

An Assessment of Patterns, Risks and Effects of Online Sports Betting Among Youths in South-East Nigeria

Chinwe Uzochukwu E (Ph.D)
Professor of Mass Communication
Nnamdi Azikiwe University
Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

Kenneth Ekene Ohiri Msc Degree Student
Department of Mass Communication
Nnamdi Azikiwe University
Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

Abstract:- The study focused on the patterns, motivation and effects of online betting among youths in South East Nigeria and the factors predisposing these youths to online sports betting behaviour. A total of 291 respondents were selected using a simple random technique which provided quantitative data analysed in the study. The Social learning theory and Diffusion of Innovations theory provided theoretical underpinnings for the study. The study agreed that the respondents who were found to be avid online bettors in a social learning sense, have learned betting behaviour through imitation of influential models such as family members and friends within their peer group. The study also proof that the younger and unemployed respondents were more involved in online sports betting than the older and employed respondents; with regards to factors predisposing the respondents to online sports betting, majority of them stated that their main reason was to earn extra income and the study recommend that a national committee be set up to streamline the frivolous and appealing massive advertisement undertaken by online sports betting companies; secondly, psychologists should intensify effort to organize seminars/conferences on the implications of online sports betting on youths behaviour and general wellbeing among others.

Keywords:- Assessment, Motivation, Online, Pattern, South East.

I. INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria today, shanty wooden structures or shops with a number of benches, a television and a satellite dish are common sights. These venues, popularly called ‘viewing centres’, offersports fans a chance to watch league games, usually for less than a dollar. As the popularity of these matches grew in the early 2000, so did the presence of these viewing centres occasioned by the introduction of ICTs into our everyday activity. On match-days, these places are usually packed with passionate fans wearing club jerseys and rooting for their favourite teams. More recently, a keen observer would notice fans at viewing centres clutching a white piece of paper – a ‘ticket’. Tickets are printed copies of selected games on which bets are placed. Since late 2012, sports betting have become prominent in Nigeria. Despite the fact that sports betting kicked off in Nigeria only

recently, the earliest sports betting firms in Nigeria recorded their first entry into the market in 2007 (Kazeem, 2015).While gamblers rely purely on luck in order to win, other variables, such as knowledge and information on betting tips are of great importance in being successful in betting.

While most forms of gambling on sports have been stable or decreased over the last few years, online betting has nearly doubled its prevalence rate in the 2009-2014 periods (Georgiu, 2015). Drawing on the high rate of poverty and the stereotypical ‘quick to make it syndrome’ among youths in the South East and the proliferation of smart phones backed by nascent Internet regulatory frameworks, bookmakers appear to have succeeded in normalizing the action of wagering money on the outcome of a sporting competition (Parke, Harris & Parke, 2014). The novelty of the online component has raised questions regarding the new nature of sports betting, bringing to the public debate the yet unseen implications of this recent form of gambling in the new media. The youth in Nigeria represent more than half of 195 million of the country’s population and their unemployment is twice the country’s average (National Bureau of Statistic, 2016).Yet, these youth have immersed themselves in online sports betting on a daily basis, both the employed and unemployed alike.

This study, therefore, assessed the youths in South East Nigeria to ascertain their pattern in online sport betting, their reasons for betting and the effect that constant activity has on them and the society.

II. STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

More than 60 million Nigerians between 18 years and 40 years of age spend about ₦1 billion daily on sports betting (www.nairaland.com) the report also revealed that ‘ a betting company can generate up to twenty million naira monthly and use between five million to seven million to meet winners’ obligation in terms of payment’. More so, as noted by American Psychiatric Association (2013), there is no doubt that gambling beyond personally affordable levels result in a multitude of harms at individual, family and societal strata which include mental health (affective disorders, substance abuse, stress-related symptoms),

marital/family dysfunction (conflict, separation/divorce, domestic violence), finances (debts), employment and productivity (absenteeism, loss of employment), and legal (criminal offences).

