

Social Factors Associated with Adolescents' Gambling Behaviour in Rivers State

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Abstract

Using ex post facto research design, this study examined social factors associated with adolescents gambling behaviour in Rivers State. The population of the study comprised of all 9,636 students in senior secondary II from 3 Local Government Areas (Obio/Akpor, Ahoada East, and Eleme) in the 3 Senatorial Zones of Rivers West, East, and Rivers South of Rivers State, Nigeria. A sample of 963 participants was purposively and randomly selected from the 40 schools in the sampled 3 Local Government Areas in Rivers State, Nigeria. Two instruments, Adolescent Gambling Behaviour Index (AGBI), and Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI) were used to collect data for the study. The Cronbach Alpha was used to establish the internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.76 for the Adolescent Gambling Behaviour Index (AGBI) and 0.78 for Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI). The data collected were analyzed with Pearson Product Moment correlation and independent t-test analysis. The findings of the study showed that peer pressure and gender relate significantly to adolescents' gambling behaviour in Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that periodic seminars and orientation programmes should be organized to educate students on the effect of gambling on their academics and social behaviour.

Keywords: social, factors, gambling, behaviour, adolescents

Introduction

As a result of technological development and availability of internet facilities, the level of adolescent's engagement in gambling behaviour is increasing. This is a big problem among this population. Present indication shows that more and more adolescents are involving themselves in this activity; some have even perceived it as a source of income and abandon other activities that can provide them with better income. Recent data shows that Nigerians spend about 1.8 billion naira daily on online sport betting (Online Sport news, 2015). A public opinion poll revealed that gambling and betting is becoming very popular in Nigeria, particularly amongst the country's bulging youth population and sports fans aged between 18–35 years (NOIPolls, 2017). While some people benefit from this activity, majority tend to lose their money in this activity. Studies have shown that if gambling situations are displayed to adolescents, most will take part to some degree.

Gambling issues among adolescents have generally gotten very little or no attention as such; there are few literature on adolescent gambling. Nevertheless, adolescents are keenly involved in gambling practices, but not being fully aware of the consequences. Studies have shown a

high prevalence of gambling among young people in Rivers state and much of this practice takes place in schools (Eneh & Stanley, 2004). Statistics revealed that in Rivers state, a significant proportion of secondary school adolescents engage in various forms of gambling (Naira bet, Bet9ja, lotto plus, MTN Quest 4Football, Merry bet, among other) (National Lottery Trust Fund, 2017). This trend is particularly prevalent among adolescents, wherein adolescents are constantly seen in game centres, pool shops, and under canopies along streets where gambling activities take place. The situation is such that adolescents have to predict the outcome of matches in order to win money or other materials. The higher the number of matches predicted the higher the expected outcome if the prediction is right at the end of the match. The researcher has also observed that secondary school students particularly those in boarding schools, usually use their meals, beverages, cloths and other personal items to gamble among their peers.

Gambling is commonly described as any activity in which something of value is risked on the outcome of an event when the probability of winning or losing is less than certain (Korn & Shaffer, 1999). Etel et al. (2013) explained that when a person gambles, he or she is placing an item of value at risk, in an attempt to gain something of even greater value. Gambling can be understood as the established practice of staking money or other valuables on games or events of an uncertain outcome (Binde, 2005). It is a form of behaviour that has been identified to have serious consequences on gamblers' health, interpersonal relationships, study-habit, academic performance, and has been reported to be related to some criminal behaviour (Oyebisi et al., 2012).

Gambling is based on a combination of skills or chance or both and something of value that can be won or lost (Kassinove, 1996). Young people including secondary school adolescents are a high risk group for gambling and gambling problems (Moore et al., 2013). A high prevalence of gambling participation has been observed in different secondary school adolescent populations, (Etel et al., 2013). Secondary school students engage in a wide range of gambling behaviours, including playing lottery, poker/cards for money, casino games (slots/poker machines), horse racing, betting on sports and internet gambling (Burger et al., 2006).

At present, when contrasted with past years, adolescents live in a period of expanded gambling accessibility (internet betting, shopping coupons, scratch cards, lotteries, raffle-draws, and so on); they are presented with the various form of gambling such that they feel gambling is normal. Adolescents are motivated to gamble for a number of reasons including: entertainment, to win money, the sensation of winning, the thrill of the game, to escape stress/problems, peer influence, gangsterism, socio-economic status, greed, and so on. As opposed to the common aim of gambling for financial increase in grown-ups, adolescents' gambling is frequently reported as a chance to mingle. It is seen as an avenue to relate with others as opposed to a chance to win money.

