

Prevalence of Sport Betting and Its Relationship with Young and Adult's Psychosocial Behavior in Hawassa City

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ABSTRACT

Recently sport betting has become a way of life in most major cities and towns of the world including Ethiopia which resulted in a high rate of gambling among adolescents and young adults. This study was aimed to examine the prevalence of sport betting and its relationship with adolescent and young adults' psychosocial behavior. The study subjects were selected using convenience (availability) sampling. Thus a total of 146 adolescent and young adults involved in sport betting practices from Hawassa city and nearby towns were the study participants. In doing so, descriptive cross-sectional research design was employed. Data was produced Questionnaire and key informant interview protocols were utilized as a data gathering tools. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze quantitative data; whereas the qualitative data was analyzed thematically and using narrative mode. The findings show that betting market is engulfing in different city shores with having different modalities, Hulu and Harif sport bet are among favorite sport betting companies in the study area. Money, enjoyment and avoiding boredom were the three major reasons that trigger youths and young adults to be engaged in sport betting. Statistically significant, positive correlation was identified between frequency of betting and the social and psychological behavior of respondents. Based on the findings, it is recommended that planning and designing clear policy and capacity building programs, enhancing youth's awareness about the negative repercussions of sport betting (gambling), community monitoring, multi actor participation and moral education as a means of tackling the negative effect of sport betting.

Keywords: Sport betting; Psychological behavior; Social behavior; Youth; Young adult

INTRODUCTION

Sport betting is a gambling form that embedded within the society as a part of mainstream culture through the entertainment, leisure and sport activities; and it is a significant source of revenue to private enterprises and few gamblers. It has become widely viewed as a socially acceptable form of recreation [1,2]. For many individuals, sport betting is an enjoyable and harmless activity but for others, it can be both addictive and problematic behavior with severe negative psychosocial consequences [3]. These consequences may include bankruptcy, loss of job, broken home, substance use and abuse, depression and addiction.

Among adolescents and young adults, the prevalence of disordered gambling (in this case sport betting) has increased significantly [4,5]. Gambling and problem of gambling have been associated with risky personality, risky decision-making, and pro-risk behavior. Personality traits like sensation-seeking, impulsivity and low self-control have been associated with gambling behavior. People with sensation-seeking traits express preference for varied, stimulating experiences and a willingness to engage in risk-taking in order to obtain such experiences [6]. People with impulsivity traits have a tendency to prefer short-term rewards, without planning or forethought, with the potential for immediate or future costs [7]. Low self-control, like impulsivity,

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is associated with a tendency to focus on temptations of the moment, ignoring long-term consequences [8,9].

From African perspectives, Nigeria bets up to just over 25 million USD per day, and this figure has been climbing yearly in contrast to the country's economic growth over the past few years and the slight decline in 2016 as per sports betting in Ghana [10]. Similarly, many countries globally permit unrestricted sports betting and often encourage the act, often in partnership with national regulatory bodies. Thus Humphreys and Perez noted that governments generally overlook the negative impacts of sports betting, in favour of the revenues it generates through the regulation and taxation of this activity [11]. On the other hand, it seems that some countries recognized the impact of gambling and introduced rules and regulations to terminate the companies engaged in betting activities. For example, according to sports betting in Ghana's youth, the President of Uganda banned the issuance of new licenses as well as the renewal of expired ones to sports betting companies to avoid the over-proliferation of sports betting centers in his country.

Some researchers such as Wiber and Potenza have all carried out empirical research on the concept of gambling [6]. However, the findings of some of these researchers lack generalization to the population other than which sampling was selected. For instance, the study of Wiber and Potenza, was able to establish significant effect of gender and peer group on gambling behavior, they further claim that the findings of their study should be interpreted with caution as they suggest more research should be carried out to establish the reliability of their findings.

In Ethiopia, sport betting has grown since 2012 when the first online sports betting company Dago Sport Bet was registered Allafrican.com. Other sport betting centers, like that of Axum sport betting, Galaxy Sport Bet, Hulu Sport Bet, Harif Sport Bet, Bet 25, Abyssinia Sport Bet and the likes were registered after Dago Sport Bet.