Little is known about whether youths that bets online in South East Nigeria are aware of the costs, consequences and potential internet threats of online activities. Against this backdrop, this study has therefore assessed online sports betting patterns among youths in South East Nigeria.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to assess the pattern of online sports betting and factors that motivate youths in the South East, Nigeria to engage in the behaviour. In addition, it focuses on the effects of this behaviour on the youths. The specific objectives for this study are as follows:

1. To ascertain the pattern of online sports betting among youths in South East Nigeria.
2. To determine the motivations for online sports betting among youths in South East Nigeria.
3. To examine the effect of online sports betting on youths in South east Nigeria

IV. EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Eboh (2015) examined the prevalence and determinant of gambling among undergraduate students of Federal University Oye Ekiti. In executing this research, social learning theory of gambling was adopted, which postulate that gambling as a form of behaviour is highly subjected to reinforcement and reward. The method of analysis adopted for this study was the frequency and percentages under the univariate level of analysis and chi-square analysis under the bivariate level of analysis to analyze the quantitative data that was obtained from the field. The sample for the study consisted of one-hundred and twenty undergraduates of the university. They were selected in order to have a quantifiable representation of the students (5% of the total population). The study found out that among the students engaged in gambling; 87.2% out of a 100 students are males and 14.3% of the remaining is female. Majority of those who gambled said they engaged in it because they needed money. Despite that some of these students came from rich families and had educated parents, they still gambled because they needed more money than their regular allowances. The study suggested that the school through its entrepreneurial centre should empower students through vocational trainings with the aim of profit making and then organize an orientation on peer influence. This study even though it was carried out in Nigeria, was done in the Western part of the country while the current study is being carried out in the Eastern part. Meanwhile, the study by Eboh (2015) handled all forms of gambling by university students while the current study focused on online sports betting among youths. Both studies utilized the social learning theory.

In an attempt to understand how football betting phenomenally shapes social relations in Nigeria, Olayinka and Fageyinbo (2015) carried out a study to discover the origin of football betting in the context of study and why people engage in football betting. The study was anchored within the theoretical orientation of social exchange and Marxism and utilized purposive and accidental sampling techniques. Qualitative approach was also adopted through eight in-depth interviews (IDIs) and eight key informant interviews (KIIs). Data analysis was done through statistical software and content analysis. Most football betters in the study were youths around 20 and 30 years of age. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents were males and 21% were females. It implied that the majority of football bettors were males and men engaged more in sporting activities, including football betting than women in Nigeria. This study relates with the current study as both narrowed down to football betting in Nigeria. However, while the current study set out originally to study youths in South East, the study by Olayinka and Fageyinbo (2015) studied football betting among youths in Nigeria with no particular zone in the country originally set out to be studied.

The purpose of another study carried out by Chikitora (2016) was to find the motives for sports betting among Gweru residents in Zimbabwe. The research also sought to find out the personal characteristics of gamblers and the outcomes they expect from gambling. The study adopted a quantitative approach to collect and analyse raw data obtained using questionnaires. The research also used descriptive survey design. Random sampling was administered on a total of 120 respondents. The raw data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 20) software and Microsoft Excel software. The data was presented through pie charts and graphs and labelled by percentages. The main findings of the study concluded that gambling is motivated by three basic motives which are enhancement motives, social motives and coping motives. The research also found out that gamblers hope to get rich through gambling. The researcher concluded that gambling is a motivational consequence which is enhanced by high hopes of getting rich. The researcher recommended the inclusion of monetary motives to the gambling motives questionnaire. The study by Chikitora (2016) shares semblance with the current study as both focused on sports betting and the act of gambling. However, this study focused more on the motives while the current study expands to level of participation, impact and possible solution. Meanwhile, this study was carried out outside Nigeria though within the same continent.

In a study to assess the impact of sports betting in Kenya, Mwadime (2017) assessed the role and impact of technology on sports betting, examined the effects of sports betting on vulnerable segments of users, and examined the role of controls and legislation on sports betting. He utilized a descriptive research design using quantitative research approach. The population of the study was drawn from individuals engaging in sports betting within Nairobi County. In total, it was estimated that 2 million individuals were engaged in sports betting. Using stratified random

sampling and Yamanes formula a sample size of 100 respondents was selected for inclusion in the study. The study found out that majority of the individuals engaging in sports betting were mostly males of the ages above 21 years and below 40 years. In addition, the biggest source of income for sports bettors was salaries indicating that employed individuals were at a higher probability of engaging in sports betting than entrepreneurs and unemployed individuals. Most bets were placed using the website on a more than once per week interval. Sport pesa was the dominant brand in sports betting. Mobile money had an influence on sports betting in Nairobi. According to this study, Mobile money was an enabler of sports betting. This study relates with the current study as both studies were on online sports betting, were impact assessment studies and focused on youths. However, it differs from the current study as it was not carried out in Nigeria.