The participation in gambling by secondary school adolescents is a major problem which can pose academic challenges and cause serious health risks including abnormal heart rhythms, anxiety, irritability, insomnia, and sensory disturbances. Although, adolescents who participate

in gambling feel that engaging in it helps reduce tension, frustration, boredom and sometimes help them stay awake all night or increase their mental alertness; however, experiences of some gamblers have shown that engaging in gambling carries a high price tag which often leads to fatality, drug use, smoking, suicide and gangsterism.

When gambling behaviour increases, it may produce negative consequences in the adolescent's financial, social, and overall health. Some of these negative health and social consequences of gambling on adolescents may include gambling disorders, family dysfunction and domestic violence, alcohol and other drug problems, psychiatric conditions, suicide and suicide attempts, significant financial problems, and criminal behaviour. A major consequence of gambling among secondary school adolescents is poor academic performance, truancy and increased school dropout. Gamblers often show signs of depression, withdrawal, mood swings and have difficulties establishing close friendships or maintaining social networks, often replacing friends with gambling associates.

There are debates that peer pressure may be associated with gambling behaviour among adolescents. A peer could be anyone a person looks up to in behaviour, or someone whom a person would think as equal to one's age or ability (Hardcastle, 2012). On the other hand, the term pressure implies the process that influence people to do something that they might not otherwise choose to do (Muratore, 2008). Peer pressure is the influence on an individual who gets encouraged to follow others by changing his or her attitude, values or behaviour to conform with those of the influencing group or individual either positively or negatively. Also, Haroon et al. (2004) found out that peer group pressure plays a significant role in adolescents' gambling behaviour. They further stressed that peers may introduce others to gambling as a shared social activity. Daniel et al. (2014) found out that favourable attitudes toward gambling were most strongly associated with peer approval of gambling. To this end, Isukwem and Ekechukwu (2019) stressed that an individual who often associate with friends that gamble is also vulnerable to gambling related activities. This is based logically on the fact that an adolescent who fails to conform to group norms may face social rejection, and finally evicted from the group. Peer pressure exerts immense influence on adolescents thus, because of fear of social rejection, adolescents tend to follow the group rules including behaviours that may be detrimental to their life, psychological wellbeing and family relations such as gambling.

Gender is another variable that may be linked to gambling behaviour among adolescents. Gender is the range of physical, biological, mental and behavioural characteristics pertaining to and differentiating between masculinity and femininity (Haig, 2004). Depending on the context, the term may refer to biological sex (the state of being male, female), sex-based social structure (including gender roles and other social roles) or gender identity (Udry, 2004). According to the Oxford Dictionary, gender is a state of being male or female with reference to social or cultural differences (Oxford English Mini Dictionary, 2003). One consistent finding in the literature is that males are more likely to gamble than females (Welte et al., 2008; Welte et al., 2002).

This sex difference is also evident in youth gambling. For example, Olason (2010) found that out of 1,537 adolescent secondary school students, boys gambled more frequently and more

regularly than girls. Jacobs (2000) noted that the intensity of gambling by male adolescents is greater than for female adolescents. Male adolescents tend to gamble earlier, gamble more on games, spend more time and money on gambling, and experience more gambling-related problems than female adolescents. From the foregoing therefore, the researcher is motivated to examine social factors associated with adolescents' gambling behaviour in Rivers State.

Objectives of the study

The study examined social factors associated with adolescents' gambling behaviour in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the relationship between peer pressure and gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State.
2. Examine the extent that gender influences gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State.

Research questions

1. To what extent does peer pressure relate to gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does gender influence gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

Ho1: Peer pressure does not significantly relate to gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State.

Ho2: Gender does not significantly influence gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted the ex-post-facto research design. The population of the study comprised of all the 9636 students in senior secondary II from 3 Local Government Areas (Obio/Akpor, Ahoada East, and Eleme) in the 3 senatorial zones of Rivers West, East, and Rivers South of Rivers State, Nigeria. A sample of 963 participants was randomly and purposively selected from the 40 schools in the sampled 3 Local Government Areas in Rivers State, Nigeria (Obio/Akpor, Ahoada East, and Eleme).

