





Investigating the effects of online sports betting on the perceived social wellbeing of student athletes

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effects of online sports betting on the perceived social wellbeing of student-athletes using a cross-sectional survey methodology with a sample of 38 universities. Findings of the study demonstrate that (i) there was a positive and significant association between gambling severity and social wellbeing, (ii) gambling severity and social wellbeing of students are positively and significantly related, (iii) demographic factors have a significant interaction effect on gambling severity and social wellbeing relationship. This paper also exhibited that gamblers were disappointed after online sports betting efforts and that fatigue and sleep disturbances were common after a loss or victory on online sports betting. Problem gamblers should be introduced to treatment or rehabilitation programmes that will help them to overcome their addiction to online sports betting.

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Introduction

Online sports betting, is the only gambling area in which participation has increased over the past decade more so, during the pandemic time, where worry and social isolation connected with the COVID-19 pandemic lead to increase of online betting as an emotional escape, (Gainsbury, 2015; Hodgins, & Stevens, 2021). These increases have been supported by widespread advertising for online sports betting during live and broadcasted sporting events, as well as via contemporary media like the internet, social networks, and cellular phones.

The sports gambling business in Kenya like other parts of the globe has evolved dramatically as a result of technological advancements, with the number of licensed sites increasing from 13 to over 30 (Mwandime, 2017). Furthermore, it was recommended that, although sports betting has certain economic benefits, the market price must be considered, and that no online gambling permission should be granted until the inflationary effect outweighs the social cost. As a result, any decision to allow online gambling should be predicated on a cost value assessment (Dense, 2009). The analysis should be based on the consequences of our future generation, the university youth.

The university youth are heavily engrossed in betting which has caused them economic turmoil and problems like debts to the extent that some have used their university fees in betting without returns. Repeated betting causes anxiety, migraine and insufficient sleep, which both impacts student athletes' social and mental lives. In consequence they build isolation thoughts from friends and family, isolation causes the students to miss class, which may impair their academic achievement. Internet sports betting was a socially accepted type of leisure activities. Betting is a fun and pleasant pastime for many student-athletes, but it may be addictive and troublesome to others, with unpredictable negative consequences.

This paper aims to investigate the effects of online sports betting on the perceived social wellbeing of student-athletes.

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This paper uses a cross-sectional survey methodology. A total of 38 institutions, 19 of which were public and 19 of which were private universities were sampled. In this study, self-reporting questionnaire, key informant interview schedules and an observation schedule have been used. The data was coded and analysed using the SPSS version 25 program. Regression analysis with an interaction effect was used to test the effect of demographic variables on the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Correlation analysis was used to test the relationship between independent variables.

Literature Review

Empirical Review

Some Kenyan university students have gambled away their tuition fees, whereas others have lost their belongings all in the name of gambling. There is no doubt that the online sports betting industry has established itself as a major concern that has a major effect not only on social-economic effect but also on both mental health and academic results (Alushula, 2017). Internet and sports betting have been correctively identified as significant risk factors for an amplified rate of involvement in online sports betting among student-athletes (Marchica & Derevensky, 2015). As a result, knowing the financial impact of online sports betting can help to reduce economic damage such as indebtedness, financial restrictions, and the abuse of college fees, among many other things (Ahaibwe, Lakuma, Katunze, & Mawejje, 2016).

According to Mathews and Volberg (2013), the social impact of internet betting on sporting events is represented in the societal value of the engagement in measures of time and money wasted. The social impact of social cost may result in the breakup of social connections, such as social relationships and extended family, resulting in legal and economic problems (Downs & Woolrych, 2010). As their gambling habits worsen, internet sports players' interactions with other academics and family relatives frequently deteriorate. And this may result in domestic maltreatment (Delfabbro, Lambos, King & Puglies 2009). Problem gambling, according to Reith and Dobbie (2012), is characterized by disorganized personalities, in which a student-athlete may also have dualism selves' personalities, namely the betting self and the non-addict self.

The betting self is unable of achieving the responsibilities and requirements that the non-addict student athlete self can handle. At this point, internet sports bettors seem powerless and are connected to identity, developing guilt and a sense of self-hatred (Yi & Kanetkar, 2010). Students who hate themselves may segregate themselves, and on the other side, they may acquire emotions of self-disappointment and remorse, which may contribute to shame and loneliness (Laursen, Plauborg, Ekholm, Larsen, & Juel, 2016). Furthermore, it has been claimed that the lengths to which a sporting online gambler would go to conceal betting and the results of gambling may result to morally and legally questionable choices, such as committing a crime (Laursen, Plauborg, Ekholm, Larsen, & Juel, 2016).

Online sports betting has directly perceived financial and social consequences. Finances spent on betting cannot be spent by the individual or the family elsewhere in the local economy.

