



## Newspaper representation of sports betting culture and its influence on youths in southeast Nigeria

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### Abstract

Nigerian youths see sports events and sports betting as a means of making money, this is because when they predict the outcomes of sports events correctly in betting shops, they win some money. Thus, it is important to examine media representation of sports betting culture and its influence on youths in Southeast Nigeria. The study covered the five states in Southeast-Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo and three national dailies (Daily Sun, The Guardian, and Vanguard) for a period of one year, that is, from January to December 2018. The study was guided by the Cultivation theory, Social Learning, and Theory of Planned Behaviour. The study used a mixed design. The questionnaire and code sheet were used to generate data. Data generated from the study showed that there were eighty-three stories about sports betting in the newspapers analyzed. The result also revealed that the reasons why youths engage in sports betting are numerous and the most significant of them is the enticing media advertisements. It was also discovered that most southeastern youths within the age bracket of 17-35 engage in sports betting very often. The study also discovered that media representation of sports betting influenced Southeast youths to develop betting habits. The study recommended that government should regulate the establishment of betting centres and the medium and rate at which bookmakers make their unsolicited adverts.

**Keywords:** Sports betting, media representation, youths, Southeast Nigeria, influence of advertisements

### Introduction

A vital human activity is sports. Since the beginning of sports, their types, characteristics, and goals have evolved. Akanle and Kolade (2015) <sup>[2]</sup> cite Omobowale (2009) as saying that while sports are typically meant to be leisurely and entertaining, their cultural connotations differ. Additionally, according to Tade (2014), sports provide therapeutic and social benefits in a variety of social circumstances, including domestic relationships between men and women. According to Armstrong and Giulianotti (2004) <sup>[4]</sup>, as mentioned in Akanle and Kolade (2015) <sup>[2]</sup>, this demonstrates how sports, like football, have a wide range of charms and are multi-contextual in their goals and expressions.

Humans cannot develop successfully without sports, and human relations may become more difficult without sports, claim Akanle and Kolade (2015) <sup>[2]</sup> on a national and international level. If played and comprehended properly, sports can aid in development. Sports have an impact on human growth, development, and progress, which are fundamental to social interactions and society existence. Sport is growing more and more limitless in its impact on the technological, physical, social, economic, psychological, and conflict spaces of people in Africa and around the world, according to Armstrong and Giulianotti (2004) <sup>[4]</sup> in Akanle and Kolade (2015) <sup>[2]</sup>.

Furthermore, according to Akanle and Kolade (2015) <sup>[2]</sup>, broadcasters and related industries consider that there is a significant influx of money accumulation into sports, especially in sports betting. Sports spread capitalism in certain respects as they infiltrate households and cultures, even the most remote ones in Asia and Africa. Many people unwittingly support capitalism and its byproducts through sports (Vidacs, 2006). Additionally, Vidacs (2006) suggests that as people are amused by sports like football, they progressively engage in capitalist profit-driven activities like gambling, which furthers the enrichment of the West

and the impoverishment of the South. Approximately 60 million Nigerians between the ages of 18 and 40 actively participate in sports betting, according to statistics (businesswire.com). These gamblers often spend about 3,000 Naira each day on wagers (medium.com). For example, according to a 2016 KPMG data analysis, one of Nigeria's top sports betting companies generates an average of \$10 million in revenue each month (thenerveafrica.com). In Nigeria, there are now sports betting establishments on practically every street, and more are opening up every day. The National Lottery Regulatory Commission (NLRC) oversees sports betting in Nigeria, and it's important to remember that all gambling is prohibited for Nigerian citizens under the age of 18.

Newspapers, magazines, radio, television, movies, posters, handbills, and the internet are just a few of the media outlets that are available in Nigeria today. Through raising awareness, all of these have made a significant contribution to the sport's development in Nigeria. In addition to how individuals think and form their thoughts and emotions, sports and the media are two of the biggest factors influencing how the community functions (Australia Sports Commission, 2011). Mass media are become an integral component of our everyday lives. According to Onuoha and Chidebere (2012), it is regarded as the most contemporary method of delivering news, opinions, education, entertainment, and agenda-setting to a sizable audience. Sports betting has spread throughout the world, according to studies. It's possible that the idea that sports betting is particularly common in Nigeria was fueled by this worldwide perception. As stated by Monaghan and Derevensky (2008) <sup>[16]</sup>, "sports betting has been recognized as an inherently risky activity as some individuals engage in problematic gambling behavior that disrupts their lives, even though the majority of individuals gamble responsibly" (p.538). However, there is a dearth of empirical research on how sports betting is portrayed in the media and how it

affects society overall, especially young people. Although there have been studies on the relationship between mass media and sports, this one will look at how the media, particularly print media, portray sports betting in Nigeria and how it affects young people in Southeast Nigeria.

