gambling or sports betting in Nigeria (Answers Africa, 2020). The involvement of youths in gambling and sports betting do not seem to be interesting. Oyedele (2019) avers that sports betting is gradually destroying youths in Nigeria. Now youths do not seem to be interested in daily jobs but rather are more fascinated with how they could bet money for a quick increase. Betting and gambling seemed to have formed part of the average Nigerian youths' routine for the day (Buzz Nigeria, 2020; Answers Africa, 2020). This is worrisome because the population of youths that are supposed to engage in other skilled jobs for economic empowerment and stimulation of the country's economy do not do so. This has affected the unemployment status of the country.

Youths unemployment rate in Nigerian is very huge. For youths aged 15 to 35, the figures of unemployment are grim: 55.4 percent of them are without work as creating jobs has been one of the key issues discussed in Nigerians election campaigns (Aljazeera, 2019). Statistics states that youth unemployment rate in Nigeria is at almost 20 percent as estimated from International Labour Organisation, an agency of the United Nation developing policies to set labour standard, although, other statistics done showed that youth unemployment rate is higher than 36 percent (Trading Economics, 2019; Statista, 2019). It is no longer news that youths aged 15-30 in Nigeria are the most unemployed as compared to the total labour force and the overall unemployment rates (Statista, 2019).

According to a report by Nairametrics, roughly 60 million Nigerians between the ages of 18 to 40 are involved in active sport betting. Almost N2 billion is spent on sport betting daily in Nigeria, this translates to nearly N730 billion in a year. The Sport betting industry keep thriving because there is a population for it, including the high rate of unemployment which has made many youths to resort to quick ways of making money (Naira Metrics, 2019). Most people who bet or gamble lose more times than they win, yet their losses do not discourage them from partaking in it. In all, there is a sufficient reason to speculate that the prevalence of gambling and sports betting among youths may continue to gain momentum (Answers Africa, 2020; Naira Metrics, 2019).

Economic empowerment is "the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth" (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2020). Economic empowerment enables people who are from poor or average family backgrounds to think beyond their immediate survival but to exercise greater control over their life choices and resources (CRUGIT, 2020). Gambling has instilled the belief to get rich fast on youths through betting than through securing a decent job to earn a living (Naira Metrics, 2019; Oyelade, 2020).

Currently, there are different types of sports betting centers in southeastern Nigeria and they include: NairaBet, Bet9ja, Super bet, Bet King, Access bet, AllCity bet etc. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to examine the perceived effect of sports betting and gambling on the economic status of youths in southeastern, Nigerians.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Sports betting and gambling seems to be part of the daily routine of most youths in Nigeria. Every day, it is common to see young men flocking around bet shops, lotto umbrellas, pool houses and other gambling shops, either to place bets, collect winnings, or just to forecast results of upcoming football matches. Some of the people who patronize bet houses are usually without jobs, and have no strong means of earning a living; yet, they walk into these shops to stake the little cash they have on them (Buzz Nigeria, 2020; Answers Africa, 2020). The youthful age is supposed to be a time to work hard and earn a living, but most youths are now sports bet addicts. This is a reason for all to worry. Most youths can go to the point of using last dime on bets. Some youths have developed suicidal thoughts and acute depression when they lose funds in bet shops; others have lost very valuable and expensive equipment in the process of gambling, yet the urge to gamble more seems to be high. Thus, this study sought to examine southeastern youths' perception of the effect of sports betting and gambling on their economic status.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What is the level of participation of youths in sport betting and gambling activities in southeastern Nigeria?
2. What is the perception of youths on the effect of sports betting and gambling on their economic status?
3. Is sports betting and gambling a risk factor affecting the economic empowerment of youths in southeastern, Nigeria?

