



## SOCIAL PREDICTORS OF SPORTS BETTING AMONG YOUTHS IN ILLORIN, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*Background.* Sports betting has been shown to be escalating among youths in developing countries. However, there is still insufficient information on the predictors of sports betting among this particular social group. The aim of this study was to examine social predictors of sports betting among youths in Ilorin, Kwara State, North Central Nigeria. *Material and methods.* A cross-sectional community survey was conducted among 470 youths from Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. Social predictors of sports betting (SPSB) were evaluated using a 23-item questionnaire consisting of three parts: Part I - socio-demographic variables (age, gender, employment status); Part II - items on sports betting engagement (SBE); and Part III - items on family influence, peer influence, and media influence. Frequency and percentage, the phi coefficient, and binary logistic regression were used for analyses. *Results.* The findings revealed a weak relationship between sports betting and family influence ( $r=.218$ ); a moderate relationship between sports betting and peer influence ( $r=.523$ ), and a moderate relationship between sports betting and media influence ( $r=.559$ ). Gender and employment status were significantly associated with sports betting ( $p < .05$ ). *Conclusion.* The study showed that family influence, peer influence, media influence, and employment status were predictors of sports betting among Nigerian youths. Gambling regulatory bodies, parents, educators, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should sensitize young people on the dangers of engaging in sports betting as a sustainable source of income.

**Key words:** sports betting, social predictors, youths

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### **Introduction**

Sport has always attracted people's interest directly and indirectly. It is a socio-cultural phenomenon of historically determined human activities connected with the use of physical exercises aimed at preparing and participating in a specially organized system of competitions, entailing individually and socially significant results [1]. Sports are beyond mere playful acts, and they provide several career opportunities [2]. The enormous value placed on sport due to its commercialization has led to the development of side attractions other than the actual sports activities. One of such side attractions is sports betting [3], which can be regarded by some as a playful act itself.

Sports betting has become a vital phenomenon, not simply a recreational pastime, but also a serious social and economic activity. It is also a form of gambling which has strongly penetrated the mainstream of society. Sports betting consists in placing a financial wager on the outcome of a sporting match as well as on events that occur within larger sport fixtures [4]. It can also be referred to as an act of placing money or other valuables as a wager on a sporting contest with the aim of making profit.

Sports betting has been growing rapidly among all forms of gambling worldwide [5-10]. It has been embedded in developed countries as part and parcel of weekend packages sold for match days, mostly in Europe and the Americas.

Sports betting has boomed in popularity over the last decade, and has become a global industry valued at over \$100 billion [5]. Studies have shown that sports betting has made an incursion into all the nooks and crannies of various societies, including the most remote ones in Nigeria [11]. Residents from the South-West of Nigeria acknowledged the high prevalence of sports betting in the country [9]. Studies revealed that in Ibadan, Oyo State, neighboring Ilorin, Kwara State, 78% of sports bettors had been gambling for at least 6 months and, on average, spent more than two hours at the betting venue each time they bet [12]. Similarly, more than one half (53%) of bettors in Nigeria bet every day on sports [9]. It is estimated that bettors from Nigeria have a 28.6% share of the worldwide online sports betting market [13]. These figures prove that the value of sports betting cannot be overemphasized.

Sports bettors are mainly young people. There is no uniform definition of the term “youth” globally; however, it can be stipulated that youths are individuals between the ages of 18- 40 years [14]. It is reported that about 60 million young Nigerians spend up to ₦ 1.8 billion on sports betting daily [15]. A national survey on betting showed that 41% of Nigerian youths engaged in some forms of betting [9] for different reasons, with social and monetary reward expectations being the predominant factors [16].

Predictors of sports betting can be social, economic, or psychological. The present study examines social predictors of sports betting, i.e. social groups and institutions that influence individual sports betting behaviors. The social surroundings of youths can, in fact, initiate a positive approach towards sports betting [17]. There have been reports of young sports supporters using sports betting as a form of social and group unity [18]. In this study the following social predictors of sports betting were considered: family influence, peer influence, and media influence.

Family has a profound influence on the experience of children, which in turn determines their early perception of life, being the first point of socialization [19]. The most significant predictors of sports betting were the

extent to which family members and peers were perceived to participate in sports betting [17]. It is observed that the extent to which one’s family, friends and colleagues gamble and approve of gambling predicted one’s own gambling frequency [20]. The most apparent social motivations for gambling may be socializing with friends, and an opportunity to interact with new people [21]. The Internet and social media platforms have made sports betting more “universal and socially acceptable” for young people [22]. Gambling activities have expanded and diversified, with young people being increasingly exposed to messages from a broad range of media that endorse, promote, and normalize gambling [23].

