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Prevalence of Problem Gambling among Senior Secondary School Students

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Abstract

Adolescent stage is crucial in the lives of everyone, it marks a new beginning. Studies have shown that adolescents gambling is associated with adverse outcome such as vocational, psychological, personal, financial, social, and academic consequences. This study investigated prevalence of problem gambling among senior secondary school students. This is a cross-sectional study that is guided by social learning theory. The population of the study is secondary school students, while the sample size consisted of 500 respondents drawn from 4 secondary schools. Information was gathered from the respondents by convenience sampling method with the use of standardized questionnaire. The result of the study indicated that prevalence of problem gambling (3.2%) is high among senior secondary students. The male students (67.8%) engaged more in gambling than their female (32.2%) counterparts. Ultimately, the peak of gambling is between SS2 (33.4%) and SS3 (37.4%). The following recommendations are made at the end of the study. Clinical psychologist and other mental health professionals are needed in all secondary school across the state to psycho-educate students on the danger and long-term effect of gambling. The school management must establish a strict measure to combat the prevalence of gambling among secondary school students in the state. The parent, guardians, and faith leaders have a role to play in reducing the menace of gambling in this contemporary time.

Keywords: *Adolescence, Nigeria, Problem Gambling, PGSI, Social Learning Theory*

Introduction

In the last couple of years, Nigeria as a country, has witnessed socioeconomic tragedy which has hindered the development of human capital or resources, and standard of living of both young and old, most especially the middle and lower classes of the citizenry. There is high rate of unemployment and underdevelopment within the country which the relevant authorities are not addressing (Aruofor and Ogbeide, 2024). Small scale and medium businesses are collapsing, inflation rate keeps increasing on a daily basis, and rising depression rate makes people to engage in risky behavior as a means of surviving (Simpasa, 2024). In other to have access to basic necessities of life such as food, most young people are ready to do anything whether legal or illegal (Yusuf and Nasirudeen, 2024). As such, in the present-day Nigeria many of the youth viewed gambling as a means to survive due to poverty, idleness and unemployment. The easiest way for youth to have money is to be involved in gambling.

Gambling industry is one of the most lucrative businesses in this contemporary time, continually appealing to millions of people around the globe who sees the avenue as means to make money from their favorite sport. The only available means of income for youth and people of age who could not get job with their skills, education and knowledge including university degree is gambling. According to Temitope (2019), most Nigerian youths including boys and girls and of different religions all participate in gambling, there are different website, and internet has made it available for them to be involved in it. Gambling is not restricted to unemployed, uneducated or underemployed, people in all works of life are involved. People that works in corporate offices such as banks, hospitals, engineering firms and civil service are not exempted. Gambling can be defined as the act of risking or putting cash or any cherished item on an event with an ambiguous result with the determination to gain more cash or belongings of value than was staked (Okere, 2024). It involves giving out something of value such as money, asset, and other belongings in other to gain something of higher value. Parents in Nigeria see gambling as unethical, which is against the customs, traditions, and norms (Ajiboye, 2021). However, despite the obvious disadvantages of gambling such as break down of mental health, psychological wellbeing, and economic hazard and instability, gambling is becoming a normal thing in the mainstream society for both young and old. The government of the day does not see it (gambling) as a problem because it is a multiple million naira market and it generates a lot of cash into the government account through direct and indirect tax. Based on the information above, this study aims to study the prevalence of problem gambling among senior secondary school students.

Literature review

Currently, people can engage in gambling through any platform, here are some of the most popular gambling activities in Nigeria ludo, sport betting, casino, lotteries and dog and horse race etc. Okere (2025) identified the following types of gambling most especially among youth.

Lottery: activities that involve tossing of dice, allocating number or figure, or tickets and the probability of winning is limited or minimal.

Sport betting: It involves predict the outcome of sporting related activates and placing a stake on it. It is the most come among Nigerian youth.

Betting on animals: placing a stake on animal who are used strictly for the purpose of sport.

Online or internet gambling: placing of stake on anything through the internet

Ludo: This game involved two to four individuals who are expected to take a token from the beginning to the end through the use of dice. It is considered as a gambling when people place a stake on it.

Promotion competitions: this type of completion is organized for the purpose of promoting a product, company or brand. Most time the participants are asked series of things such as question, memory verse, or dancing completion and stake is placed on them.

Casino: this one strictly for adult most time people above 18 years depending on the country regulation. It takes place in a private establishment or setting where people are to place a stake on card, roulette, and slot machines etc. Nevertheless, irrespective of the type of gambling, it can easily get out of control and affect the mental health and psychological wellbeing of the individual.

