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Sport Betting Among Students of Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The recent ease access to online betting platforms and the perceived potential for financial gain contribute to the popularity of sports betting among students. However, there are concerns about the impact of sports betting on students' academic performance and overall wellbeing. This papers discussion is centered on 'sport betting among students of Federal University Wukari. The paper used a descriptive survey research design. A sample size of 200 respondents were purposefully selected for the study. Responses from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages. The paper revealed that sports betting is more than just a recreational activity for many students; it has significant negative impacts on their concentration, financial management, and mental health. the paper also revealed that frequent and prolonged engagement in sports betting is associated with potential negative impacts on students' financial well-being, academic performance, and social interactions. The paper recommended that Educational institutions should provide access to counseling and support services specifically targeting students affected by the emotional and psychological impacts of sports betting. Also, educational programs focused on financial literacy and responsible gambling should be introduced to help students better manage their finances and understand the risks associated with

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betting. These programs could include workshops on budgeting, the consequences of risky financial behavior, and strategies for avoiding financial pitfalls related to gambling.

Keywords: Academic performance, Betting, Gambling, Sport, Students

INTRODUCTION

The global community has witnessed the growth of online betting companies. Many developing countries around the globe have been identified as the new markets for multinational betting companies to operate (Bitanihirwe, Adebisi, Bunn, Ssewanyana, Darby & Kitchin, 2022). A survey by African Gaming Market Report in 2022 on gambling industry in Africa, reported that about 78% of Nigeria youth engage in gambling, including online sports betting. This survey ranked Nigeria second in Africa, only after Kenya with 83.90% (Falade & Abanum, 2022). The betting industry has grown progressively in Nigeria. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the involvement of Nigerian students in sports betting activities. The accessibility and popularity of sports betting platforms, coupled with the allure of quick and easy money, have contributed to a growing trend of students engaging in betting on sports events. This rise in sports betting among students has raised concerns about its potential impact on their academic performance and overall well-being (Falade & Abanum, 2022).

Noble, Freund, Hill, White, Leigh, Lambkin, Scully and Sanson-Fisher (2022) suggest that the alarming rate of students engaging in online sports betting could be attributed to the daily advertisements on all media platforms. Millions of billboard adverts are dotted around major cities. The addictions of the youth, especially those in higher educational institutions are a great source of worry for stakeholders, as these unfortunate habits greatly have negative effects on the academic performance and social relations of these students

Sport betting can be a highly addictive activity that can consume a significant amount of time and resources. As students dedicate more time and attention to betting on sports, they may neglect their academic responsibilities, leading to poor academic performance, lower grades, and ultimately hindering their chances of success in their studies. Additionally, the financial implications of sports betting can also negatively impact students' financial

stability, creating additional stress and distractions that can further detract them from their academic pursuits (Ndung'u, Munayi, Wanjira, & Inyega, 2022).

Furthermore, the pervasive culture of sports betting in Nigeria, along with aggressive marketing tactics employed by betting companies, has normalized and even glamorized gambling behaviors among students. This normalization of sports betting can desensitize students to the potential risks and consequences associated with gambling, potentially leading to addiction and other mental health issues (Ndung'u et al., 2022). Overall, the increasing prevalence of sports betting among Nigerian students poses a significant threat to their academic performance, well-being, and future prospects. Additionally, Falade and Abanum (2022) posited that students who are involved in sports betting may also become preoccupied with the potential financial rewards, leading to a decreased motivation to focus on their academic responsibilities. This can further impact their performance in school and hamper their ability to reach their full potential.

Meanwhile, previous research has largely overlooked the specific experiences of students in Federal University Wukari, failing to address the unique socio-economic factors that may influence their engagement with sports betting. Additionally, many studies have not adequately explored the psychological and academic ramifications of sports betting on students, leaving a significant gap in understanding how these activities affect their overall well-being and academic success. Moreover, the limited research that does exist often lacks a comprehensive approach, focusing predominantly on either the financial or psychological aspects, rather than providing a holistic view of the issue. Thus, this study aims to fill the existing gap by conducting an in-depth investigation into the impact of sports betting on students at Federal University Wukari. The research will focus on the academic, psychological, and social dimensions of sports betting, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how these activities influence students' lives.