Youths with a favorable attitude towards sports betting may face gambling-related issues in the future [17] that may occur through uncontrollable or excessive spending on gambling [24]. While recreational gamblers can control their spending on sports betting and engage sporadically in betting for money and fun [25], some youths become addicted to sports betting, despite all the negative consequences [26], but cannot tell what influenced their engagement in the first place.

At the time this study was completed no research had been carried out on this topic. The aim of this study was to determine how family, peers, and media influenced the involvement in sports betting of youths from Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The understanding of the influence of family, peers, and media on the engagement of young people in sports betting will provide a better perception of the level of impact of all these three determinants.

## **Method**

### *Study design and setting*

A cross-sectional community survey was carried out between September 2020 and June 2021 at sports betting centres in three local government areas (LGAs) of Ilorin East, Ilorin West, and Ilorin South in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The three LGAs are made up of thirty-five electoral wards.

### *Participants*

The study population comprised 339,225 youths, with the following distribution: Ilorin East - 61,764, Ilorin West - 168,600, and Ilorin South - 108,861. 20.7% of participants were women and 79.3% were men, and their mean age was 26.50 years. Over two-thirds of the participants (75.5%) were aged between 18 and 29 years, with the largest age group being 18 – 23 years (58.4%); 36.7% were employed, and 63.3% were unemployed.

### *Sampling procedures*

The sample size was determined using a randomized table [27] and was calculated at 470. A four-stage sampling procedure was employed. The first stage involved the use of random sampling technique to stratify the youths into the three LGAs. To distribute the 470 sampled youths to the three LGAs, a sample protection formula was adopted [28], and the sample distribution for the three LGAs was as follows: Ilorin East - 85, Ilorin West – 234, and Ilorin South – 151.

The second stage was the selection of electoral wards to be used in the study. Simple random sampling of balloting without replacement was adopted. The sample protection formula was used to allot electoral wards selected in each of the three LGAs. The sample distribution for the three LGAs based on 35 electoral wards in total was: 2 electoral wards out of 12 in Ilorin East, 6 out of 12 in Ilorin West, and 4 out of 11 in Ilorin South. The youths were selected to ensure adequate representations based on the number of electoral wards and youth population. 12 electoral wards were selected for the study at this stage.

The third stage involved the use of the simple random sampling technique of balloting with replacement to sample 85 youths in 2 electoral wards in Ilorin East, i.e. 42 youths in one electoral ward and 43 in the other; 234 youths in 6 electoral wards in Ilorin West, i.e. 39 youths in each electoral wards; and 151 youths in 4 electoral wards in Ilorin South, i.e. 38 youths in three electoral wards and 37 youths in one electoral ward.

The fourth stage involved an accidental sampling procedure through which the allocated number of respondents for each LGA

was obtained. A researcher administered questionnaire copies to any youths present at any sports betting centre and its environs in the sampled wards. The questionnaires were then filled in and collected.

### *Material and measures*

After receiving consent from the managers of the sports betting centres and from the participants, a 23-item questionnaire was administered for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. Part I contained data on participants' socio-demographic variables: gender, age and employment. Part II comprised 5 YES/NO questions on sports betting engagement (SPE); while Part III consisted of 15 questions with non-dichotomous response options (strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed) on social predictors of sports betting (SPSB). The structured dichotomous and non-dichotomous questions were developed specifically for purpose of the present study.

### *Data collection procedure*

Having considered security challenges in Nigeria the research team made relevant consultations and displayed their identity cards for the ease of identification by the participants. Ethical approval for the study had been granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN/FE/REC20/103).

The research team employed five research assistants to administer the questionnaires. The assistants were knowledgeable in human kinetics and scientific evaluation. First, in order to reach the expected youths, the research team and their assistants met with the sports betting shops managers/operators to seek their consent to administer the questionnaires. After the managers/operators granted our request, informed consent was obtained from the participants. The research team and their assistants explained the objectives of the study to the participants, and their confidentiality was assured. After receiving their consent, the research team administered 470 questionnaire copies to the participants face-to-face in the twelve electoral wards of the three LGAs in

Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The participants were requested to be as sincere as possible in their answers and fill out the questionnaires individually one time only. The questionnaires were collected immediately after filling out in order to ensure the maximum return rate, and, in fact, 100% of the questionnaires were returned. Out of 470 returned copies, 20 were filled out incorrectly and were discarded.