According to our observation, nowadays in the study sites, specifically Hawassa city and the nearby towns are engulfed by sport gambling fever. Sport betting shops are springing up across the country and the study sites. The sport betting shops are often owned in a joint venture with foreigners and their customers are mostly adolescents and young adults. This new trend of betting among the people of many communities has been explained in many ways. In Hawassa city and the nearby towns, gambling are becoming very popular particularly among sports fans. As it was mentioned above, because of gambling "people have gone crazy and the owner of the betting shops consider the business as a "cash cow". This situation as a whole becomes the concern of the society in Ethiopian cities and towns, specifically in Hawassa city and nearby towns such as Yirgalem, Dilla and Alleta Wondo. Therefore, the problem of gambling due to sport betting should not be overlooked since it has an adverse effect on adolescents and young adult's psychosocial behavior. Thus, this study was carried out to examine the practices of sport betting and its relation with psychosocial behaviors in Hawassa City and nearby towns of Technology Village of Hawassa University.

Statement of the problem

In recent years, there is a spurt of growth in the retail betting market, with physical shops starting to make their presence felt in some cities and towns. Sport betting has become widely viewed as a socially acceptable form of recreation [1]. For many individuals, betting is an enjoyable and harmless activity but for other individuals it can become both addictive and problematic with severe negative psychosocial consequences [3].

The impact of the extensive availability, advertising, and legalizing of betting has been identified as an important public health and addiction concern [12]. Among adolescents and young adults, the prevalence of disordered gambling has increased significantly.

As it was stated in the above section, sport gambling is a new phenomenon in the Ethiopian context that attracts a number of individuals considering it as shortcut means to escape from poverty. The growing of sport betting centers in number from time to time is an evidence for this. Thus, according to the observation of the writers of this paper, the participants of this sport betting and at the same time those that encounter psychosocial behavioral disorder is increasing from time to time.

Based on the above explanations and problems for warded regarding the situation of gambling because of sport betting, the following research questions were forwarded for investigation.

- What looks like the prevalence and extent of gambling observed among the study participants demographic variables?
- Is there a statistically significant relationship between gambling behavior of sport betting and the psychological behaviors observed among the study participants?
- Is there a statistically significant relationship between gambling behavior of sport betting and the social behaviors observed among the study participants?

Objective of the study

General objective: The general objective of this study was to examine the practices of sport betting and its relation with the psychological and social behaviors of the practitioners in Hawassa City and nearby towns of Technology Village of Hawassa University.

Specific objectives: More specifically, the present study was proposed to achieve the following specific objectives, to:

- Examine the prevalence and extent of gambling among adolescent and young adults in the study area.
- Investigate whether there is statistically significant relationship or not between gambling behavior and the psychological behaviors observed among the study participants.
- Investigate whether there is statistically significant relationship or not between gambling behavior and the social behaviors observed among the study participants.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Description of the study area

The study sites for the present study were selected mainly from

Sidama Regional State towns and Hawassa city which are the parts of Technology Villages of Hawassa University. From the nearby towns Dilla town was included in the study. Here, even though Dilla town (which is about 100 kilometers from Hawassa City) is out of the Technology Village of Hawassa University, the researchers included this town as one of the study site because the presence of a number gambling cases in the town because of sport betting.

Study subjects

The target population for this study was adolescents and young adults who are frequently engaged in gambling in Hawassa city and nearby towns. In addition, a randomly selected six owners of the sport betting centers and other six individuals who frequently participate in sport betting were selected as key informants were participated in providing their information regarding sport betting.

Study design

The central purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence of sport betting and its relationship with young and adult psychosocial behaviour in Hawassa city and nearby towns of Hawassa University Technology villages. In doing so, the study employed mixed approach (quantitative and qualitative approaches) with cross-sectional survey research design. The main reason for the use of this approach was to get holistic understanding about the issue under investigation.