2. GAMBLING AND SPORT BETTING, AND YOUTHS ECONOMIC STATUS

Gambling and sports betting is the act of placing a wagering of money or valuable on the prediction of an event where the outcome is uncertain. Casinopedia, (2018) also defined gambling as taking a chance on an outcome that could have either a positive or negative result. Gambling and sports betting is the wagering of money or something of value referred to as the "stake" on an event with an uncertain outcome with the primary intent of winning money or material goods or other things of greater value (Derevensky, 2015). Gambling is an excessive behaviour that acts as a gateway addiction or perhaps an enhancer of existing addictive behaviour (Park & Jung, 2012). It can come in different legal and illegal ways such as lottery raffle draw, betting on a race, football pools, casino and snookers (Eboh, 2015).

As it concerns this study, gambling and sports betting will be treated as one and the same despite the fact that they may have different meaning to different people. This is while Augustyn (2019) noted that central to the various definitions of gambling is the fact that gambling is a risk activity. The two concepts are the same just that most bets are legal in countries while most gambles are illegal in more countries (Abbott & Volberg, 2015). It is important to note that most of the people that engage in sports betting in Nigeria are the youth population within the ages of 15-40. In fact, statistics has it that 70% of Nigerian youths get involved in sports betting and other gambling activities (Research Clue, 2020). This shows the degree of betting and gambling among youths in Nigeria. It is therefore imperative to assess the influence of this betting and gambling on the economic status of youths. Akinlosotu, Imandojemu and Aina (2019) revealed that most youths go into sport betting because of the economic condition of the country. They stated that the rate of unemployment and the ability of youths to risk is a factor aiding the increase in youths' involvement in sports betting and gambling.

2.1 Empirical Study

Several studies have looked at the involvement of youths in gambling and sports betting, while some other studies have looked at the psychological effects of gambling and betting on youths. However, there is dearth of works or none that has looked at the economic influence of sports betting and gambling on youths in southeastern Nigeria. Some of the works that have been done in this related areas are reviewed below. Adenugba and Akhuetie, (2018) undertook a study which revealed that peers at school and home introduce gambling opportunities to groups of friends and convince others to participate in gambling.

The findings further revealed that there is a significant association between gender and the respondents' perception of gambling. Also, parental socialization plays a significant role in the gambling behavior of the youths. Peer groups also have an important influence on young people's risk-taking behaviour.

The Study of Moore, Thomas, Kale, Spence, Zlalevska, Stager and Kyrios (2013) found that the various factors associated with gambling participation, non-problem gambling, and/or problem gambling include socio-demographic variables such as gender. This finding was corroborated by that of Tozzi, Akre, Fleury-Schubert and Suris (2013) and Huang and Boyer (2007) noted that older age is another factor associated to gambling. They also stated that other risk factors associated with gambling were substance use, drinking, smoking, drug abuse.

Gupta and Derevensky (1998) and Jacobs (2000) studies identified the various reasons for gambling among youths to include: for fun, opportunity to win money, and excitement of gambling games. The findings went further to show that gambling transports problem and pathological gamblers to a fantasy world without life's daily problems, anxiety, depression, or loneliness. Few of their respondents feel that gambling is a way to socialize, make friends, relax, relieve boredom, feel older, escape daily problems, alleviate depression, and deal with loneliness. Similarly, Emshoff (2007) findings stipulated that younger adolescents tend to prefer games like cards, sports betting, and those involving personal skills, when these same youngsters mature they build more preference for commercial games like lotteries, gambling machines, and scratch tabs.

Adenugba and Akhuetie, (2018) findings pointed out that youths are usually immature and have little understanding of the consequences of participating in sport betting and gambling. Youths have a higher past-year prevalence of low-risk gambling and moderate-risk/problem gambling. Splevins, Mireskandari, Clayton, and Blaszczyński (2010) findings showed that different males preferred bingo, lotto, lotteries, pools and gaming machines and gambled less frequently on off- and on-course betting and casino table games.