*Data analysis*

The IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 was used for all statistical analyses. Frequency and percentage were used to analyze the participants' socio-demographic variables and the structured statements on sports betting engagement, while the phi correlation coefficients were used on social predictors of sports betting. In scoring for sports betting engagement, the following criteria were used: 0-29% = low proportion, 30-49% = moderate proportion, 40-69% = high proportion, and 70% and above = very high proportion. For social predictors of sports betting, guidelines for interpreting correlation coefficients were followed [29] based on the

following criteria:  $\pm .00$  = no relationship;  $\pm .01$ - $\pm .29$  = weak relationship;  $\pm .30$ - $\pm .59$  = moderate relationship; and  $\pm .60$ - $\pm 1.00$  = strong relationship. The internal consistency of the SBE scales was estimated using Cronbach's alpha, while the SPSB scale was estimated using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. The predictive capacity of sports betting profile on SPSB as well their covariates (gender, age, employment) was assessed using binary logistics regression analysis. All tests were 2-tailed, and  $p < 0.05$  values were considered statistically significant, except for age.

**Results**

According to Table 1, a very high proportion of Nigerian youths aged 36-40 years (73.9%) reported participating in sports betting, i.e. more than other age groups of respondents: below 18 years (51.7%), 18-23 years (57.8%), 24-29 years (61.0%), and 30-35 years (63.0%). The results in Table 2 indicate that a higher proportion of male youths (79.3%) than female youths (20.7%) reported engaging in sports betting.

**Table 1.** Frequency and percentage of Nigerian youths who engage in sports betting based on age (n = 450)

s/n	Item	below18y	18-23yr	24-29yr	30-35yr	36-40yr
		n = 60	n = 263	n = 77	n = 27	n = 23
				Yes		
				f (%)		
1.	Have you ever bet on sports?	34 (56.7)	116 (63.1)	53 (68.8)	18 (66.7)	18 (78.3)
2.	Have you ever won at sports betting?	30 (50.0)	143 (54.4)	50 (64.9)	16 (59.3)	15 (65.2)
3.	Do you get involved in sports betting weekly?	27 (45.0)	101 (38.4)	33 (42.9)	14 (51.9)	17 (73.9)
4.	I visit sports betting shops/online sites to place bets.	26 (43.3)	122 (46.4)	37 (48.1)	15 (55.6)	15 (65.2)
5.	I always look forward to winning a sports bet.	42 (70.0)	166 (63.1)	50 (64.9)	18 (66.7)	16 (69.6)
	<b>Total %</b>	51.7	57.8	61.0	63.0	73.9

**Table 2.** Frequency and percentage of Nigerian youths who engage in sports betting based on gender (n = 450)

	Item	Men (n = 357)	Women (n = 93)
		Yes	
		f (%)	
1.	Have you ever bet on sports?	253 (70.9)	36 (38.7)
2.	Have you ever won at sports betting?	224 (62.7)	30 (32.3)
3.	Do you get involved in sports betting weekly?	165 (46.2)	27 (29.0)
4.	I visit sports betting shops/online sites to place bets.	185 (51.8)	30 (32.3)
5.	I always look forward to winning a sports bet.	248 (69.5)	44 (47.3)
	<b>Cluster %</b>	79.3	20.7

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Table 3 shows that a higher proportion of employed youths (70.9%) reported engaging in sports betting more often than the unemployed youths (51.6%). Table 4 reveals an overall positive weak relationship between sports betting and family influence ( $\varphi = .218$ ) among the youths from Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 5 reveals an overall positive moderate relationship between sports betting and peer influence in youths from Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria ( $\varphi = .523$ ). Table 6 indicate an overall positive moderate relationship between sports betting and media exposure in youths from Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria ( $\varphi = .559$ ).

**Table 3.** Frequency and percentage of youths who engage in sports betting based on employment status (n = 450)

	Employed (n = 165)		Unemployed (n = 285)	
			Yes f (%)	
1.	Have you ever bet on sports?		123 (74.5)	166 (58.2)
2.	Have you ever won at sports betting?		102 (61.8)	152 (53.3)
3.	Do you get involved in sports betting weekly?		98 (59.4)	94 (33.0)
4.	I visit sports betting shops/online sites to place bets.		97 (58.8)	118 (41.4)
5.	I always look forward to winning a sports bet.		127 (77.0)	165 (57.9)
	<b>Total %</b>		70.9	51.6