The study employed convenience (availability) sampling. This was because since it was difficult to get the actual listed number of individuals who engaged in playing sport gambling as a sample frame. Hence, non-probability sampling was assumed as possible and better sampling technique and procedure for this particular study in which 146 respondents were selected to fill the questionnaire items.

For the descriptive data, a total of 46 self-developed questionnaire items (6 of them demographic characteristic questions, and 40 five point Likert-type scale questionnaire items) were developed and administered for the respondents (adolescents and young adults). The questionnaire items were set in line with the research questions. Before dispatching and administering the final instrument, validity and reliability was checked. Thus the instrument was found valid and reliable with the Cronbach's alpha of 0.897 with high internal consistency that enabled to gather the final data. In addition, structured interview that consisted 6 items were designed and administered with respondents who frequently engaged in playing sport gambling and with those who own or manage the sport betting center.

The final questionnaire items were refined based on the feedback given and administered at each study sites by the researchers and their assistances.

Data management and analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were employed in the study. For the quantitative data, depending on the nature of the basic research questions both descriptive and

inferential statistical analysis was employed. Statistical Package for Social Science version 25.0 employed for different statistical analysis purpose. For the descriptive analysis, frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were employed to analyze the data. Furthermore, Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis was employed for the inferential data analysis. In addition to this, the data collected through interview form the key informants was analyzed, narrated, and organized in systematic way and presented by integrating with the quantitative data.

RESULTS

A total of 146 questionnaires were distributed across sample respondents in the study area. Of which 140 questionnaires were completed, retrieved and fully returned the rest 6 were not returned or fully responded as a result the response rate was 91.3 percent.

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

According to Table 1, all of the respondents, 140(100%) were males. This indicates gambling behavior on sport betting all in all practiced by male adolescents and young adults. Age was another demographic variable which was seen in the analysis in which majority 129(91.4%) of sample respondents were early adults with an age range from 21-30 years. Of the total respondents 1(0.7%) were primary grade level, 22(15.7%) were at secondary and preparatory level, 37(26.4%) were TVET graduates, 53(37.9%) first degree graduates and 27(19.3%) were second degree and above holders. From this, one may conclude that as individuals academic status increase their exposure to practice gambling using sport betting might also increases. A significant number of respondents, 42(30%) earn 14,000-18,000 Ethiopian Birr (ETB) on monthly basis. Thus, similar to the academic status data, there is an indication that those who have relatively better income in terms of salary engaged more in sport betting gambling. Regarding marital status of the respondents 84(60%) of the respondents were married.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	140	100
Female	0	0
Age		
Adolescents (12-20 year)	2	1.4
Early adults (21-30 year)	128	91.4
Late adults (31 years and above)	10	7.2

Educational status		
Primary (Grade 1-8)	1	0.7
Secondary and Preparatory	22	15.7
TVET	37	26.4
First degree	53	37.9
Second degree and above	27	19.3
Monthly income		
Below 2000	15	10.7
2001-6000	23	16.4
6001-10,000	19	13.6
10,001-14,000	16	11.4
14,001-18,000	42	30
Above 18,000	25	17.9
Marital status		
Single	48	34.3
Married	84	60
Divorced	8	5.7

Table 1: Summary for background characteristics of the respondents.

Prevalence and extent of sport betting

As illustrated in Table 2, 100% of the respondents were in the list of at least one betting providers. Out of all betting providers 62 (44.3%) of the respondents were frequently visiting Harif sport bet among the lists and the rest 40 (28.6%), 32 (22.9%), 5(3.6%) and 1(0.7%) of the respondents were frequently visited Hulu, Bet 251, Galaxy and Habesha sport bet respectively.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Hulu	40	28.6
Harif	62	44.3
Galaxy	5	3.6
Bet 251	32	22.9
Habesha	1	0.7

Table 2: Summary on favorite betting provider.

This indicates Harif and Hulu sport bet providers have many visitors than the rest betting providers because they offer players dual blessing that betting with a minimum amount of birr 10 and there betting software is user friendly and can be accessed by using Amharic language. Consistently, key informant interviewees were in favor of the aforementioned result: Hulu sport bet is among favorite betting provider because of allowing better to bet with Amharic user friendly application and minimum amount of cost to bet (Table 3).