Review of Literature

Amoah-Nuamah, Agyemang-Duah, Mensah and Opoku (2022) view gambling is a human activity with a long-standing history, in the present day it takes a number of forms including land-based table games and electronic games, internet games, lottery and casinos. Though it is considered to be a leisure and recreational activity amongst the people it has serious repercussions for individuals, families and society as a whole. The launch of

internet world wide has led to an increase in number of adolescent and college students that engage in gambling activities.

There are different forms of gambling and among them sports betting is the fast-growing type of commercial gambling. Since the beginning of the sports betting in the gambling industry, there has been competition in the industry with emerged of many sports betting companies like Naira bet, Sahara bet, Bet9ja, 1960Bet and so many others (Glozah, Tolchard & Pevalin, 2021).

Amoah-Nuamah et al. (2022) posited that the launch of online sports betting platforms in Nigeria in the mid-2000s further revolutionized the industry, making it more accessible and convenient for Nigerians to participate in sports betting activities. The proliferation of mobile technology and internet connectivity has made it easier for people to place bets on their favorite sports events from the comfort of their homes or on the go. In recent years, the Nigerian sports betting market has become increasingly competitive, with numerous local and international betting companies vying for market share. This competition has led to aggressive marketing strategies, attractive promotions, and lucrative bonuses to entice customers to place bets on their platforms (Odame, Quarshie, Oti-Boadi, Andoh-Arthur & Asante, 2021).

Sakala, Paul, Dalal and Sheikh (2019) posited that sports betting involves placing a wager on the outcome of a sporting event or events that occur within a match or a given fixture. The wager can be placed physically or using online sports betting web sites via mobile phone or computer. It is most popular amongst different age groups because of easy accessibility and availability of betting companies. Sports betting is seen as an easy way of making money among students in universities and colleges worldwide despite it having negative effects.

Agbonzikilo & Ogebe (2020) posited that students who are heavily involved in sports betting may spend a significant amount of time and energy on placing bets, researching teams and games, and following the outcomes of their bets. This can lead to a distraction from their studies and result in poor time management, leading to lower grades and decreased academic performance.

The study by Hing and Breen (2018) posited that engaging in sports betting activities can be highly engaging and addictive, leading students to spend excessive amounts of time and energy on following sports events and placing bets. This distraction can take away from the

time and effort they should be dedicating to their studies. In some cases, students may resort to cheating or plagiarism in order to cover their tracks or secure funds for sports betting. This can have serious consequences for their academic integrity and long-term success. Similarly, engaging in sports betting can also lead to social consequences, such as strained relationships with friends and family members who may disapprove of their gambling habits. This can further impact students' mental and emotional well-being, as well as their ability to focus on their studies (Hing & Breen, 2018)

Furthermore, Benson, Munayi, Wanjira and Inyega (2021) were of the view that the stress and anxiety that can come with sports betting, particularly when money is involved, can also have a negative impact on students' mental health and overall well-being. This can lead to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues, which can in turn negatively impact their academic performance. The authors' claim that sports betting can lead to significant financial losses for students who may be using their limited resources to place bets. This can result in increased stress and anxiety, as well as the potential need to work extra hours or take on additional loans to cover their losses, further detracting from their academic focus.

Chambers (2011) was of the view that pathological bettors do involve in crime, financial difficulties, and disruptions of interpersonal relations. Many families of pathological bettors suffer from a variety of financial, physical, and emotional problems. Most bettors had serious emotional problems and had resorted to drinking, smoking overeating, and impulse spending. Cutlog (2020) found that the spouses of pathological bettor suffered from chronic or severe headaches, stomach problems, dizziness, and breathing difficulties, in addition to emotional problems of anger, depression, and isolation.