Also, Neighbors et al, 2007; Wickwire et al, (2008) findings showed that education and gambling has shown that gambling is both more prevalent and problematic among college/university students than among the general population. However, LaBrie et al, (2003) findings indicated that the college student population has a lower percentage of gamblers. Myrseth, Pallesen, Molde, Johnsen, and Lorvik (2009) found that students are at greater risk for gambling-related harm than other segments of the population, although this remains equivocal.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two theories namely perception theory and empowerment theory.

Perceptive Theory

Perception theory was developed by social psychologist Daryl Bem in the late 1960's and early 1970's. The theory looked at perception from two perspectives which are structural influences on perceptions (the physical aspects of the stimuli to which we are being exposed) and functional influences (the psychological factors that influence perception) (Onabanjo, 2004). Onabanjo (2004) noted that perception flows from the structural influences to the functional influences which produces some subjectivity into the process. Konkwo (2004) notes that selective perception predicts how people interpret messages in a manner consistent with their pre-existing beliefs. The basic premise of the perception theory is that some physical issues within the social environment influences peoples' mental disposition, thereby making them to produce some subjective responses.

This theory is relevant to this study because it shows that people perceive things in a way that influences them and they as well behave that way. People are aware of sport betting and gambling and they perceive that it is good; this leaves them to adopt sport betting and gambling as a reigning trend. When people perceive sports betting to be wrong, they hardly adopt it, but when they see it as being productive and profitable they will continually engage in it. The way southeastern youths perceive gambling and sport betting has really shown in the ways they encourage themselves into continually engaging in it.

Empowerment Theory

This theory originates from American community psychology and is associated with the social scientist Julian (Rappaport, 1981). This theory was enhanced to promote youth development through specific skills and positive assets (Zimmerman, 1995). Youths who were motivated into actively applying their skills and knowledge end up being agents of positive change for themselves and their nation (Seidman & Capella, 2017). The theory stressed the need to connect youths with their local resources and adult role models, it as well engages youths in community service activities (Rappaport & Seidman, 2000 as cited in Dalton, Hill, Thomas & Kloos, 2013; Wilkinson, 1998).

This means that the theory encourages that youths in various countries should learn and do something productive with their lives (Jennings, Parra-Medina, Messias, 2006). Youth can be empowered through learning skill, going to school and/or becoming an entrepreneur who can take care of his/her expenses through legit means (Youth Empowerment Solution (YES), 2020). This theory helps us understand that when youth are empowered rightly they end up becoming economically independent and role model for upcoming youths. This empowerment helps to do away with laziness and idleness which might encourage cases of involvement in gambling or sports betting.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study is youths in Southeastern Nigeria which consist of five (5) states namely: Anambra, Abia, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. This population of youths between 15-39 in southeastern Nigeria for the year 2016, was estimated by the National Bureau of Statistics to be 2, 264 990 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The online Australian sample size calculator was used to arrive at a sample size of 398. The study used the multi-stage and random sampling techniques to selected respondents from one Local Government Area of the state capitals of the selected states.

This means that from Anambra – Awka (Awka North LGA was selected), Abia – Umuahia (Umuahia South LGA was selected), Ebonyi – Abakiliki (Abakiliki LGA was selected), Enugu – Enugu (Enugu North LGA was selected) and Imo – Owerri (Owerri Municipal LGA was selected).

Respondents were selected from these five local governments randomly. The questionnaire instrument was used for data collection. The questionnaire comprised of close-ended questions and likert scale questions. The reliability of the study was conducted using a pilot study on 35 respondents in Lokoja, Kogi State. The result of the reliability test showed uniformity and thus adjudged valid. The results of the distributed questionnaire were presented in tables using simple frequency, percentage and means analysis.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Out of 398 copies of questionnaire distributed, the researchers were only able to retrieve 390 copies which constituted 98% of the number of copies distributed. This number was analyzed and the result presented below.

