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Gambling Behaviour among Undergraduates: The Role of Social Support and Peer Relations

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ABSTRACT

This study examined gambling behaviour among undergraduates; the moderating role of social support and peer relations. 223 undergraduates participated in the study. They include 132 females and 91 males whose ages ranged from 17- 31 years (mean age 21.94; std 3.02). A mixed sampling design involving simple random and accidental samplings was used to select the faculties, departments and participants that participated in the study. Three instruments (Gambling Urge Scale, multidimensional scale of perceived social support and Index of Peer Relation scales) were used to collect data for the study. The study adopted correlational design and hierarchical multiple regression statistics were used to analyze the data. The result shows that models for each of the hierarchies were significant, $R^2 = (.12$ and $.05$ and F values for these three hierarchies are 9.750^{**} , 10.760^{**}) respectively. The result shows that family social support is positively correlated with gambling behaviour but not significant ($r = .059$, $P > .05$), Significant others social support negatively correlated with gambling behaviour but not significant ($r = -.036$, $P > .05$), while Friends social support positively and significantly correlated with gambling behaviour ($r = .238^{**}$, $p \leq .01$), and peer relations negatively and significantly correlated with gambling behaviour ($r = -.146^{*}$, $P \leq .05$). The result further showed in model 1 that family and significant others social support did not predict gambling behaviour ($\beta = -.357$, $t = -1.91$, $P = .057$, $\beta = .072$, $t = -.557$, $P = .573$.) respectively while friends positively and significantly predicted gambling behaviour, $\beta = .573^{**}$, $t = 4.680$, $p \leq .01$. The second model result shows that peer relations negatively and significantly predicted gambling behaviours, $\beta = .434^{**}$, $t = -3.505$, $p \leq .01$. The results may have implication for understanding, planning and designing programmes for prevention of of gambling. Recommendations were based on the findings. It was recommended that input from friends social support and peer relations are important variables that can encourage gambling behaviours.

Introduction

In present-day Nigeria, youths and undergraduates are no longer interested in long-time learning and hardworking to earn a living. Most youths and undergraduates prefer the shortest means of earning a living. One of the shortest means of earning a living without hard work is gambling. Gambling behaviour is no longer seen as a deviation from the norms and mores of society (Zangeneh et al, 2000). A visit to any viewing centre popularly known as Betnija or betting centres on weekends will show that Nigerian youths and undergraduates engage in gambling as a means of acquiring quick wealth by betting with their monies and potentials (Oyebisi et al. 2012; Temitope, 2019). Many parents, guardians and teachers most of the time encouraged their wards to engage in gambling behaviours to acquire quick wealth, despite, the fact that gambling has been preached against by many churches and mosques, many youths and undergraduates still engage themselves in gambling behaviours. This behaviour called gambling has become part and parcel of our present-day societies, most especially among the youth and undergraduates. The norms and mores of society which was originally against gambling are bending rules to accommodate this misdemeanour.

Many countries enacted laws that supported these gambling behaviours and those who are benefiting from it in most cases are the influential people in the society (Parrado-Gonzalez & Leon-Jariego 2020). Unfortunately, owing to this legalization of gambling behaviours, many young youths and undergraduates are no longer paying much attention to their professions and academics. This is because they believed that they will acquire wealth faster by gambling rather than by learning work or going to school. This is in agreement with the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen, 1991). The theory thinks that behavioural intention is produced from a combination of attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control. Therefore, it is alarming that among old gamblers, young adults have been convinced that gambling is not a disorder (McComb et al, 2010).

Gambling behaviour is a psychological game of chance and luck, always affecting a specific outcome, including the way an individual thinks and makes decisions, resulting in action and behaviour, as measured by gambling urge scale

(Raylu & Oei, 2004). Gambling behaviour is seen also as the activity that involves the staking of an item of value, such as money or property, on an outcome that is determined in part or solely by chance. In some cases, this element of chance is an inevitable feature of the activity itself due to incomplete knowledge (e.g., racing or sport betting) or due to the random nature of the outcomes (e.g., lotteries, gaming machines, or casino games).