A total of 4,594 eligible respondents were recruited by Hing, Russell and Browne (2017) and they completed an online survey which targeted Australian adults who had gambled in the past 12 months. Participants were recruited via advertisements on Internet gambling sites ($n = 2,475$) and on gambling-related sites ($n = 535$), such as help services. Participants were also recruited through advertisements on Facebook ($n = 810$) and via Google AdWords ($n = 288$). These recruitment methods were employed to specifically oversample online gamblers. The overall sample was mostly male (77.8%) with a mean age of 42.1 years ($SD = 14.7$). Compared to non-problematic online EGM gamblers, problematic online Eagle Global Markets (EGM) gamblers had significantly lower incomes. They gambled on EGMs more frequently and were significantly more likely to use alcohol or illicit drugs at least some of the time when gambling. They were significantly more likely to be experiencing psychological distress and to have significantly more negative attitudes toward gambling. Compared to non-problematic online sports bettors, problematic online sports bettors were significantly more likely to be male, younger, have a lower income, be born outside of Australia, and speak a language other than English as their main language at home. They gambled on sports more frequently, but did less of their sports betting online and were significantly more likely to consider themselves to be semi-professional gamblers. They were significantly more likely to use illicit drugs at least some of the time when gambling, to be experiencing psychological distress, and to have more negative attitudes toward gambling. This was a Western study in Australia and focused on all online adult gamblers. It also utilized the online survey while the current utilizes the survey. However, both are driven by one factor – the Internet.

Deans, Thomas, Derevensky and Daube (2017) conducted qualitative, semi-structured interviews with 50 Australian men (aged 20–37 years) who gambled on sports. They explored their attitudes and opinions regarding sports betting marketing, the embedding of marketing within sports and other non-gambling community environments, and the implications this had for the normalisation of betting. Their findings indicate that most of the environments in which

participants reported seeing or hearing betting advertisements were not in environments specifically designed for betting. Participants described that the saturation of marketing for betting products, including through sports-based commentary and sports programming, normalised betting. Participants described that the inducements offered by the industry were effective marketing strategies in getting themselves and other young men to bet on sports. Inducements were also linked with feelings of greater control over betting outcomes and stimulated some individuals to sign up with more than one betting provider. This research suggests that marketing plays a strong role in the normalisation of gambling in sports. Legislators must begin to consider the cultural lag between an evolving gambling landscape, which supports sophisticated marketing strategies and effective policies and practices which aim to reduce and prevent gambling harm. Both studies were on sports betting. While the current is on online, the former is on general sports betting and the major focus was the sports betting market itself. However, both are for the youths, though the former focused on men. Meanwhile, the study was in Australia.

The review of related studies showed that there is a paucity of research on the pattern, motivating factors and effects of online sports betting among youths in the eastern part of Nigeria which is mostly made up of commercial cities. This constituted the gap in literature which the present study aimed to fill.

V. METHODOLOGY

This study was designed as a survey. Guided by the scale of sample size adequacy provided by Comrey and Lee (16), 300 respondents were selected purposively from three (3) randomly selected states in South east Nigeria, namely Anambra, Imo and Enugu States. The study focused on the states' capitals: Awka, Owerri and Enugu. The essence of narrowing down to the capitals of the selected states is due to the concentration of youths exposed to Information Communication Technology usage and high speed of internet access. More so, a structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection.

a. RESULTS

Results from the survey which involved 300 youths (youths who bet online) selected purposively in Awka, Owerri, Enugu is as follows:

b. Response Rate

Out of the 300 questionnaire copies distributed among the respondents, 291 representing 97.0% were recovered; while 9 representing 3 % were not. Thus, 97% response rate was recorded as against 3% casualty rate.