Table 1: Youths level of Participation in Sports Betting and Gambling (N = 390)

Option	Higher level	Moderately level	Low level
1. At what level do you participate in sport betting and gambling?	200 51.3%	176 45.1%	14 3.6%
Option	More than twice Daily	More than once weekly	Monthly
2. How often do you participate in online betting on sports?	350 89.7%	37 9.5%	3 0.8%

Source: Field Survey, 2020

From the above table, findings showed that 51.3% of the respondents highly participate in sports betting and gambling. It was also revealed that 89.7% of the respondents participate in sports betting online more than twice a day. The implication of this findings is that over 50% of the youth population in southeastern Nigeria participate in sports betting and gambling on daily bases. This shows high level of sports betting and gambling activities among the youths.

Table 2: Respondents Perception on the effect of Sports Betting and Gambling on their Economy (N=390)

Options	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
3. Do you think since you started sport betting often that you still lookout for other source of income	154 39.5%	86 22.1%	60 15.4%	90 23.1%	2.7	Accept
4. Do you think sport betting stops you from learning good skills and handiwork	89 22.8%	79 20.2%	138 35.4%	84 21.5%	2.4	Reject
5. Do you think your participation in Sport betting/gambling prevents you from other works you've previously done	163 41.8%	70 17.9%	77 19.7%	70 17.9%	2.7	Accept
6. Do you think participating in sports betting prevents you from saving always	180 46.1%	53 13.6%	89 22.8%	68 17.4%	2.7	Accept
7. Do you think sport betting prevents you from being able to invest in other business opportunities	63 16.2%	82 21%	171 43.8%	74 19%	2.3	Reject
8. Do you think you are gaining economically since you started sport betting	86 22.1%	98 25.1%	67 17.2%	139 35.65	2.3	Reject
Average mean					2.6	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Variables: SA=Strongly Agree, 4: A=Agree, 3: D=Disagree, 2: SD=Strongly Disagree, 1.

Decision rule: If the average mean score is lower than 2.5 (1 - 2.4), the researchers decide that there is no effect on youths' economic status. But if the average mean score is higher than 2.4 (2.5 – 4.0), the researchers decide that there is effect on the youths' economic status.

Analysis of data in table 2 revealed that at an average mean of 2.6 (N=390), respondents agree that sports betting and gambling affect their economic status. At a mean score of 2.7 respectively, respondents agree that their participation in sport betting/gambling prevents them from other works they have previously done, as well as prevent them from saving money. Further analysis revealed that at a mean score of 2.3, respondents opined that sport betting prevents them from gaining economically. The implication of this findings is that sport betting and gambling negatively affects the economic status of youths in southeastern Nigeria.

Table 3: Respondents view on whether Sports Betting and Gambling is a Risk Factor to Youths Economic Empowerment in southeastern Nigeria

Options	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
9. Sports betting affects youths from taking up daily decent jobs	156 40%	78 20%	96 24.6%	60 15.4%	2.8	Accept
10. Sport betting makes youths to think only for the moment leaving the future to think for itself	175 44.9%	69 17.7%	60 15.4	86 22.1%	2.8	Accept
11. Sport betting leaves you to luck for their daily earnings	200 51.3%	121 31%	23 2.6%	46 11.8%	3.2	Accept
12. Turns youth into bet addicts without their notice	52 13.3%	65 16.7%	202 51.8%	71 18.2%	2.2	Reject
13. Increases youths earning in times of unemployment	187 47.9%	97 24.9%	20 5.1%	76 19.5%	2.9	Accept
Average mean					2.8	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Variables: SA=Strongly Agree, 4: A=Agree, 3: D=Disagree, 2: SD=Strongly Disagree, 1.

Decision rule: If the average mean score is lower than 2.5 (1 - 2.4), the researchers decide that there is no effect on youths' economic status. But if the average mean score is higher than 2.4 (2.5 – 4.0), the researchers decide that there is effect on the youths' economic status.