Some forms of speculation (e.g., stock market trading) may also be considered forms of gambling depending on how people make decisions, although the market is not by its nature, designed to generate chance-determined or random outcomes (Rickwood, et al., 2010). Researchers stated that gambling has become an integral part of our society as a part of mainstream culture through the entertainment, leisure, sport and tourism industries and it is a significant source of revenue for governments and private companies (Onebunne & Nnaemeka, 2020). Again, understanding gambling behaviour should be of interest to psychologists (not just gambling harm) and it has been argued recently that there is much to be gained from a wider investigation of all types of participation in gambling across various individuals categories or classes (Laplane et al., 2008).

These gambling behaviours imply that young and some old adults may stop paying attention to gainful employment, rather they will be wasting their precious time at viewing centres trying to predict a game and at the same time wasting the little resources they have. This will affect the economy of the society later in the future. Therefore, it has become necessary for research to explore the possible factors that could increase or decrease gambling behaviours, especially among undergraduates. Logically, one can conclude that understanding the factors that can propel intention for actions such as gambling would be a step to understanding how gambling behaviours can be managed. Thus, the present research looked at these factors (social support and peer relations) and examined their contribution to gambling behaviours.

The first variable in this study is social support. Onyishi, et al.,(2012) defined social support as the comfort given to one by the friends, family, co-workers and others who help one. Onyishi, et al., (2012) stated also that perceived social support is the perceived function and quality of social relationships such as the availability of aid or

support received. Duci and Tahsini (2012) also defined social support as feeling that one is cared for by, and has assistance available from other people, and that one is part of a supportive social network. Therefore, social support is a multidimensional construct that involves physical and emotional comfort given to one by family, friends, teachers, co-workers, and others who assist or the feeling that one is cared for by others and being part of a social network (Duci & Tahsini, 2012; Nichole, 2011; Onyishi, et al., 2012 as cited in Mabilia, et al., 2019; Orejudo et al., 2020). These support resources can be emotional, informational, or companionship. The authors explained further that social support can be seen as the perception that one has assistance available, the actual received assistance, or the degree to which a person is integrated into the social network.

Furthermore, according to the literature, social support is being studied in relationship with Psychological wellbeing and not in relationship with negative variables (Brown, 2016). So, social support in this study can be studied with gambling behaviours. Social support is the perceived function and quality of social relationships such as the availability of help or support received from other people. This means also that social support can be emotional (e.g., nurturance), tangible (e.g., financial help), informational (e.g., advice) or companionship (e.g., sense of belonging). Petry and Weiss, (2009), researched social support associated with gambling treatment outcomes in pathological gamblers using sixty-two thousand, nine hundred and fifty-six (62,956) 8th and 9th-grade students. The findings of the result revealed that low baseline social support was associated with increased severity of gambling, family and psychiatric problems and poorer post-treatment outcomes. Furthermore, social support assessed post-treatment was significantly related to the severity of gambling problems at twelve months of follow-up. These findings demonstrated that social support plays an important role in moderating outcomes, and enhancing social support may be an important aspect of effective gambling treatment.

Rasanen, et al., (2016) conducted a study using 102,545 adolescents on social support as a mediator between problem behaviour and gambling; a cross-sectional study among 14-16-year-old finish adolescents. Path analysis results revealed that social support was negatively associated with problem behaviour, and problem behaviour and social support were negatively related to gambling with the exception of social support from friends

among boys. Social support from parents and school mediated albeit weakly with gambling.

Bozzato, et al, (2020) conducted a study using five thousand, six hundred and four (5604) Italians on problematic gambling behaviour in adolescents; its prevalence, and its relation to social, self-regulatory, and academic self-efficacy. The findings revealed that gambling, several game types, some motivations to gamble, and at-risk/problem gambling were more concern among males than females.