The perceived social effects of online sports betting on individual student-athlete and the immediate society are more challenging to quantify than the perceived economic effects (Yi & Kanetkar, 2010). This is mainly because of some reasons such as limited quality data on perceived social effects of online sports betting. Two are the complications of identifying and quantifying perceived social effects. Three, the difficulty of finding a cause-effect relationship between online sports betting and social problems are due to the difficulty of isolating any one factor that causes social problems; where the interplay is huge and difficult to differentiate.

In addition, the perceived social effect of online sports betting may cause individuals and families in misery that is also likely to cause mental health problems to student-athletes. (Laursen, et al, 2016; Dhillon et al. 2011; Flanagan, 2013). The impact of online sports betting's widespread availability, promotion, and legalization has been recognized as a major public health and addiction issue.

Simiyu (2012), on the other hand, claims that the emotional and social demands of sports contests make learning difficult for student-athletes. Offering learners with additional options for social and leisure pursuits is likely to keep them away from obsessive gambling (Potenza, Wareham, Stinberg, Ruggle, Carallo, Krishnan-Savin, and Desai, 2011). According to Koross (2016), college students utilize their Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) government loans for online gambling, and many have either considered or attempted suicide, negatively impacting their academic lives.

Research and Methodology

The present research used a cross-sectional survey methodology. The study targeted 74 publicly and privately chartered institutions by the Commission for University Education in Kenya. A total of 38 institutions, 19 of which were private and 19 of which were public universities were sampled. Random sampling was employed for the selection of sports disciplines and games officials and sports patrons and the ' Dean of students from government institutions and 50% (37) from private universities. Hence there were a total of 38 athletics officials and 385 student-athletes.

The researcher used self-reporting questionnaire, key informant interview schedules and an observation schedule. The data was coded and analysed using the SPSS. Cross-tabulation was utilized to arrange and aggregate information for descriptive statistics which include proportions means and frequency patterns.

Regression analysis with an interaction effect was used to test the effect of demographic variables on⁶¹ the⁶¹ relationship⁶¹ between⁶¹dependent and independent variables. Correlation analysis was used to test the relationship between independent (extent of online sports betting) and dependent variable (Social well-being).

Findings

Descriptive Results for Social Wellbeing

The research analysed social well-being due to gambling in the form of domestic arguments or conflict after online sports betting, alcohol consumption after winning or losing, skip training sessions to sports bet online, and advise to stop betting online from others people and betting practices. This is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive results- social well-being

| | Mean | Std. Dev |
|---|--------|----------|
| How often have you intended to avoid domestic argument or conflict after online sports betting? | 1.1157 | 1.16987 |
| Have you ever intended to use alcohol after winning or losing online sports bets? | 1.2285 | 0.94802 |
| How often have you ever intended to skip training sessions to sports bet online? | 1.4366 | 1.10823 |
| Have your comrade or family members ever intended to advise you to stop betting online? | 1.6493 | 1.03683 |
| How often do you prefer betting online alone than with comrades? | 1.7594 | 1.13703 |

Most respondents indicated that they have intended to avoid domestic arguments or conflict after online sports betting, with a mean of 1.11 ± 1.16 . Majority indicated that sometimes they intended to use alcohol after winning or losing online sports bets as per response mean of 1.22 ± 0.95 . The respondents indicated sometimes they have ever intended to skip training sessions to sports bet online with a response mean of 1.43 ± 1.04 . The mean of 1.64 ± 1.03 reveals that most times, comrades or family members are ever intended to advise them to stop betting online. The respondents most times prefer betting online alone rather than with comrades, as shown by the response mean of 1.68 ± 1.06 .

From the interviews conducted, the study reveals that some effects of online sports betting on the students' social lives include social irresponsibility, disconnection from society and friends, conflicts and violence, and other relational conflicts. Further, it was noted that the alienation of the gamblers from the society minimizes the cohesion in the society, especially the family members and other colleagues of students in problematic gambling.

Effect of Online Sports Betting on Social Wellbeing of Students

To achieve the second objective, the study assessed the effects of online sports betting on social wellbeing of students. Correlation and regression analysis was done to test the relationship between online sports betting on social wellbeing factors. General linear regression was conducted to test the interaction of respondents' demographics on⁶¹ the⁶¹ relationship⁶¹ between⁶¹online sports betting and social wellbeing.

Relationship between Gambling Severity and social wellbeing of student-athletes

A correlation coefficient of zero is an indicator of the nonexistence of a linear relationship between two continuous variables, while a correlation coefficient of -1 or +1 indicates a perfect linear relationship. The stronger the correlation between variables, the closer the correlation coefficient comes to ± 1 .

Table 2: Correlation - Gambling Severity and social wellbeing

| | | Problem Gambling | Social |
|------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------|
| Problem Gambling | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .702** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | 0.000 |
| | N | 254 | 239 |

The results show a positive³² and³² significant³² association³between online gambling severity and poor social wellbeing state ($r = 0.702$, $P > 0.0001$). This implies that online gambling severity factors have led to poor social wellbeing of students.

Regression model analysis was done and results were presented in Table 4.