Ugochukwu, Anadi, Onunkwo and Offiah (2021) posited that students encounter economic and social problems after gambling because of high prevalence of gambling participation. From social view, male undergraduates became gambling addict, which is very difficult to break the cycle. Many factors contribute to gambling addiction, such as desperation, to win money, desire to experience thrills, highs and entertaining atmosphere of the mainstream gambling scene gambling can degenerate to crimes such as robbery, kidnapping, cultism, rape according to (Rawe 2012). This indicates that there is a strong relationship between male undergraduate involvement in crime and gambling. Economically, many undergraduates have become drop outs because they invested the

money meant for their education in online gambling. The student will never have any savings and can resort to theft, embezzlement and similar crimes in order to get cash.

Ndung'u et al. (2022) discovered that sport betting can results to poor academic performance, drop out from school, absent mindedness especially in the class, severe debts, depression, drug or alcoholic addiction, bad company, health problems especially, mental issues, criminal activities, loss of focus, absenteeism from class, psychological problems, heavy financial loss, impulse spending, renders one useless in life, impoverishment and committing suicide.

METHODS

The study used a descriptive survey research design. A sample size of 200 respondents were purposefully selected for the study. Responses from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the study discusses the findings generated from the study using the data gotten from the questionnaire. The findings are logically discussed as follows:

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by how often they engage in sports betting

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	79	39.5
Weekly	102	51
Monthly	13	6.5
Rarely	6	3
Total	**200**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The above table shows that 39.5% of the respondents engage in Sports betting daily, 51% of the respondents engage in Sports betting weekly, 6.5% of the respondents engage in Sports betting monthly while 3% of the respondents rarely engage in Sports betting. The majority of respondents engage in sports betting at least weekly, with a significant portion doing so daily. Frequent betting can lead to substantial financial outlay, increasing the risk of financial strain, especially if betting is not consistently profitable. For those who bet

daily, the risk of developing gambling-related debt or financial insecurity is particularly high. This could lead to reduced savings, difficulty in meeting essential expenses, and long-term financial instability. Correspondingly, frequent sports betting can consume a considerable amount of time, not just in placing bets but also in researching games, following sports news, and monitoring outcomes. For daily bettors, this could lead to neglect of other important activities, absent from class, school responsibilities, or personal development. Weekly bettors might also struggle with time management, especially if they dedicate significant portions of their weekends or free time to betting-related activities.

Hence, the data suggests that a majority of respondents engage in sports betting frequently, either daily or weekly. This frequent engagement raises concerns about potential negative impacts on financial well-being, time management, and social behaviour. Specifically, the risks include financial instability, poor time management, and potential social isolation or conflicts. Addressing these issues may involve promoting responsible betting practices, providing financial education, and encouraging balanced time management to mitigate the adverse effects of frequent sports betting. This result collaborates the study by Agbonzikilo & Ogebe (2020) who contended that students who are heavily involved in sports betting may spend a significant amount of time and energy on placing bets, researching teams and games, and following the outcomes of their bets. This can lead to a distraction from their studies and result in poor time management, leading to lower grades and decreased academic performance.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by how much time they spend on sports betting per Day

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	47	23.5
1-2 hours	49	24.5
2-3 hours	38	19.0
3-4 hours	31	15.5
More than 4 hours	35	17.5
Total	**200**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The above table shows that 23.5% of the respondents spent less than 1 Hour on Sports betting per day, 24.5% of the respondents spent 1-2 Hours on Sports betting per day,

19.0% of the respondents spent 2-3 Hours on Sports betting per day, 15.5% of the respondents spent 3-4 Hours on Sports betting per day, while 17.5% of the respondents spent more than 4 Hours on Sports betting per day. As the time spent on sports betting increases, students are likely to experience greater difficulties in managing their time effectively. This can lead to procrastination, missed classes, and insufficient time for studying or completing assignments, directly impacting academic performance. Likewise, frequent sports betting, especially if time spent increases, could lead to financial stress, which might force students to make tough decisions about prioritizing betting over essential expenses like books, food, or even tuition. Financial stress can lead to decreased academic performance due to anxiety and lack of focus.

Furthermore, students who spend more time on sports betting may find themselves increasingly isolated from non-betting peers, leading to social challenges. Alternatively, they might form social circles around betting activities, which could reinforce the behaviour and make it harder to reduce time spent on betting. Social dynamics focused on betting could further distract them from academic pursuits.