### Statement of the Problem

The phenomena of sports betting have created issues for society and is expanding at an alarming rate (Derevensky, 2008) [16]. The fact that young people are participating in it at a significantly higher rate than the general population is even more concerning. The newspaper has been hailed as the modern society's conscience. It facilitates social communication and provides an essential check on a country's other institutions. Therefore, it assumes that newspapers must be socially conscious, committed to public service and welfare, and able to respond to societal issues.

Even though there have been recent studies on sports betting in Nigeria (Tade, 2014; Omobowale, 2009), all of them looked at the prevalence of football betting among young people in Nigeria overall, the acceptance of sports betting, and the gambling habits of young people. Additionally, a lot of the studies were more theoretical discussion papers that didn't gather data from any particular state to assess how newspapers represented the culture of sports betting among young people in southeast Nigeria. As a result, young people in the Southeast lack sufficient awareness about sports betting. In order to close this gap, this study looked into how sports betting culture is portrayed in newspapers and how it affects young people in southeast Nigeria.

### Objectives of the study

1. Determine the frequency of selected newspapers representation of sports betting in Nigeria;
2. Identify the reasons why youths of the southeast engage in sports betting;
3. Ascertain how often youths place bet on various sports; and
4. Find out how newspaper representation of sports betting influences Southeast youths.

### Literature Review

#### Sports Betting: An Overview

The trajectory of sports betting and gambling during sporting events is a relatively nascent phenomenon. Whereas historically, sports betting was confined to an individual physically placing a wager on the outcome of a horse (or greyhound) race, two important changes occurred in the mid-1990s, (Akinlosotu, Imandojemu, & Aina, 2019) [3]. First, some bookmakers moved beyond horse and greyhound racing and started taking bets on the outcome of team sports. Secondly, bookmakers took advantage of a technological breakthrough by placing sports bets over the telephone. Two additional changes occurred that have further, and more fundamentally, shifted the nature and parameters of sports betting:

- a. The rise and expansion of the Internet and associated media platforms and
- b. Technologies (i.e, phone and tablet “apps”) led to sports betting going online.
- c. The nature of betting itself has shifted from predicting the result of a race or an event to “micro-betting”, “in-play betting” and betting “in-the-run”, where consumers can place a bet on a range of possible

outcomes both after the game has commenced and, as they occur during a game (Akinlosotu, Imandojemu, & Aina, 2019) [3]. In addition to betting on sporting results and outcomes, “sports betting” can also refer to betting on other events such as the outcome of a political election or a reality television program. For this study, the review focuses on placing a wager on sporting events via the Internet. While sports betting is legal in Australia, “in-play” betting via the Internet is illegal under Commonwealth Law (it is legal if the bet is placed in person or over the telephone), yet there remains a range of illegal gambling activities that are accessible via the Internet (Interactive Gambling Act, 2001, p.61).

The clandestine nature of these activities means that there is little research evidence into these forms of sports betting and are outside the scope of this study. The rise of online betting on sport and its promotion has been greeted with considerable levels of public concern, in which the relationship between gambling exposure and participation is seen to pose several implications for sport, health and wellbeing and social policy. In 2013, concern over the accessibility of the technology, and the increasing presence of the televised promotion of live-odds betting during broadcasts of football and cricket matches (particularly during weekend daytime television slots) led to a Joint Parliamentary Select Committee review in Australia into the advertising and promotion of gambling in sport. The report suggested that a precautionary approach should be adopted, during which time more research could be undertaken into the effects of gambling advertising on children and adults (Joint Committee, 2013).

The fever of sports betting is spreading all over the world and it has caught up with Nigeria. Sports betting and other forms of gambling are becoming a phenomenon across Africa and Nigeria in particular. Betting over which sports team may win has become a multi-million Naira business. Nigeria is witnessing a huge expansion in sports betting and other forms of gambling. Lotteries, poker, sports bets, slot machines, casino games, and online gambling are all new trends. Many entrepreneurs and foreign companies are pocketing millions of Naira from Nigerians who want quick money (Sule & Adam, 2018)

According to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), N1.8 billion is spent on sports betting daily in Nigeria. It is not surprising that Nigerians in the youth demographic are heavily involved in betting. The poll states that 60 million people within this age range are into betting and gambling. This is not surprising. Nigeria is a football-crazy country that has a huge youth population (Ayomide, 2017).

Generally, gambling is not an illegal activity and this has increased the prevalence societies and almost all part of the world allows one form of gambling or the other.