Parrado-Gonzalez and Leon-Jarego (2020) conducted research using one thousand, one hundred and seventy four (1,174) adolescence on exposure to gambling advertising and adolescent gambling behaviour: moderating effects of perceived family support. The findings of the result revealed that the majority of the effect of exposure to gambling advertising were mediated by attitudes and descriptive norms. In this model, exposure to gambling advertising also had a direct effect on gambling frequency, which mediated its impact on problem gambling. Likewise, gambling frequency was associated with problem gambling. Again, in adolescents with high family support, exposure to gambling advertising did not promote favourable attitudes towards gambling and gambling frequency had less effect on problem gambling.

Another variable of interest in this study is peer relations. Peer relations can be defined as the relationship which exists among peers or people of the same age or intellectual level. Peers can influence each other either positively or negatively. Peer relations is the process of interaction or relationship of people that can be considered as peers in such a way that they can be influential to one another's behaviour. Peers have a great level of influence on one another because people always want to behave in certain ways which would earn them the required respect among their peers. Yu et al., (2009), refer to that desire to be accepted among peers as peer acceptance. Peer acceptance represents the social status or popularity within a large group; they further stated that experiencing positive peer relationships and friendships contributes to a positive self-image. People most of the time behave in certain ways to be accepted among their peers (Yu et al., 2009). There is a need to investigate the contribution of peer relations to gambling behaviours.

Savolainen, et al., (2019) conducted online survey with one thousand, two hundred and twelve (1'212) Americans and one thousand and two hundred (1,200) Finnish participants between 15 and 25 years of age. The result revealed that youth who identify strongly with offline peer groups were less likely to engage in problem gambling while strong identification with online peer groups had the opposite effect. The result revealed also that the association between social identification and problem gambling behaviour was moderated by perceived social support. Focussing on offline peer groups and increasing social support can hold significant potential in youth gambling prevention. Longhinrichsen-Rohling et al., (2004) conducted a study on individual family, peer correlated and adolescents gambling using one thousand, eight hundred and forty six (1,846) students from three states.. The findings suggest that demographic individual, family and peer variables are all important correlates of probable pathological gambling.

In another study, Bas and Soysal, (2015), conducted study using four hundred and forty-two (442), high students on peer relations and peer deviance. The study investigated the association between reactive and proactive aggression and peer relations and peer deviance among high school girls. The result of the finding revealed that self-disclosure, loyalty, mild deviance, and serious deviance were significantly and positively related to both reactive and proactive aggression. Findings revealed also that self-disclosure, loyalty, and mild deviance among peers were significant predictors of reactive aggression, while loyalty and mild deviance were significant predictors of proactive aggression. The purpose of this study is to investigate to what extent social support and peer relations will predict gambling behaviours. First, it is hypothesized that social support (family, friends and significant others) will significantly predict gambling behaviours among undergraduates. Second, it is hypothesised that peer relations will significantly predict gambling behaviours among undergraduates

Method

Participants

Accidental and simple random samplings of two hundred and twenty-three (223) undergraduates (males = 40.8%, females = 59.2%) from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, in South-eastern Nigeria participated in the study. The ages of the participants ranged from 17 to 31 years with a mean age of 21.94 years (SD = 3.02).

Instruments

Participants completed three instruments: The instruments include: Gambling Urge Scale (GUS), Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support and index of peer relations.