**Table 4.** Phi coefficients of association between sports betting and family influence in Ilorin youths (n = 450)

S/N	Sports betting and family influence	$\varphi$ Decision
1.	A member of my family bets on sports regularly.	0.177 WR
2.	My family members approve of me getting engaged in sports betting.	0.147 WR
3.	I accompany a family member to place sports bets.	0.279 WR
4.	I have been sent on an errand by a family member to place a bet.	0.284 WR
5.	I have celebrated winning a sports bet with family members	0.264 WR
	<b>Overall</b>	0.218WR

\*Note:  $\pm .00$  = no relationship;  $\pm .01 - \pm .29+$  = weak relationship;  $\pm .30 - \pm .59$  = moderate relationship;  $\pm .60 - \pm 1.00$  = strong relationship

**Table 5.** Phi correlation of association between sports betting and peer influence in youths from Ilorin, Kwara State (n = 450)

S/N	Sports betting and peer influence	$\varphi$ Decision
1.	I hang out with a friend who bet on sports.	0.474 MR
2.	I accompany my friends to place their bets.	0.420 MR
3.	Sports betting affords me an opportunity to meet new friends.	0.474 MR
4.	Betting outlets offer environments conducive to relaxing with friends.	0.475 MR
5.	A friend has celebrated his/her winning a sports bet with me, which aroused my interest in sports betting.	0.574 MR
	<b>Overall</b>	0.523 MR

\*Note:  $\pm .00$  = no relationship;  $\pm .01 - \pm .29+$  = weak relationship;  $\pm .30 - \pm .59$  = moderate relationship;  $\pm .60 - \pm 1.00$  = strong relationship

**Table 6.** Phi coefficients of association between sports betting and media exposure in youths from Ilorin, Kwara State (n = 450)

S/N	Sports betting and media exposure	$\varphi$ Decision
1.	Sports betting advertisements during commercial breaks on TV influenced my participation in sports Betting.	0.535 MR
2.	Online betting facilitates my engagement in sports betting.	0.489 MR
3.	Access to a mobile phone app motivates me to participate in sports betting.	0.491 MR
4.	Social media interactions on sports betting prompt my participation in sports Betting.	0.504 MR
5.	The privacy of placing a bet using my handset motivated my engagement in sports betting.	0.541 MR
	<b>Overall</b>	0.559 MR

\*Note:  $\pm .00$  = no relationship;  $\pm .01 - \pm .29+$  = weak relationship;  $\pm .30 - \pm .59$  = moderate relationship;  $\pm .60 - \pm 1.00$  = strong relationship

Results show that a full constant only model of association between demographic factors and sports betting was statistically significant. This is evidence that demographic factors have a significant effect and reliably differentiate between the observed and model predicted value ( $X^2(8) = 18.560, p = .017 < .05$ ). Nagelkerke  $R^2$  of .255 indicated a modest relationship (variation or change) of 25.5% between the demographic factors and the dependent variable (sports betting). This finding shows that gender and employment status ( $p < .05$ ) were significantly associated with sports betting, while age ( $p > .05$ ) was non-significantly associated with sports betting. Young women were 74.8% less likely to engage in sports betting than their male counterparts (OR = .252. 95% CI [.151- .420],  $p = .010 < .05$ ); and unemployed youths were 53.1% less likely to engaged in sports betting than employed youths (OR = .469. 95% CI [.281 - .783],  $p = .004 < .05$ ). This implies that beside gender and employment status the demographic factor of age did not influence the engagement of youths in sports betting.

## Discussion

Research shows that more youths become engaged in sports betting without knowing what initially led to their involvement. The present study aimed to investigate the social predictors of sports betting among youths from Nigeria. A very high proportion of the surveyed young people aged 36-40 years (73.9%) reported participating in sports betting more than other age groups: below 18 years (51.7), 18-23 years (57.8), 24-29 years (61.0), and 30-35 years (63.0%) (Tab.1). This could be explained by the fact that older adults have more money that younger adults. This finding corroborates the results of Ayandela and Aramide [30] who revealed that older participants reported more positive attitudes toward sports betting than younger participants. Also Ayandele et al. [18] found that older participants expressed more positive attitudes towards sports betting than younger ones.

There was a higher proportion of male youths (79.3%) reporting participating in sports betting than of female youths (20.7%) (Tab. 2).