Table 3: Model summary- Gambling Severity and social wellbeing

| R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error ²¹ of ²¹ the ²¹ Estimate ² |
|-------|----------|-------------------|---|
| .402a | 0.161 | 0.158 | 0.53814 |

The results in Table 5 presented the fitness of model of the regression model. The R square value was 0.161. This shows that gambling severity explains 16.1% of poor social wellbeing of students. This also implies that 83.9% of the variation in students' poor social well-being is attributed to other variables not captured in the model.

Table 5 shows the ANOVA model analysis of the relationship.

Table 4: ANOVA - Gambling Severity and social wellbeing

| | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean ¹² Square ¹² | F | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|-----|---|--------|-------|
| Regression | 13.21 | 1 | 13.21 | 45.615 | .000b |
| Residual | 68.635 | 237 | 0.29 | | |
| Total | 81.845 | 238 | | | |

The ANOVA results indicated that the model was statistically¹² significant. This⁰¹ was⁰¹ supported⁰¹ by⁰¹ an⁰¹ F statistic of 45.615 and the reported P>0.0001, which was less than the¹² conventional²¹ probability¹² of¹² 0.05 significance level. The results implied that gambling severity is a significant predictor of poor social wellbeing of students.

Table 5 shows the coefficients of regression

Table 5: Regression coefficients- Gambling Severity and social wellbeing

| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 0.605 | 0.129 | | 4.698 | 0.000 |
| ProblemGambling | 0.544 | 0.081 | 0.402 | 6.754 | 0.000 |

Regression of coefficients results revealed that students' online gambling severity and poor social wellbeing are positively and significantly related ($\beta = 0.544$, P>0.0001). Therefore:

$$\text{Social wellbeing} = 0.605 + 0.544(\text{gambling severity}) + e$$

Hypothesis testing

The interaction effect of demographic factors on the relationship between gambling severity and students' social wellbeing was assessed and findings of general linear regression model presented.

Table 6: Hypothesis Testing of Gambling Severity and Social Wellbeing with Interaction

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | Df | Mean ¹² Square ¹² | F | Sig. |
|--|-------------------------|-----|---|-------|-------|
| Corrected ²¹ Model ²¹ | 37.042a | 106 | 0.349 | 2.654 | 0.000 |
| Intercept | 0.839 | 1 | 0.839 | 6.368 | 0.014 |
| v.S1.1 * v.S1.2 * v.S1.3 * v.S1.4 * v.S1.5 * v.S1.6 * v.S1.7 * | | | | | |
| ProblemGambling | 37.042 | 106 | 0.349 | 2.654 | 0.000 |

a R Squared = .810 (Adjusted RSquared = .505)

The findings reveal that the interaction effect of demographic factors on the relationship between gambling severity and student athletes' social well-being had an F-value of 2.654. The R Squared value was 0.810 (with demographic factors interaction) greater than 0.161 (without interaction). The demographic factors interaction effect was significant (P>0.0001). Therefore, reject the null hypothesis. This implies that demographic factors have a significant interaction effect on gambling severity and social wellbeing relationship.

Discussion

The study revealed that the interaction between the extent of online sports betting and the demographic variables on the perceived social wellbeing of student-athletes are significant. The findings reveal that sometimes students intend to use alcohol after winning or losing online sports bets. Moreover, they intend to skip training sessions to bet online despite the comrade or family members' advice to stop betting online. The study revealed that the effects of online sports betting on the social lives of the students include social irresponsibility, disconnection from society and friends, conflicts and violence, addiction to online betting, bankruptcies due to online betting, Crime and Corruption including the time the athlete uses on online sports betting instead of his or her significant

others. Paterson and Garrett (2010) noted that a minority of online sports bettors would decide on illegal acts to fund their betting appetite and to fill the loose gap. Harms include criminal charges, fines, incarceration and loss of studies for a student-athlete (Crofts, 2003). Seifried, Krenzelok, Turner and Brett (2009) have shown the undesirable effect on other sides of life, as they possibly affect educational success, social connections, health, finances, levels of self-esteem, and future job prospects. The utmost social effects of online betting include domestic violence/ conflict and relationship break-ups (Dowling, Smith, & Thomas, 2009).

Conclusion

The effects of interaction between extending of online sports betting and the demographic variables on the perceived social wellbeing of student-athletes are significant. Sometimes students intend to use alcohol after winning or losing online sports bets. Moreover, individuals can skip training sessions to sports bet online despite the comrade or family members advice to stop betting online. The impact of online sports betting on students' social lives includes social negligence, disengagement from family and relationships, tensions and aggression, online betting disorder, bankruptcies related to online betting, crime and corruption, and the time athletes spend on inline gambling rather than spending time with their loved ones.

The findings revealed that suicide and attempted suicides have been shown to be popular among frequent bettors, particularly when they are stressed. Problem gamblers should be introduced to treatment or rehabilitation programmes that will help them to overcome their addiction to online sports betting. This is essential to avoid the deeper consequences such as suicide or attempted suicide.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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