c. Demographic Variables

Six demographic variables were measured viz gender, age, marital status, highest educational qualification, occupation, and monthly income. Majority of the respondents ($n=272$; 93.0%) were males, while 7.0% ($n=19$)

were females. This result suggests that males are more involved in online sports betting than the females as the respondents for this study were those found around online betting sites. With regards to the respondents' age, 67.3% (n=196) of them fell within the age bracket of 18-26 years, while 32.7% (n=95) fell within the age bracket of 27-35 years. This result suggests that younger individuals are more involved with online sports betting compared to the older ones. More so, of the 291 respondents who gave responses on their marital status, majority (n=176; 60.4%) stated that they were single, followed by the 25% (n=75) who stated that they were married. Only 11.6% (n=34) of the respondents stated that they were divorced, and 2% (n=6) stated that they were widowed. This result suggests that more single individuals were engaged in online sports betting.

For the respondents' educational qualification, the respondents who stated that they had SSCE/equivalent as their highest educational qualification (43.9%; n=128) were more than the respondents that stated that they had other academic qualifications. This was followed by the 19.5% (n=57) who stated that they had first degree/HND and 13.4% (n=39) who stated that they had OND/NCE/Pre-degree Diploma. More so, 12.3% (n=36) and 10.6% (n=31) stated that they had First School Leaving Certificates and Postgraduate qualifications as their highest educational qualifications, respectively. The data on the respondents' highest educational qualification suggests that majority of the respondents have basic education. With regard to the respondents' occupation, the percentage who stated that they were students (34.3%; n=100) were more than that which stated other occupations. This was followed by the 17.1% (n=50) who stated that they were professionals in private firms and 14.3% (n=43) who stated that they were traders. In addition, 13.4% (n=39) stated that they were unemployed; while 5.1% (n=15) stated that they were teachers. The respondents who stated that they had other occupations different from the ones contained in the options also made up 5.1% (n=15) of the total number of respondents. In addition, for respondents' monthly income, 71.8% (n=209) stated that they earned below N50, 000; while 28.2% (n=82) stated that they earned N50, 000 and above monthly.

d. Table 1

Respondents' Engagement in Online Sports Betting

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	278	95.5
No	13	5.0
Total	291	100.0

Table 6 presented data on the proportion of respondents who engaged in online sports betting. As shown in the table, 95.5% (n=278) admitted that they were around the sports betting shops to engage in online sports betting; while 5.0% (n=13) stated that they were not. This result suggests that online sports betting is popular among youths in south east Nigeria and this makes them susceptible to any type of effect online sports betting can have on individuals who engage in it.

e. Table 2

Respondents' frequency of online sports betting

	Frequency	Percent
Daily	152	54.6
2-4 times a week	50	17.9
Once a week	34	12.2
Monthly	17	7.0
Sparingly	25	8.9
Total	278	100.0

Table 2 presented data on the frequency at which the respondents who stated that they engaged in online sports betting did so. As shown on the table, majority of the respondents (54.6%; n=152) stated that they engaged in sports betting on a daily basis. This was followed by the 17.9% (n=50) who stated that they engaged in online sports betting 2-4 times a week and the 12.2% (n=34) who stated that they did so once a week. More so, the table showed that 8.9% (n=25) of the respondents agreed that they engaged in online sports betting sparingly; while 7.0% (n=17) stated that they did so on a monthly basis. The implication of this result is that majority of the respondents are susceptible to the effects of online sports betting since they engage in it on a daily basis.

f. Table 3

Respondents' Major Medium of Online Sports Betting

	Frequency	Percent
Smartphone/ tablets	122	43.8
Laptop	26	9.3
Betting shop	130	46.7
Total	278	100.0

Table 3 presented data on the respondents' major medium of online sports betting. As shown on the table, 46.7% (n=130) of the respondents stated that their major medium of online sports betting was the betting shops. This was followed by the 43.8% (n=122) that stated that they used smart phones and tablets, and then the 9.3% (n=26) that used laptops. This result suggests that most of the respondents use new media in their sports betting and this makes them susceptible to the effects of online sports betting.