According to Armitage (2021), gambling behavior among youth is generally believed to be a societal problem. Through observation, gambling in adolescents begins at a very early stage. As such, early gambler has the tendency to develop gambling related consequences at the latter stage of their life (Rahman et al, 2012). The use of internet made it very easy to engage in gambling. Online platform can easily be downloaded on play store. Many factors are responsible for high degree of gambling among secondary school students in Nigeria most especially Lagos being a commercialize city. Environmental factor such as advertisement plays a crucial role in propagating gambling as an easy way to generate money ((O'Loughlin and Blaszczyński, 2018; Savolainen et al, 2025). As such adolescent sees gambling as a way to create money while they are out of cash. Adolescents are majorly influenced by those around them. Social association such as having gamblers folks and social approval from friends increase the likelihood to go into gambling (Parrado-Gonzalez et al, 2023).

Psychological factors such as boldness, beliefs, anticipations, and hazard perception all contributed to greater degree of gambling among secondary school students (Botella-Guijarro et al., 2020; Favieri et al., 2023). Challenges of life, low state of mental health, low self-esteem, problematic stressful situations and negative life events, poor coping methodology, lack of self-control and impulsiveness lead to gambling among youth (Stefanovics et al., 2023; Rizzo et al., 2023). Several studies have shown that considering social demographic variables such as gender, the male children are likely to go into gambling than their female counterpart (Frisone et al., 2020; Pisarska & Ostaszewski, 2020). Overindulging in gambling can have numerous disadvantages such reduced level of productivity, financial difficulties, poor interpersonal relationship with loved ones, anxiety, and depression in the life of the gambler. Skipping of school, poor academic performance, and school difficulties have a significant relationship with gambling among school students (Molinaro et al., 2018).

Tsegay and Tecleberhan (2025) asserted that online sporting gambling has negative effect on mental health, low self-esteem, increase depression and anxiety. For example, in the United State of America, the mental state and psychological wellbeing of gambler most especially online gambler is a thing of concern to relevant authority (Mitchell, 2025). Online betting can easily become a problem to the individual because the margin between passion and obsession is usually very small. This simply means that online betting can easily turn to problem (addiction) that affects mood, daily activities, and interpersonal association. In order to be in the right frame of mind, it is important to know when gambling becomes a problem. Of late in Indonesia, sports such as football, basketball, and horse racing have massive followers (Wijaya et al, 2023). This medium has created massive opportunities for various types of gambling platform. This podium is used by various companies to create opportunities for individuals place a bet either on local or international matches or games.

As a result of the above, the study aims to investigate prevalence of problem gambling among secondary school students in Agege, Lagos State.

Objective of the study

This study examined prevalence of problem gambling among senior secondary school students in Ibadan. The following are the specific objective.

1. To show statistical distribution of gambling among secondary school students in Agege.

2. To reveal numerical dissemination of gambling based on gender among secondary school students.
3. To disclose arithmetical distribution of gambling across class in Agege, Lagos State.

Research question

1. What is the statistical distribution of gambling among secondary students in Agege.
2. What is the numerical dissemination of gambling based on gender among secondary school student
3. What is the arithmetic distribution of gambling across class in Agege, Lagos State.

Theoretical Framework

The Social Learning Theory

Bandura and Walters (1977) introduced social learning theory. The theory centers on the fact that secondary school students learn anti-social behaviors by watching people (e.g parents, religious leader, teachers, actors, and footballers and musicians) around them. Behaviors are learnt by looking at influential figure in the society. This demonstrate that students who see gambler has influential figure go through three stage process. Firstly, students sees gambling as a normal thing. Secondly, students noticed that society sees nothing wrong with gambling. The student eventually engaged in the act. This theory shows that maladaptive, psychopathology, and antisocial behaviors are learnt by watching other. While observing adult, students decode adult behavior and later replicate it. This indicate that gambling is learnt just like any other behavior. The principle of reinforcement takes place, as such adolescent begins to exhibit the behaviour. This theory is useful to this study.

Methodology

This is a descriptive study that make use of standardized questionnaire to get information from senior secondary school students in Agege, Lagos, State. Five hundred participants were sourced with the use of convenience sampling method from Government College, Agege, Girls High School, Agege, Anwar-UI Islam Model College, Agege, and Onipetesi High School, Agege. Convenience sampling was preferred because of availability of students in Lagos State. Due to epidemic nature of gambling in Lagos, convenience sampling makes it easy to have access to the participants (students). An ethical committee was set up by the university to look at the instrument and the procedure in which the study was carried out. The instrument and research procedure were approved by the committee. The researcher approached the management of each secondary school about the study, and approval were given. Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher told the students what the research entails and seek they content. The participants willing agreed to be part of the study.