Therefore, the data suggests that there is likely an inverse correlation between the amount of time spent on sports betting and academic performance. As students dedicate more time to betting, their academic performance is likely to decline due to the increased distraction, time commitment, and potential stress associated with frequent betting. This result is in tandem with Ndung'u, et al. (2022) who stated that sport betting can be a highly addictive activity that can consume a significant amount of time and resources. As students dedicate more time and attention to betting on sports, they may neglect their academic responsibilities, leading to poor academic performance, lower grades, and ultimately hindering their chances of success in their studies. Thus, to mitigate the negative impact, universities might consider interventions such as time management workshops, financial literacy programs, and counseling services that address gambling-related issues. Encouraging a balanced lifestyle where sports betting, if engaged in, is done responsibly and in moderation, could help students maintain better academic outcomes.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by how much they use per bet

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1,000 naira	78	39
1,100-2,000 naira	60	30
2,100-3,000 naira	27	13.5
3,100-4,00 naira	19	9.5
4,100-5,000 naira	13	6.5
5,000 naira and above	3	1.5
Total	**200**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The above table shows that 39% of the respondents used less than 1,000 naira per bet, 30% of the respondents used 1,100-2,000 naira per bet, 13.5% of the respondents used 2,100-3,000 naira per bet, 9.5% of the respondents used 3,100-4,00 naira per bet, 6.5% of the respondents used 4,100-5,000 naira per bet while 1.5% of the respondents used 5,000 naira and above per bet. The majority of students prefer to bet conservatively, spending 2,000 Naira or less per bet. This suggests that most of the respondents are cautious with their betting activities, likely due to limited financial resources or a desire to avoid significant financial risks. Comparably, a smaller portion of the respondents engage in more substantial betting, with some even spending over 5,000 Naira per bet. This group is more likely to view betting as a serious endeavour, with higher financial stakes and potentially higher rewards, but they are also at greater risk of experiencing financial difficulties. Thus, the data indicates a strong preference for low-stakes betting among the student population, with only a small fraction engaging in higher-risk betting. This distribution suggests that most students may be aware of the financial risks associated with betting and choose to limit their exposure. However, the presence of higher-stakes bettors indicates that there are students who may be at risk of financial strain if their betting habits become problematic. On the other hand, the finding of the study is consistent with Ndung'u, et al. (2022) who argued that sport betting can be a highly addictive activity that can consume a significant amount money and time. As students dedicate more resources, time and attention to betting on sports, they may neglect their academic responsibilities.

Table 4: I lose concentration in class because of unfavourable result of matches.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
SA	108	54
A	69	34.5
U	8	4
SD	11	5.5
D	4	2
Total	**200**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The above table shows the response of the respondents on how they lose concentration in class as a result of unfavourable result of matches. 54% strongly agreed with the assertion, 34.5% agreed, 4% were indecisive, 5.5% strongly disagreed while 2% disagreed. The data reveals that a vast majority of the respondents experience a negative impact on their concentration in class due to unfavourable sports betting results. This indicates that sports betting is not just a recreational activity for many students; it has significant emotional consequences that interfere with their academic performance. Similarly, a small minority of respondents' report that they are not affected by sports betting in terms of losing concentration in class. This group may have better coping mechanisms or a less significant emotional attachment to the outcomes of their bets. The findings suggest that interventions might be needed to address the emotional and psychological impacts of sports betting on students, as it appears to be a significant distraction that could potentially hinder academic success for a large proportion of the student body. Awareness programs and counselling services could be beneficial in helping students manage the stress and disappointment associated with sports betting.