Reason for sport betting	Frequency	Percent
Entertainment	50	35.7
Making money	57	40.7
Getting rid from boredom	37	17.9
Spending time	7	5
Other	1	0.7

Note: Self survey data 2021.

Table 3: Summary of the factors for frequent practice of sport betting.

Out of all respondents 57(40.7%) of the respondents play sport betting for making money and it was the popular reason out of all, 50(35.7%) of them play sport betting for entertainment purpose, 37 (17.9%) of them play sport betting to get rid of boredom, 7(5.0%) of them play sport betting to spend time and the rest 1(0.7%) play sport betting for unknown reason. Thus, we can conclude that making money which is a social factor is the key reason that triggers betting in the study area to be in the middle of sport betting practice. Psychological issues such as entertainment purpose and getting rid from boredom also contributed a lot for frequently practicing sport gambling betting.

Consistent with the aforementioned findings key informants also prove that earning money, entertainment and avoiding boredom were the three major reasons trigger many adolescents and young adults to be engaged in sport betting practices. As they portray gambling was also stated as a means for enjoyment and a way to have fun. It was stated as: “I play for enjoyment or just to have fun to have a good time. It’s enjoyable you know and it’s fun”. Others say they gamble to occupy time and to have something to do or to alleviate boredom. This refers to filling a gap in the person’s life either through alleviating boredom or through providing a means of socializing that was otherwise missing from their lives.

As illustrated in Table 4, 59(42.1%) of the respondents spent 0-2 hours daily on internet to check the current status of the team and odds, 37(26.4%) of them of the respondents spent 2-5

hours daily on internet to check the current status of the team and odds, 6(4.3%) of them spent 0-2 hours weekly on internet to check the current status of the team and odds and 38 (27.1%) of the respondents spent 2-5 hours weekly on internet to check the current status of the team and odds. From the data, respondents prefer to bet on weekend days (2-5 hours week end days) because in weekend many of the giant leagues are on. Key informants also confirmed that weekend days are the dream day to bet for betting deplorer because the day have a plenty of games to offer from senior to junior divisions.

Time spent	Frequency	%
0-2 hours daily	59	42.1
2-5 hours daily	37	26.4
0-2 hours week end day	6	4.3
2-5 hours week end days	38	27.1

Note: Self survey data 2021.

Table 4: Summary of time spent for checking odds and favorite time to bet.

Relationship between sport betting practice and psychological behavior

The relationship between the independent variable i.e. sport betting practice and the dependent variable i.e. psychological behavior was investigated using Person’s correlation coefficient. The correlation shown in the table below presents bivariate correlations between variables. Since a single construct in the questionnaire was measured by multiple items, the average score of the multi-items for a construct was computed and used in further analysis such as correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis.

The relationships between gambling and psychological behaviour score was investigated using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient. There was a significant high positive correlation $r=0.63$, $p<0.05$ between gambling and psychological behaviours (For example, experiencing high level of stress because of playing sport betting, experiencing headache because of playing sport betting, feel of depression when they loss an opportunity of winning while they play sport betting, think disappointed if there is a condition of closing centers/houses of sport betting, disturbed when they miss playing sport betting, nervous when they loss a winning chance etc.). Based on the value of person’s correlation test shown in Table 5, the high positive correlation between gambling behavior and psychological behavior implies that as the magnitude of gambling practices increase the psychologically problematic behaviors also tend to increase.

Variables	Gambling (Sport betting)	Psychological behavior
Gambling (Sport betting)	1	0.63
Psychological behavior	0.63	1

Table 5: Pearson's product-moment correlation matrix for the correlation between gambling (Sport betting) and psychological behavior.

Relationship between gambling (Sport betting) practice and social behavior

Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient performed to investigate the strength of relationship between gambling and social behaviours (For example, drinking alcohol while failed to bit in gambling, loss of money, borrowing money from others, fighting with friends, loss of social values, loss of acceptance in the work place etc.) yielded a very high significant positive correlation $r=0.74<0.05$. The result signifies that as the magnitude and extent of gambling using sport betting increases, the desirable social values tend to decrease and the undesirable ones tend to increase (Table 6).