Instrument

Gambling was measured using problem gambling severity index (PGSI) developed by Ferris and Wynne (2001). The scale consisted of 9 items, rated on 4-point like format from (1) never, (2) sometimes, (3) most of the time, (4) almost always. Here are some of the items on the items, taking into context in the last 4 weeks, have you bet more than you could really afford to lose, have you felt your gambling has caused financial problems for you or your

household, have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble? The Cronbach alpha of the scale is 0.91 and it has a test-retest reliability of 0.78. Finally, high score indicates gambling problem.

Table 1.1 shows gambling among secondary students in Lagos, Nigeria

SN	Items	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	Almost always	Mean	Remark
1	Have you bet more than you could really afford to lose?	30 (6%)	70 (14%)	100 (20%)	300 (60%)	3.34	High
2	Have you needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same excitement?	20 (4%)	50 (10%)	200 (40%)	230 (46%)	3.28	High
3	Have you gone back to try to win the money you'd lost?	10 (2%)	40 (8%)	200 (40%)	250 (50%)	3.38	High
4	Have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble?	25 (5%)	70 (14%)	150 (30%)	255 (51%)	3.27	High
5	Have you felt that you might have a problem with gambling?	50 (10%)	70 (14%)	80 (16%)	300 (60%)	3.26	High
6	Have you felt that gambling has caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety?	15 (3%)	60 (12%)	190 (38%)	235 (47%)	3.29	High
7	Have people criticized your betting, or told you that you have a gambling problem, whether or not you thought it is true?	68 (13.6%)	89 (17.8%)	167 (33.4)	176 (35.2%)	2.90	High
8	Have you felt your gambling has caused financial problems for you or your household?	19 (3.8)	78 (15.6%)	150 (30%)	253 (50.6%)	3.27	High
9	Have you felt guilty about the way you gamble or what happens when you gamble?	56 (11.2%)	78 (15.6%)	142 (28.4%)	224 (44.8%)	3.07	High

Table 1.1 shows gambling among secondary students in Agege. Have you bet more than you could really afford to lose, 30 (6%) of the respondents never, 70 (14%) of participants sometimes, 100 (20%) of the participants most of the time, while 300 (60%) of the respondents picked almost always. Have you needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same excitement, 20 (4%) of the students never, 50 (10%) of the participants sometimes, 200 (40%) of the respondents most of the times, while 230 (46%) always almost. Have you gone back to try to win the money you'd lost, 10 (2%) never, 40 (8%) sometimes, 200 (40%) most of the time, while 250 (50%) almost always. Have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble, 25 (5%) never, 70 (14%) sometimes, 150 (30%) most of the time, while 255 (51) almost always. Have you felt that you might have a problem with gambling, 50 (10%) never, 70 (14%) sometimes, 80 (16%) most of the time, while 300 (60%)

almost always. Have you felt that gambling has caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety, 15 (3%) never, 60 (12%) sometimes, 190 (38%) most of the time, while 235 (47%) always almost. Have people criticized your betting, or told you that you have a gambling problem, whether or not you thought it is true, 68 (13.6%) never, 89 (17.8%) sometimes, 167 (33.4%) most of the time, while 176 (35.2%) always almost. Have you felt your gambling has caused financial problems for you or your household, 19 (3.8%) never, 78 (15.6%) sometimes, 150 (30%) most of the time, while 253 (50.6%) always almost. Have you felt guilty about the way you gamble or what happens when you gamble, 56 (11.2%) never, 78 (15.6%) sometimes, 142 (28.4%) most of the time, while 224 (44.8%) of the participant always almost.

Table 1.2 shows gambling based on gender among secondary school student

SN	Items	F	M	Mean	Remark
1	Have you bet more than you could really afford to lose?	200 (40%)	300 (60%)	1.6	High
2	Have you needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same excitement?	150 (30%)	350 (70%)	1.7	High
3	Have you gone back to try to win the money you'd lost?	200 (40%)	300 (60%)	1.6	High
4	Have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble?	100 (20%)	400 (80%)	1.8	High
5	Have you felt that you might have a problem with gambling?	150 (30%)	350 (70%)	1.7	High
6	Have you felt that gambling has caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety?	200 (40%)	300 (60%)	1.6	High
7	Have people criticized your betting, or told you that you have a gambling problem, whether or not you thought it is true?	150 (30%)	350 (70%)	1.7	High
8	Have you felt your gambling has caused financial problems for you or your household?	100 (20%)	400 (80%)	1.8	High
9	Have you felt guilty about the way you gamble or what happens when you gamble?	200 (40%)	300 (60%)	1.6	High