Sports betting has become a 21st Century money-spinning, entrancing venture for the Nigerian youth population that has embraced it with both hands for financial succour. Betting is as addictive as intoxicants if not more, but just as it is with the tobacco industry, the henchmen of the betting industry keep promoting the slogan that “winners know when to stop”. However, the reality is “winners do not know when to stop” until they are completely drawn into it and are finished financially, psychological and become suicidal. Now, will the society fold its arms and watch the cancer of

betting and gambling dominate its economic landscape until it reaches every corner of the society from the cities to rural areas and even remote settlements? Travelling across Nigeria exposes anyone to the reality of how far-reaching betting/gambling is, it is bet9ja, bet365, everywhere (Sule & Adam, 2018).

### Young People Attitude Towards Gambling

Delfabbro, Myrseth, Hanss, Mentzoni, and Pallesen (2014) state that "public perceptions of gambling are often equivocal." On the one hand, most individuals are aware that excessive gambling can have major negative effects on a person. However, it is also recognized that gambling can be a fun hobby for people and have positive effects on communities (for example, by giving athletic teams or charitable organizations a source of income) (Vong 2009). According to Gainsbury, Wood, Russell, Hing, and Blaszczynski (2012) in Hanss, Mentzoni, Delfabbro, Myrseth, and Pallesen (2014), the ratio of these positive and negative opinions is likely to have an impact on people's attitudes toward gambling and, ultimately, their choices to gamble.

Numerous studies in the literature demonstrate that a person's attitude about gambling will influence how they gamble and whether or not they develop a gambling addiction. According to Chiu and Storm (2010) <sup>[11]</sup>, these studies found that "those who hold more positive attitudes toward gambling are more likely to gamble and to experience gambling-related problems." According to Hanss, Mentzoni, Delfabbro, Myrseth, and Pallesen (2014), these findings by Fishbein (2000) support theories of behavior and decision-making that attribute attitudes a significant role in determining people's intentions to act and, indirectly, their actual behavior. The theory of planned behavior is one such theory.

This theoretical paradigm on health risk-taking behaviors has been adopted by authors such as Fishbein and Cappella (2006) <sup>[20]</sup>, who contend that attitudes are influenced by personality, larger demographics, and other individual-level factors. However, little is known regarding the relative significance of the various background variables in relation to attitudes about gambling. According to Nowak and Aloe (2013), it is especially crucial to concentrate on characteristics associated with attitudes toward gambling for the former group, both in terms of prevention and therapy, as the prevalence of gambling problems among adults rises.

Compared to research conducted abroad, Norway's teenage gambling problem prevalence seems to be lower (Brunborg, Hansen, & Froyland, 2013 in Hanss, Mentzoni, Delfabbro, Myrseth & Pallesen, 2014). However, the overall percentage of teenagers reporting some gambling difficulties increases significantly when the percentage of those who could be categorized as at-risk gamblers is also taken into account (Hanss, Mentzoni, Delfabbro, Myrseth & Pallesen, 2014). Additionally, there was a correlation between lower levels of teenage gambling and more parental supervision (Magoon & Ingersoll, 2006 in Hanss, Mentzoni, Delfabbro, Myrseth & Pallesen, 2014). According to Hanss, Mentzoni, Delfabbro, Myrseth, and Pallesen (2014), who wrote about other factors that affect gambling views, social factors including peer relationships and family gambling histories also have an impact on gambling attitudes. It seems that whether or not others have gambling-related difficulties may have an impact on the association between gambling

attitudes and family gambling history. According to one study, teenagers with parents who gambled frequently had less unfavorable attitudes about gambling than teenagers whose parents gambled less. On the other hand, unfavorable sentiments were more prevalent among individuals whose parents or relatives had dealt with gambling-related issues (Orford et al., 2009).

### Theoretical Framework

#### a. Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory is a social theory otherwise known as cultivation analysis which was developed based on examining the long-term effects of television on American audiences of all ages. Developed by George Gerbner and Larry Gross of the University of Pennsylvania, cultivation theory derived from several large-scale research projects as part of an overall research project titled "Cultural Indicators". The purpose of the Cultural Indicators Project was to identify and track the "cultivated" effects of television on viewers. They were concerned with the effects of television programming (particularly violent programming) on the attitudes and behaviour of the American public (Miller, 2005).

According to Özer (2013), many researchers criticised the studies of Gerbner et al. in terms of Message System and Cultivation Analyses from the starting point until the mid-1980s. One of the other criticisms of Cultivation Analysis according to Özer (2013) can be called as other variables problem. With this essential background, suffice it to say that exposure to the newspaper by Nigerian youths with special reference to sports betting glamorisation is a lee way to the adoption of the habits displayed therein. This means that you can adopt the kind of media content you expose yourself to.