Table 3 above revealed that at an average mean of 2.8 (N=390), sports betting and gambling is a risk factor to youths' economic empowerment. Further analysis showed that at 2.8 mean score, respondents agreed that sports betting affects them from taking up daily decent jobs, and also makes them think only for the moment instead of the future. The analysis went on to show that respondents strongly agree at 3.2 mean score that sport betting makes youths rely on luck for their daily earnings instead of hard work. This implies that sports betting poses strong risk for youths' economic empowerment in southeastern Nigeria.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Result from data analysis revealed that 51.3% of youths' in southeastern Nigeria highly participate in sports betting and gambling, with 89.7% of the respondents taking part in sports betting online more than twice a day. Corroborating the finding of this study, Jacobs (2000) and Turner, (2008) showed that youths gamble a lot in sport games. They even traced youth's most popular forms of gambling to be private bets with dice, cards, sports, and skill-based games such as bowling and pool. Emshoff, (2007) found that there is a positive relationship between increased availability of sport betting and gambling platforms/shops/outlets and youth's patronage to them, as it encourages them to try out each of them at different occasions just for the fun of it. Adenugba and Akhuetie (2018) and Huang and Boyer (2007) indicated that age is another factor that makes youths participate in gambling. This implies that over 50% of the youth population in southeastern Nigeria participate in sports betting and gambling, meaning that there is high level of sports betting and gambling activities among the youths.

Communicating results from data analysis, it was revealed that at an average mean of 2.6 (N=390), respondents agree that sports betting and gambling affect their economic status. Contrary to the findings of this study, Gupta and Derevensky (1998), and Sharp, Dellis, Hofmey, Kincaid, and Ross, (2014) found that gambling is less perceived as a means to make money and functions more to provide stimulation, enjoyment, and a way of coping with difficulties. But Myrseth, Pallesen, Molde, Johnsen, and Lorvik (2009) noted in their findings that students might be at greater risk for gambling-related harm than other segments of the population. This is why empowerment theory argues that people (youths) should go to school, learn new skills and become entrepreneurs as a way of overcoming the economic impact of joblessness. From the forgoing, it implies that sport betting and gambling negatively affects the economic status of youths in southeastern Nigeria.

Further analysis of data revealed that at an average mean of 2.8 (N=390), sports betting and gambling is a risk factor to youths' economic empowerment. Supporting the findings of this study, Hodgins and Racicot (2013), and Tozzi et al., (2013) found that there are several risk factors associated with sport betting and gambling which include substance use, drinking, smoking and drug abuse. Huang et al, (2007) found that sexual risk behaviour and poor mental health, anxiety and mood disorders are as well risk factors in sport betting and gambling. This implies that sports betting poses strong risk for youths' economic empowerment in southeastern Nigeria.

6. CONCLUSION

Sport betting and gambling is a business that has come to stay. People seem not to be worried about it because governments have come to allow it operate. It has been in existence for a very long time, and it is gaining more acceptance. The worrisome aspect of it is that youths are beginning to engage in it. From the findings of this study, it was revealed that over 50% of the youths are into sport betting and gambling. This means that it is gradually affecting the workforce and able population of the country. Even when they know about the economic loss associated with gambling and sports betting, they still continue in it. It is safe to conclude that most youths who live in southeastern Nigeria have accepted sport betting as part of money making avenue, not as business owners, but as gamblers. This is one of the challenges, because perception influences action. Southeastern youths' participation to sport betting is influenced by their perception of it. Daily sport betting gradually weakens youth mindset towards working hard in their work places, and relying more on chance or luck to earn cash.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

What follows are recommendations based on the findings from the research

- ✓ The researchers recommend that southeastern youths should reduce/stop their involvement in gambling and betting. Rather, they should concentrate on better means of revenue generation and better their lives and that of their family members.
- ✓ It is also recommended that southeastern youths should think of learning new skills, becoming entrepreneurs and acquiring more knowledge that will make them economically viable.
- ✓ The researchers further recommended that youths should beware the risk factors associated with sports betting and gambling. They should get other avenues to legitimate money and avoid psychological issues that can cause them depression, thereby, becoming drunks, lazy and anxious for nothing.

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