This finding was expected, and therefore not surprising, as it is consistent with the results of prior studies by Ahaibwe et al. [7], who found a much higher percentage of men participating in sports betting than women (36.7% vs 3.61%). Similarly, significantly higher percentages of men than women participating in sports betting were noted by Ayandele et al. [17], Ayandele and Aramide [30], and Ayandele et al. [24] (82.8% vs 16.2%).

A higher proportion of employed youths (70.9%) reported engaging in sports betting more often than the unemployed youths (51.6%) (Tab. 3). This could be justified by the fact that the employed youths often have money to afford sports betting compared with the unemployed youths, who only occasionally have money to spend on sports betting. This is consistent with the results of a literature review by Palmer [4], who reported that those engaged in sports betting are mostly employed youths. Ahaibwe et al. [7] also revealed that unemployed youths participated less in gambling activities compared with their employed counterparts.

There was an overall coefficient of correlation of family influence as a social predictor of sports betting ( $\varphi = .218$ ) (Tab. 4); however, it indicated a positive weak relationship between sports betting and family influence. This finding is not congruent with previous US studies by Matthew [31] who found that family gambling history had a significant impact on engagement in sports betting by youths, and with Ayandele et al. [17] who stated that with respect to sports betting one's knowledge about gambling (sports betting) and the subjective norms of one's in-group (i.e. one's family) determined youths' involvement in sports betting. The different findings in the present study could be explained by the fact that the majority of the family members of the youths did not engage in sports betting.

The study revealed an overall correlation coefficient of peer influence as a social predictor of sports betting ( $= .523$ ) (Tab. 5), which indicated a positive moderate relationship between sports betting and peer influence. Table 5 shows specifically that the peers who influence youths' engagement in

sports betting are above average. This finding corresponds with the results of an earlier study by Thomas et al. [32] who noted that youths reported that sports betting were part of peer discussions, and that young people felt compelled to participate in sports betting to avoid seclusion from peers. Thomas [33] also noted that peers were identified as one of agents of socialization facilitating individuals' gambling attitudes and behaviors. Furthermore, Lopez-Gonzalez et al. [34] found that the normalization of sports betting by peers had an influence on youth's engagement in sports betting.

There was an overall coefficient of correlation of media exposure as a social predictor of sports betting ( $= .559$ ) (Tab. 6), which indicated a positive moderate relationship between sports betting and media exposure. According to data from Table 6 the level at which media exposure influences young people's engagement in sports betting is above average. This is in line with the results of Lopez-Gonzalez et al. [34], who revealed that the proliferation of sports betting messages in different media such as television, social media, and newspapers significantly affected youths' engagement in sports betting, and with Temitope [35] who reported that the increase in media coverage of sporting events significantly increased sports betting in Nigeria.

Unemployment was shown to have a significant impact on youths' engagement in sports betting. Similarly, Ayandele et al. [24] stated that the unemployment rate could influence participation in gambling among youths, while Adebisi et al. [36] indicated that unemployment was one of the causes why Nigerian youths engaged in gambling in the first place. Nevertheless, these findings are contrary to those by Gbemi et al. [37] who reported that unemployment was not significant to youths' engagement in sports betting. This is probably because most of the respondents sampled in this study were unemployed.

An important strength of this study is the diverse community sample of male and female participants. The study has also certain limitations which could be avoided in future

research. It was a challenge to draw the attention of young people in sports betting shops as they were engrossed in calculating bets to place. Thus there were possible errors in their responses to particular questionnaire items. Also, some women we met at the sports betting shops refused to participate in the study, most likely because of social stigmatization of female gambling, especially in Nigeria. This had an effect on respondents' gender distribution [38]. In future studies female researchers should administer questionnaire copies to female respondents. Also prospective studies should be carried out regarding women's perception of participation in sports betting.

### Conclusion

Employment, family and peer influence, and media exposure were predictors of sports betting among Nigerian youths. Gender was also a significant predictor of sports betting among youths, but not age. Moreover, the Nigerian youths had a more positive attitude towards sports betting. The study results indicate the need for the Nigerian government to create employment opportunities so that the young people do not rely on sports betting engagement as an employment alternative. Parents, educators, gambling regulatory bodies, the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, and NGOs should use these findings to design appropriate programs to educate youths that sports betting is not a viable source of income, and that deviant friends can lead one into irresponsible betting. Furthermore, the study results will help parents and other family members refrain from modelling behaviors that will endanger the future of younger members of the family. Gambling regulatory bodies should develop appropriate plans to filter access to sport betting apps and sites as well as to regulate online betting practices and formulate socially responsible betting policies. Further studies should consider a more in-depth exploration of sports betting issues among youths.

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