Variables	Gambling (Sport betting)	Social behavior
Gambling (Sport betting)	1	0.74*
Social behavior	0.74*	1

Note: * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6: Pearson's product-moment correlation matrix for the correlation between gambling (Sport betting) practices and social behavior.

DISCUSSION

It was found that no women were found even observed while gambling in sport betting in the study sites. This finding confirm what was found in the previous study of Abbott M, et al. that stated because of gender bias, men have significantly higher participation rates and harms from gambling as compared to women [13]. On the other hand the present finding rejected what was found in the recent study studies of Gambling Commission of Ghana that argued gambling participation rates in general demonstrates that participation in gambling is roughly similar for men and women [14-16]. The finding of the present study might be because of gender bias and cultural influence of the society at different times.

The study also identified that young adults whose age is from 21-30 were more engaged in gambling practices. This finding support the previous findings which proved that increased availability of gambling and the expansion of opportunities to

gamble online have led to increases in the number of young people who gamble on a regular basis. The present finding is also consistent with the study findings of few researchers, who reported adolescent gambling practices as an illegal activity, adolescents and young adults engage in gambling with a prevalence rate higher than adults. Contemporary youth have grown up in an era where opportunities to gamble are increasingly widespread. In addition, it was also found adolescents and young adults frequently practice gambling on sport betting for the purpose of entertainment and source of income which confirmed the previous research findings showed that betting participants participate in gambling to earn money, to enjoy and avoid boredom.

The study clearly point out that gambling in the form of sport betting positively related with psychological and social behaviors. This signifies as the prevalence and extent of gambling behavior on sport betting behavior increases the tendency of increment was also observed on the undesirable psychosocial behaviors. This finding is consistent with the studies of Griffiths et al. and Barnes which stated many some players will play excessively and spend hours and hours every single day either practicing or competing [17,18]. For many players, their whole life is dominated by the activity and may impact on their relationships and family life. The present finding replicated the previous findings of Russell, Hing and Browne and Masaba, Sekakubo, Blaszczyński and Kuka that point out persons with addictive gambling problems demonstrate varying degrees of poor physical health conditions, gambling related criminal offences, psychosocial difficulties and familial conflicts as compared to non-gamblers [19,20]. More supporting argument which supported by the present research finding reported that those engulfed in gambling basically cease to exist as socially functional human beings, cases of debt, financial ruin, theft, job losses, ruined relationships and even suicide have been reported among compulsive gamblers who must indulge regardless of harm done to self or loved ones [6,7].

CONCLUSION

This study was aimed to investigate the practices of sport betting and its relation with the psychological and social behaviors of the practitioners in Hawassa City and nearby towns of Technology Village of Hawassa University. After a systematic data gathering and analysis, the study findings were properly identified. Based on the findings the following points were concluded.

- Males, young adults (age 21-30), graduates from different educational levels (TVET, first degree and second degree and above) and those with better monthly income engaged more frequently in gambling (sport betting) behavior.
- Making money, entertainment, and getting rid from boredom were identified as major causes that lead adolescents and young adults to gambling behavior.
- Frequent engagement in sport betting for gambling purpose resulted in different forms of social and psychological problems because of addiction of the participants by gambling behavior.

- The sport betting centers grow in number in alarming rate and may become out of control within a short period of time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study it is recognized gambling through sport betting has a negative effect on individual practitioners and the community as whole. Thus curbing the trend of this fast growing gambling behavior seems an urgent issue. To do this:

- Strict policy should be set on how to implement sport betting for the wellbeing of the society.
- Rules, controlling and checking mechanisms should be set for not practicing undesirable behaviors in sport betting centers. E.g. not to drink too much alcohol, harmful drugs etc.
- Awareness training for the players, and owners of the betting centers to use sport betting for entertainment purpose, to use their time properly.
- When licensing as well as the renewing the permission sports betting companies their social and the psychological contribution should be considered. Issues such as Income tax for the government and other offices should be considered as secondary.

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