Table 5: Sports betting makes me spend money that should have been spent on food and educational materials.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
SA	110	55
A	67	33.5
U	8	4
SD	9	4.5
D	6	3
Total	**200**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The above table shows the response of the respondents on how sports betting makes them spend money that should have been spent on food and educational materials. 55% strongly agreed with the assertion, 33.5% agreed, 4% were indecisive, 4.5% strongly disagreed while 3% disagreed. The data reveals that a significant majority of the respondents believe that sports betting negatively affects their financial priorities, leading them to spend money that should have been allocated to food and educational materials. This suggests that sports betting is having a substantial and potentially harmful impact on the well-being and academic performance of the student population. Only a small minority disagree, indicating that most students are aware of the negative consequences of sports betting on their essential financial responsibilities. The data underscores the need for interventions or educational programs to address the financial risks associated with sports betting among students. Nevertheless, this result is in tandem with Ndung'u, et ai., (2022) who proposed that the financial implications of sports betting can negatively impact students' financial stability, creating additional stress and distractions that can further detract them from their academic pursuits.

Table 6: I can use my school fee on sports betting.

	Frequency	Percentage
SA	22	11
A	32	16
U	18	9
SD	76	38
D	52	26
Total	**200**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The above table shows the response of the respondents on the possibility to use school fee for sport betting. 11% strongly agreed with the assertion, 16% agreed, 9% were indecisive, 38% strongly disagreed and 26% disagreed. While the majority of the respondents reject the idea of using their school fees for sports betting, a significant minority are open to or have considered it. This suggests that there is a notable group of students who might be engaging in risky financial behaviour, which could jeopardize their academic success. The respondents who are undecided represent a vulnerable group that could be influenced to

engage in risky betting practices, especially under financial stress or peer influence. Therefore, the results highlight the need for financial literacy and responsible gambling education among students. Interventions might be necessary to reduce the temptation or perceived need to gamble with educational funds, thereby protecting students' academic futures.

Table 7: Betting create constant anxiety in me.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
SA	79	39.5
A	83	41.5
U	7	3.5
SD	16	8.0
D	15	7.5
Total	**200**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The above table shows the response of the respondents on how betting create constant anxiety in them. 39.5% strongly agreed with the assertion, 41.5% agreed, 3.5% were indecisive, 8.0% strongly disagreed while 7.5% disagreed. The majority of the respondents agree that betting creates constant anxiety for them. This indicates that betting is a significant source of stress, which could have negative implications for their mental health, daily functioning, and academic performance. Conversely, a small percentage of the respondents do not feel that betting causes them anxiety. This suggests that while most students are negatively affected by betting, there is a minority who either manage their betting habits well or do not engage deeply enough to experience anxiety. Thus, the data reveals a concerning trend among students, where the majority are experiencing anxiety as a result of their betting activities. This could lead to further issues such as poor academic performance, emotional distress, and potential financial difficulties. The high levels of anxiety reported by students suggest that betting is more than just a recreational activity for many, and its emotional impact should be addressed. Notwithstanding, this finding agreed with the research by Benson et al. (2021) when they put forward that the stress and anxiety that can come with sports betting, particularly when money is involved, can also have a negative impact on students' mental health and overall well-being. This can lead to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues, which can in turn negatively impact their academic performance.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the study suggest that sports betting is more than just a recreational activity for many students; it has significant negative impacts on their concentration, financial management, and mental health. The data underscores the need for interventions to help students manage the emotional and financial risks associated with betting, thereby protecting their academic performance and overall well-being. Similarly, the paper suggests that frequent and prolonged engagement in sports betting is associated with potential negative impacts on students' financial well-being, academic performance, and social interactions. The risks identified emphasize the need for strategies to mitigate these effects and promote responsible betting behaviors.

Recommendations

Having considered the findings from the study, the following measures are recommended to avert the future impact of sport betting on students in Federal University Wukari.

1. Educational institutions should provide access to counseling and support services specifically targeting students affected by the emotional and psychological impacts of sports betting. These services can help students develop better coping mechanisms to manage stress and anxiety related to betting outcomes, ultimately improving their concentration and academic performance.
2. Universities should launch awareness campaigns to highlight the risks of sports betting and promote healthy, responsible gambling habits. Additionally, establishing peer support networks could provide students with a platform to discuss their experiences, share coping strategies, and support one another in maintaining a balanced approach to betting and academics.
3. Educational programs focused on financial literacy and responsible gambling should be introduced to help students better manage their finances and understand the risks associated with betting. These programs could include workshops on budgeting, the consequences of risky financial behavior, and strategies for avoiding financial pitfalls related to gambling.

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