#### b. Social Learning Theory

Lou (2013) opined that Bandura proposed the concept of social cognitive theory. A general contention is that much of the development in human cognition is explained by the interplay of internal personal factors in the form of cognitive, affective and biological events; behaviour; and environmental events. According to Nabavi (2014), Bandura in 1961 conducted his famous experiment known as the Bobo doll experiment, to study patterns of behaviour, by social learning theory, and that similar behaviour was learned by individuals shaping their behaviour after the actions of models.

The significance of this theory to the present study is that youths are heavily influenced by newspaper representation of sports betting and they adopt the behaviour of others through observation. This means that Nigeria youths will adopt the behaviour of people they see on mass media.

### Methodology

To ensure an effective study, the researcher used a dual research method: content analysis and survey. For this study, the population was limited to all issues published by the three selected national dailies: Daily Sun, The Guardian and The Vanguard newspapers from January 1st, 2024, to December 31st 2024, which amounted to 1098. Also, the population of this multi-state study comprised the youth (male and female) in the five contiguous Southeast states that are within the age brackets of 18-35 which is the legally accepted youth age in Nigeria (National Youth Policy,

2009) which is 5,930,290 (National Baseline Youth Survey Report, 2024).

A total of 252 editions of the three selected newspapers formed the sample size of this study. For the survey, the sample size is 385. The Australian Calculator as given by the National Statistics Service (NSS), was employed in calculating the sample size for this study. Qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis were used to analyse the data generated. While the qualitative method was employed to give interpretation to the data generated, the quantitative method was used to analyse the data using frequency distribution tables.

### Discussions of Findings

The first research question aimed to determine how frequently sports betting in Nigeria was covered by the chosen newspapers. There were 83 stories about sports betting over the study period, according to the manifest data from the analysis. There were 35 stories (42%) about sports betting in Nigeria in *The Guardian* newspaper, 19 stories (23%) in *Vanguard*, and 29 stories (35%) in *The Sun*, according to a breakdown of the results. The study found that the stories contained a variety of particular tactics that might be more appealing to young people. The average attention strategy for each narrative was determined by identifying attention techniques.

This result is consistent with that of Killick and Griffiths (2020), who found that certain inducements, such as request-a-bet and improved odds, were present in the sports betting narratives and commercials they examined. For instance, on January 21, 2024, *The Guardian* newspaper published an article titled: *Nairabet Offers Loyal Customers the One Bet-Cut System*. Certain tactics, particularly the application of risk-reduction strategies like "cash out," "money back," and "refund" offerings, were exclusive to betting stories. These tactics may persuade readers to begin wagering on their preferred sporting events.

The second research question is to determine the motivations behind sports betting among young people in southeast Nigeria. The results reveal that although every respondent is aware of sports betting, the plurality of them—167, or 46%—said that they learned about it from the media. Additionally, a sizable portion of the participants acknowledged having wagered on sports. Additionally, it was found that the majority of them wager on sports at local bookmakers. With 83 (23%) of the answers, Bet9ja is the bookmaker that most bettors utilize to place their wagers. Regarding the motivations behind sports betting among young people in the Southeast, 175 (48%) of the participants concur that earning additional cash is the primary motivation. This is because the majority of bettors place a high value on their stakes, which may be the real reason why young people in the Southeast choose to place bets. The urge to take advantage of the potential to earn additional money is consistent with the first influential factor theory of planned behavior (TPBs), which holds that people would act in a way that is perceived as beneficial.

Sport betting is seen favorably by the research participants as an additional revenue stream. Financial gains are expected following a wager, claim Shead and Hodgins (2009). This result is in line with the Australian Psychology Society's conclusion that gambling is inherently a chance to gain money.

Additionally, 192 (52%) of the participants acknowledged that they gambled on sports merely to learn more about them. This indicates that sports betting is meeting the bettors' information demands. They use sports betting to determine which teams will play at home, which teams are leading the league table, and the match schedule for other sporting events. They also learn about previous tournament winners and their top goal scorers through sports betting. According to additional research, the majority of bettors—164, or 45%—strongly agreed that their friends' involvement in sports betting is the reason they began placing bets on sporting events. Mwesigwa (2018) concurred with this conclusion, indicating that students mostly begin betting in order to socialize with their peers. This indicates that a coworker introduced the majority of the young people who participated in the study to sports betting. Some young people are enticed or coerced into the behavior by their friends or peers. They also want to do it to feel included because everyone else is doing it.