g. Table 4

Time spent on online sports betting sites daily

	Frequency	Percent
Less than one hour	71	25.5
More than one hour	207	74.4
Total	278	100.0

Table 4 presented data on the time spent on online sports betting sites daily among the respondents. As shown on the table, majority of these respondents (74.4%; n=207) stated that they spent more than 1 hour on sports betting sites on a daily basis; while 25.5% (n=71) stated that they

spent less than 1 hour. This result suggests that the respondents are addicted to online sports betting

h. Table 5
Major Motivation for Online Sports Betting

	Frequency	Percent
Need for pass time	10	3.5
Need for leisure	18	6.4
Need for extra income	140	50.3
Unemployment	43	15.4
Winnings by friends/family	41	14.7
Impulse	26	9.3
Total	278	100.0

Table 5 presented data on respondents' major motivation for online sports betting. As shown on the table, majority of the respondents 50.3% (n=140) of the respondents stated that the major reason why they engaged in online sports betting was the need for earn extra income. This was followed by the 15.4% (n=43) who stated that they were motivated to engage in online sports betting due to unemployment. More so, 14.7% (n=41) of the respondents stated that they engaged in online sports betting because their friends/family have won online sports bets; while 9.3% (n=26) stated that they engaged in sports betting on impulse. In addition, 6.4% (n=18) of the respondents stated that they engaged in online sports betting for leisure. The results on this table suggest that the major motivation for online sports betting was the need to make money (whether as an income earner who needs extra income or an unemployed) and this can be linked to the economic realities in Nigeria.

i. Table 6
Major Effect of Online Sports Betting on Youths

	Frequency	Percent
Sadness/Depression after loss	67	24.1
Anxiety	60	21.5
Excitement after winning	45	16.1
Debt	18	6.4
Addiction	77	27.6
Job loss	11	3.9
Total	278	100.0

Table 6 presented data on the respondents' view on the major observable effects online sports betting had on them. As shown on the table, 27.6% (n=77) stated that online sports betting caused addiction; while 24.1% (n=67) of the respondents stated that bet loss made them sad/depressed. More so, 21.5% (n=60) of the respondents stated that online sports betting made them anxious; while 16.1% (n=45) stated that it made them excited after winning. In addition, 6.4% (n=18) stated that it led them to debt; while 3.9% (n=11) stated that it caused job loss. This result suggests that online sports betting mostly had negative effects on the youths.

Furthermore, this study sought the relationship between respondents' age and frequency of online sports betting and found that the respondents aged 18-25 engaged in online sports betting more frequently than those aged 26-35 and relationship between age and frequency of online sports betting was found to be statistically significant at 0.000 level. More so, the study sought the relationship between respondents' educational qualification and the frequency at which they engaged in online sports betting and found that the respondents who had SSCE/Equivalent as their highest educational qualification engaged in online sports betting more frequently than the respondents who had other educational qualifications. The relationship between the respondents' highest educational qualification and the frequency at which they engaged in online sports betting is found statistically significant at 0.000 level. In addition, the respondents who stated that they were students engaged in online sports betting more than those who stated other occupations. The relationship between the respondents' occupation and the frequency at which they engaged in online sports betting was found to be statistically significant at 0.000 level. This study also sought the relationship between respondents' income and the frequency at which they engaged in online sports betting and found that the respondents who indicated that they earned less than N50,000 a month engaged in online sports betting more than those who earned N50,000 and above. The relationship between the respondents' monthly income and frequency at which they engaged in online sports betting was found statistically significant at 0.000 level.

VI. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Two Hundred and Ninety One respondents selected using a combination of probability and non-probability techniques provided quantitative data analysed in this study. The study focused on the patterns of online betting with the use of new media platforms among youths in South East Nigeria and the factors that motivate these youths to engage in online sports betting. It also looked at the effects of online sports betting on the youths in South East Nigeria with the view of proffering possible solutions its negative effects.