Two instruments, Adolescent Gambling Behaviour Index (AGBI) and Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI), were used to collect data for the study. Both instruments were developed by the researcher. Adolescent Gambling Behaviour Index (AGBI) and Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI) have two parts. Part A: deals with demographic information; part B of AGBI has 10 items and collects information on AGBI while part B of PPI also has 10 items and collects information on PPI. Both instruments were designed on a four point scale of Strongly Agree (SA) =4, Agree (A) =3, Disagree (D) =2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1. The Cronbach Alpha reliability was used to establish the internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.76 for the Adolescent Gambling Behaviour Index (AGBI) and 0.78 for Peer Pressure Inventory. The data collected was analyzed with Pearson Product Moment correlation and independent t-test analysis.

Presentation of results

Research question one: To what extent does peer pressure relate to gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State?

Ho1: Peer pressure does not significantly relate to gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment correlation on the relationship between peer pressure and gambling behaviour among adolescents

Category	N	R	Sig.	Remarks
Peer Pressure				
Gambling behaviour	963	.726**	.021	Statistically significant

Table 1 revealed that the Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (r) was calculated to be 0.726. This showed that there is a positive and high relationship between peer pressure and gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State. The relationship between peer pressure and gambling behaviour of 0.726 is statistically significant at 0.021 when compared to the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between peer pressure and gambling behaviour is rejected. This implies that peer pressure significantly relates to gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State.

Research question two: To what extent does gender influence gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State?

Ho2: Gender does not significantly influence gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State.

Table 2: Independent sample t-test on the influence of gender on gambling behaviours among adolescent

Gender	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	t-cal.	t-crit.	Sig.	Decision
Male	581	38.13	5.98					
Female	382	43.72	9.48	961	11.224	1.96	.000	Significant

Table 2 revealed that male students have mean and standard deviation scores of 38.13 and 5.98 while the female students have mean and standard deviation scores of 43.72 and 9.48. Based on their mean scores, it is deduced that female students tend to gamble more than male students by a mean difference of 5.59. With a degree of freedom of 961, the calculated t value of 11.224 is greater than the critical t value of 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. By implication, the analysis revealed that gender (male/female) significantly influence gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State.

Summary of the findings

The findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. Peer group significantly relates to gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State.
2. Gender (male/female) significantly influences gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State. However, female students tend to gamble more since they have high mean value compared to their male counterparts in Rivers State.

Discussion of the findings

The findings of this study revealed that peer pressure significantly relates to gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State. The result of the present study supports the study by Hardoon et al. (2004) who found out that peer group pressure plays a significant role in adolescents' gambling behaviour. They further stressed that peers may introduce others to gambling as a shared social activity. Daniel et al. (2014) found out that favourable attitudes toward gambling were most strongly associated with peer approval of gambling. Jianbin and Ziyang (2016) also found out that the risk propensity to gambling is directly and positively related to and moderated by peer gambling. The reason why peer group pressure accounts for adolescents' gambling behaviour may be because members of a peer group usually have strong behavioural influence on one another. Moreso, members of a peer group may be scared of losing the acceptance of their peers if they do not join them in doing what they do.

The result of this study showed that gender significantly influence gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State. Further analysis of the result revealed that female students tend to gamble more than male secondary school students in Rivers State. The findings of this study disagree with the research work of Olason (2010) that boys gambled more frequently and more regularly than girls. Also, Jacob (2000) does not support the findings that the intensity of gambling by male adolescents is greater than for female adolescents. Male adolescents tend to gamble earlier, gamble more on games, spend more time and money on gambling, and experience more gambling-related problems than female adolescents. The reasons why there is higher numbers of female students engaging in gambling could be that it may be used to escape boredom, loneliness or stress, or just catching fun. Another study though, by NCAA (2004) found out that males consistently engage in gambling or sports wagering activities in much higher proportions than females. The study further reported that the proportion of males participating in any gambling behaviour was 61 percent, more than 37 percent of females and are more likely to become problem or pathological gamblers.

Conclusion

Gambling has been conceptualized as the act of betting or wagering of money or something of value on an event that has an uncertain outcome with the possibility of winning money or materials. The participation in gambling by secondary school adolescents is a major problem which can pose academic challenges and cause serious health risks including abnormal heart rhythms, anxiety, irritability, insomnia, and sensory disturbances. This has shown that social factors such as peer pressure and gender relates significantly to gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommended the following;

1. Periodic seminars and orientation programmes should be organized to educate students on the effect of gambling on their academics and social behaviour.
2. Parents and caregivers should endeavour to check and moderate the activities of their children from time to time. This will help in reducing some mischievous activities that are carried on by adolescents both at home and in school.
3. Schools should enforce strict disciplinary measures prohibiting any form of gambling among students.

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