The third research question asked how frequently young people wager on different sports. The answer to question 19 shows that a significant percentage of respondents—123, or 34%—state that they wager on football games. Since the majority of respondents are unmarried, they find football and sports betting to be both financially lucrative and appealing from a sociopsychological standpoint. This is the situation in Nigeria, where sociopolitical exclusions and high unemployment rates are prevalent. By creating an illusion, the betting organizations gave the impression that betting was a way for the bettors to get out of poverty. This implies that when watching the games and placing their bets, the bettors experience "imaginary socioeconomic wins" as well as a genuine sense of ecstasy. Kolade and Akanle (2015) [2].

The quantity of time spent on sports wagers each day is a crucial factor in evaluating the impact of how sports betting is portrayed in the media. Regarding this, the respondents were asked to select their preferred alternative from the list provided. As a result, table 16 showed that 38% of young people who bet on sports do so for at least an hour and up to two hours per day. 28% of respondents said they spent two to three hours a day, and another 31% said they spent less than an hour. Over three hours a day are spent by the remaining 3% of responders. It is clear that the percentage of respondents decreases as average time rises.

Additionally, the study's results show that most respondents frequently place their favorite sports wagers both online and in physical stores. This is consistent with Corina's (2010) [13] research, which found that nearly 60% of college students regularly gambling. This demonstrates unequivocally that the great majority of young people regularly wager on a variety of interesting sports. Sports betting's addictive qualities may be the cause of young people's strong emotional attachment to making predictions about game results in exchange for financial gain.

The fourth research question was to ascertain how Southeast teenagers are influenced by newspaper depictions of sports betting culture. According to the analysis, the majority of respondents (157, or 43%) believed that the way the media portrays sports betting culture causes young people in the Southeast to develop criminal tendencies. This supports a previous study by Delfabbro, Winefield, and Anderson (2009) [15] that suggested gamblers might feel pressured to

commit crimes in order to feed their gambling and betting tendencies. Money is spent to get more money in a game of chance, and for young people who depend on their parents for support, the money needed to wager must be obtained from them under false pretenses. If this doesn't work, they search for alternative ways to get the money so they can wager. This implies that a number of bettors will stop at nothing to obtain funds for wagering.

The emergence of betting addiction is another effect of being exposed to how sports betting is portrayed in the media. The majority of respondents (142, or 39%) concurred that the way betting is portrayed in the media contributes to their addiction. Philip (2014) asserts that gambling presents a serious threat to public health. A betting addiction, also known as problem betting, is characterized by compulsive behavior that involves people in betting even though it negatively impacts their lives. Even though they continue to gamble, those who struggle with gambling are gambling to the point that it negatively impacts their lives. It is the want to play in spite of the negative consequences that gambling has had on their lives. To wager on better things, a person with this addiction can spend all of the money that is left in his pockets.

According to the Ministerial Gambling Council (2019), an addiction to gambling entails numerous challenges in regulating the amount of money and/or time spent playing, which can have negative effects on the gambler, other people, or the community. It refers to the inability to control gambling urges, which can have detrimental effects on one's social or personal life. This can be linked to the rise in uncontrolled media portrayals of gambling-related information, particularly through alluring commercials. The negative impacts of betting extend beyond the bettor to include their friends, family, and society as a whole.

### Conclusion

This paper examined media representation of sports betting culture and its influence on youths in southeast Nigeria. Based on the result of this paper, it is evident that there is a relationship between media representation of sports betting and frequent betting habits of the southeast, Nigerian youths. For the respondents, the primary motivators of sports betting are based on social and economic reasons. Even though some of these youths come from rich homes and well-educated parents, they still need more money than their regular allowances. Also, peer influence account for the reason why youths engage in sports betting. This set of people will want to live beyond their means and this prompts them to take on activities that would double or increase their regular income in this case, sports betting.

These bettors indicated that they bet on their favourite sports very often. As a result of exposure to media representation, respondents agree that they developed the following betting problems like criminal behaviours, betting addictions, use of funds meant for tuition fee or business capital to bet, consumption of alcohol and smoking, and difficulties in clearing outstanding debts.

The study concluded that the incidence of sports betting-related problems amongst youths is on the rise because of the media representation of betting in Nigeria as a win-win venture.

### Recommendations

1. The government should regulate the establishment of betting centres and the medium and rate at which bookmakers make their unsolicited adverts.
2. Youths should also be motivated to come up with creative ideas which should be enhanced to create self-employment and help to curb involvement in betting.
3. As a result of the media portrayal of sports betting, key stakeholders in the country should put in more effort to provide a more balanced story about this business especially on the awareness of the dangers associated with sports betting.

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