The Social learning theory and Diffusion of Innovations theory provided theoretical underpinnings for the study. While the social learning theory views gambling/betting as a learned behaviour, learned through imitation, either of an admired figure or from one's peers (Bandura, 1977), the diffusion of innovations theory suggests that such new technologies as new media can drive changes in sports betting to a point that exposes bettors to a plethora of effects.

It was found in literature that Nigeria has in recent times witnessed some of the highest rates of sports betting among young people. Notably however, there has been a shift from the offline mode of sports betting to that which is purely new media driven. Stated differently, sports betting can now be done on digital platforms and even in convergent media environments as explained by (King,

Delfabbron & Griffiths, 2012), a scenario which is experienced as an overlap between new media and betting and gaming products and platforms, where such activities that were previously encountered separately now co-exist and/or interface with each other through connected or all-in-one technology.

However, there seems to be a paucity of research that focused on the patterns of new media/online driven sports betting among young people in Nigeria, in addition to factors that have predisposed them to online sports betting behaviour and its impact on the youths. An analysis and discussion of data presented in this study, in line with reviewed literature, and research method showed different results.

This study agrees that the respondents who were found to be avid online sports bettors, in a social learning sense, have learned betting behaviour through imitation of influential models such as family members and friends within their peer group. They first pay attention to some of these people (models) and encode their behaviour, and at a later time, they imitate the behaviour they have observed. However, it argues that examining online betting behaviour through the lenses on the social learning theory alone may be too simplistic as the theory seems to, as its limitation, and as also noted by such scholars as (McLeod, 2016), underestimate the power of individual motivation to influence outcomes. Generally, the theory does not emphasize on the individual characteristics of the respondents and how it influences their engagement in online sports betting with the use of new media.

First, findings from this study show that the younger and unemployed respondents were more involved in online sports betting than the older and employed respondents. This result corresponds with that from the study conducted by Gainsbury and Derevensky (2013) which also showed that those who gambled online were more likely to be younger, unemployed, engage in more types of gambling activities and to bet on sports both online and offline. More so, with regards to educational qualification and income, findings showed that a lesser percentage of respondents who earned highest (above N50,000 monthly) and those who had postgraduate degrees were involved in online sports betting. This is in contrast with findings from the study conducted by Jiménez-Murcia (2011) which showed those who gambled online were found to have higher educational levels and socio-economic status.

With regards to factors that have predisposed the respondents to online sports betting with the use of new media, majority of them stated that the major reason why they engaged in online sports betting was to earn extra income. Though the need for extra income can be linked to the difficult economic realities in Nigeria, findings from other studies conducted in other climes and economic conditions (Chikitora, 2016) also showed that the major predisposing/motivating factor for sports betting and gambling generally was the need to earn extra income, a result which tends to revalidate a notion that humans have a

natural drive to always desire to earn extra income. This desire to earn extra income and the perception that online betting with the use of new media can meet this need (compatibility of innovation) is what has driven respondents of this study to become, in a diffusion of innovation sense, adopters of new media technology, a result which adds to the body of literature that has focused on factors that influence diffusion of innovation with regards to the attributes of the innovation.

With regards to the effects of online sports betting with the use of new media, the responses of the respondents suggests that the behaviour had both negative and positive observable effects on them. However, the negative effects seem to outweigh the positive effects. Apart from the excitement majority of the respondents stated that they felt after winning a bet, majority of them also stated that bet loss made them sad/depressed. More so, they stated that bet loss made them anxious and sometimes leads them to debt and that the behaviour was also addictive. Findings from extant study showed similar results with respondents agreeing that online betting had series of negative spill over physiological and psychosocial effects on them, which include health disorders, addiction, and huge debt among others.

However, some scholars (McGowan, 2014; Hunt, 2016) disagree with conclusions drawn about the negative effects of online sports betting, suggesting that consumers are the best judges of their own welfare and that evidence from leading industrialized democracies indicates that most people who gamble do so willingly and rationally and to them, it is as a form of entertainment and that it would be unreasonable to curtail the enjoyment that the vast majority obtain from the activity (gambling), because of a tiny minority. This study therefore argues that since conclusions over the positive and negative aspects of online sports betting has so far been based on studies conducted in developed nations, notably, North America, Australia, UK, and some European countries, the conclusions on the limited negative effects of online sports betting particularly cannot be drawn without considering results from underdeveloped countries where economic hardship tends to make more individuals more prone to addictive online sports betting and therefore more susceptible to negative effects of the behaviour.