Table 1.2 shows gambling based on gender among secondary school student in Agege. Have you bet more than you could really afford to lose, 200 (40%) of the respondents were female, while 300 (60%) were male. Have you needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get

the same excitement, female respondents were 150 (30%), while male counterpart were 350 (70%). Have you gone back to try to win the money you'd lost, female participants were 200 (40%), while male were 300 (60%). Have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble, female number were 100 (20%), while male were 400 (80%). Have you felt that you might have a problem with gambling, 150 (30%) of the respondent were female, while male respondent were 350 (70%). Have you felt that gambling has caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety, 200 (40%) were female, while male colleague were 300 (60%). Have people criticized your betting, or told you that you have a gambling problem, whether or not you thought it is true, 150 (30%) of the respondent were female, while 350 (70%) were male. Have you felt your gambling has caused financial problems for you or your household, 100 (20%) were female, while 400 (80%) of the participants were male. Have you felt guilty about the way you gamble or what happens when you gamble, 200 (40%) of the participants were female, while 300 (60%) were male.

Table 1.3 shows gambling across class in Agege Lagos State

SN	Items	SS1	SS2	SS3	Mean	Remark
1	Have you bet more than you could really afford to lose?	140 (28%)	170 (34%)	190 (38%)	2.1	High
2	Have you needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same excitement?	150 (30%)	170 (34%)	180 (36%)	2.06	High
3	Have you gone back to try to win the money you'd lost?	150 (30%)	175 (35%)	175 (35%)	2.05	High
4	Have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble?	160 (32%)	170 (34%)	170 (34%)	2.02	High
5	Have you felt that you might have a problem with gambling?	150 (30%)	170 (34%)	180 (36%)	2.06	High
6	Have you felt that gambling has caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety?	130 (26%)	160 (32%)	210 (42%)	2.16	High
7	Have people criticized your betting, or told you that you have a gambling problem, whether or not you thought it is true?	140 (28%)	170 (34%)	190 (38%)	2.1	High
8	Have you felt your gambling has caused financial problems for you or your household?	150 (30%)	150 (30%)	200 (40%)	2.1	High
9	Have you felt guilty about the way you gamble or what happens when you gamble?	140 (28%)	170 (34%)	190 (38%)	2.1	High

Table 1.3 shows gambling across class in Agege, Lagos State. Have you bet more than you could really afford to lose, 140 (28%) of the respondent were in SS1, 170 (34%) were SS2

students, while 190 (38%) were SS3 students. Have you needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same excitement, 150 (30%) were in class 1, 170 (34%) were SS2 students, while 180 (36%) were in class3. Have you gone back to try to win the money you'd lost, 150 (30%) were SS1 students, 175 (35%) were in class2, while 175 (35%) were SS3 students. Have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble, 160 (32%) were in SS1, 170 (34%) were SS2 students, while 170 (34%) were in SS3. Have you felt that you might have a problem with gambling, 150 (30%), 170 (34%) were SS2, while 180 (36%) were SS3. Have you felt that gambling has caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety, 130 (26%) were SS1, 160 (32%) were SS2, while 210 (42%) SS3. Have people criticized your betting, or told you that you have a gambling problem, whether or not you thought it is true, 140 (28%) were SS1, 170 (34%) were SS2, while 190 (38%) were SS3. Have you felt your gambling has caused financial problems for you or your household, 150 (30%) were SS1, 150 (30%) were SS@, while 200 (40%) were SS3. Have you felt guilty about the way you gamble or what happens when you gamble, 140 (28%) were SS1, 170 (34%) were SS2, while 190 (38%) were SS3.

Effect of gambling

Gambling among secondary school students has numerous shortcomings such as poor grade, fighting, skipping school, suicide attempt, binge drinking and mental health difficulties (Riley, 2021). It also has other challenges including vocational, psychological, personal, financial, social, and academic consequences among students. These students have little control over their behavior and only think about gambling which leads to pathological gambling at later stage of their life. Pathological gambling is more dangerous and obsessive, it's the inability of a person to regulate gambling related behavior.

Conclusion

The study investigated prevalence of problem gambling among senior secondary school students. This a descriptive research that made use of questionnaire to get information from respondents. Three research question were asked in the study. The result indicated that most secondary students are gambler in Agege, Lagos State. The male students engaged in gambling than their female counterparts. The peak of gambling is between SS2 and SS3. Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations are made. The school authority must established a strict measure to combat the prevalence of gambling among secondary school students in the country. Clinical psychologist and other mental health professionals are needed in all secondary school across the state to psycho-educate students on the danger and longtime effect of gambling. The parent, and faith leaders have a role to play in reducing the menace of gambling in contemporary time. This study was conducted in Agege Local Government, Lagos State. The researcher urges other scholars to replicate the study in a bigger setting for more acceptability.

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