In addition, the negative effects of online sports betting seem to be more than that of offline gambling. Findings from the study conducted by Jiménez-Murcia (2011), just as findings from the present study, showed those who gambled online were found to have high gambling expenditure and gambling debts. However, there are contrasting findings as presented in the study on extant literature which showed offline problem gamblers reporting more negative effects of gambling overtime, suggesting that effects of either online or offline betting varies across socio-cultural contexts. The foregoing discussion on how the new media has been used for online sports betting may lead to the conclusion that the technology has first diffused among bettors because they find it useful in the sustenance of a learned social behaviour, and then, its use affects them in a plethora of ways.

VII. CONCLUSION

Gambling and online sports betting with the use of new media in particular has economic benefits for those that participate in them especially in such climes as Nigeria which has often witnessed high rate of unemployment, incessant job losses, and high inflation rates. For the younger individuals who were found in this study to be avid online sports bettors with the use of new media, the economic benefits of gambling can be said to have outweighed the costs (with regards to the negative economic, physiological and psychological effects of online sports betting). This is to say that the youths do not see the negative implications of online sports betting and perhaps, in part, that is why the sports betting sector is growing at a very high speed in Nigeria as witnessed by the high rate of proliferation of online betting sites/companies.

The major assumption of the social learning theory is that individuals in a given society learn certain behaviour through observation. This theory is found relevant to this study which has provided evidence that young people have learned online sports betting through observation. It can be concluded that the addicted online sports betting youth has now formed a particular subgroup with Nigeria's active gambling culture which has been sustained by unfavourable economic conditions in the country. For these youths, opportunities to obtain information about online sports betting sites and how they operate have multiplied, because more people (who they can learn from in the social learning sense) know about them and access channels that are more varied. Furthermore, the individual online sports bettor can now access betting opportunities worldwide, thanks to the internet.

The researcher argues that findings from this study should lead to a shift in scholarly focus from the prevalence of online sports betting culture in Nigeria. For the researcher, instead of focusing all lenses on how online sports betting reached Nigeria, how Nigerian youths have learned the game, its prevalence and predisposing factors (which has been addressed by this study), efforts should also be made to find solutions to the problems that accompany the behaviour. The researcher further argues that there is need for an accumulation of research findings that would expand scholarly insight into findings solutions to the problems of online sports betting.

Specifically, the researcher is of the view that any plan aimed at combating the negative effects of online sports betting among youths in Nigeria should be structured in line with the four public health goals outlined by Messerlian, Derevensky, Gillespie, and Gupta (2004) – denormalization, protection, prevention, and harm-reduction – which taken together describe action needed to address problem of online sports betting among youth population in Nigeria. Denormalization, within the context of youth online sport betting behavior, implies social denormalization, where society begins to question and assess underage gambling. Similar to the strategies used in tobacco prevention, as

Messerlian, Derevensky, Gillespie and Gupta (2004) explain, denormalization can include drawing attention to the marketing strategies employed by the online sports betting industry, influencing social norms and attitudes on youth gambling, challenging current myths and misconceptions of Internet gambling among youth and the general public, and promoting realistic and accurate knowledge about gambling.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In precise terms, the following recommendations aimed at finding solutions to the negative effects of online sports betting are made based on the findings of this study:

1. There is need to enlighten parents and guardians on the significance of continued parenting on youths. This will help in the collaborative efforts to identify possible online sports betting related behaviour and problems among youths and provide appropriate cautioning and help.
2. Gambling related issues should be legislated upon to curb the indiscriminate establishment of online sports betting centres in the country.
3. Psychologist should intensify their effort to organize seminars/conferences on the implications of online sports betting on youths' behaviour and general wellbeing.
4. There should be a national committee that will be set up to streamline the frivolous and appealing massive advertisement undertaking by online sports betting companies. More from the social welfare angle, government should also create more employment opportunities for the youths and increase their quality of life as unemployment and low income where found in this study to be factors that predisposed them to online sports betting.

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