Gambling Urge Scale (GUS). Gambling behaviour was measured with GUS. It is a 6 item scale developed by Raylu and Oei, (2004), GUS asks participants to indicate how much they agree or disagree with the items using five likert format' ranging from 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree. Higher scores indicates higher urge to gamble. Sample items on the scale include, "all I want to do now is to gamble" "it will be difficult to turn down a gamble this minute". Raylu and Oei, (2004), reported .87 internal consistency Cronbach alpha for the scale. The present researcher conducted a pilot test and obtained a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .93.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) was developed by (Zemet et al., 1988). This twelve (12) items scale was used to measure perceived social support. MSPSS measures the three sources of social support; family support, friends support and significant others support. MSPSS was scored on a 6-point Likert format ranging from 1 "very strongly disagree" to 6 "very strongly agree". Items 3, 4, 8 and 11 measure family supports; items 6, 7, 9 and 12 measures friend support while items 1, 2, 5, and 10 measure significant other support. Sample items on the scale include, "my family really tries to help me", "I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows", "There is a special person who is around when am in need". Zemet et al. (1988) reported that family, friends and significant others support had strong and moderate construct validity. Zemet et al. (1988) also reported the internal and test retest reliability of MSPSS. Validity of the scale was also obtained by Onyishi et al., (2012) by reporting that factor loading of the items were relatively high. Reliability of the scale was also obtained by Onyishi et al., (2012) by reporting internal consistencies of the subscales (Cronbach alpha) were: Family, .78, friends, .76 and significant others, .70. Onyishi et al. (2012) reported a predictive validity of $p < .01$ by using MSPSS to predict life satisfaction of prison workers. The present researcher conducted a pilot test and obtained a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of family, .89, friends, .77, significant others .74. The index of peer relations (IPR) was developed by Hudson et al (1986) The scale was designed to measure the degree, severity, or magnitude of a

problem that a participants has in interpersonal relationships with peers. The scale consists of 25 items. IPR was scored on 5-point likert format ranging from 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree. Items 2 3 5 6 9 10 13 14 19 20 23 24 25 were directly scored while items 1 4 7 8 11 12 15 16 17 18 21 22 were reverse scored. Addition of direct scores and reverse scores minus 25 is the total IPR score. Hudson et al (1986) reported Cronbach's α reliability coefficient of .94 and the norms obtained by Anumba (1995) for Nigeria samples 29.31 for males and 26.83 for females. The norms obtained for America males and females by Hudson (1986) was .35 for 107 students. Anumba also obtained a validity coefficient of .62 for Nigerian samples which correlated IPR with Hare self-esteem (HSS) by Hare (1985).. The present researcher conducted a pilot test and obtained a Cronbach's α reliability coefficient of .78

Procedure

Ethical clearance and approval for the study were duly obtained from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (NAU) and a letter of introduction was given for identification of the researcher. The three sets of questionnaires (GUS, MSPSS and IPR) were

administered to the participants after explaining the purpose of the study to them and obtaining informed consent. Further, assurances were also given regarding the utmost confidentiality of participants' responses, and they were specifically instructed not to indicate their names. This was done to increase the level of compliance in filling in the questionnaire. Participants were encouraged to be honest in their responses to the questionnaire. The questionnaires were self-administered and took approximately 50 to 60 minutes to complete. . Only two hundred and twenty-three (223) well-filled questionnaires were used for the data analysis.

Design and Statistics

The researchers adopted correlational design because the objective of the study is to establish social support and peer relations as predictors of gambling behaviour. We applied hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis to predict undergraduates gambling behaviour from social support and peer relations. Hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis is a statistical tool that allows researchers to examine how multiple independent variables are related to a dependent variable (Higgins, 2005).

Result

Table 1: Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations of undergraduates gambling behaviour, social support (family, friends and significant others) and peer relations

S/N	Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	GB	25.75	2.56	1				
2	FAM	20.15	1.92	.059	1			
3	FRI	20.21	2.24	.238**	.828**	1		
4	SO	20.66	2.99	-.036	.846**	.586**	1	
5	PR	53.83	5.51	-.146*	-.112	-.095	.329**	1

* $P < .05$, ** $P < .01$, GB = gambling behaviour, FAM = Family social support, FRI = friends social support, SO = significant others social support and PR = Peer relations. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the study variables. As can be observed from Table 1, family social support is positively correlated with

gambling behaviour but not significant ($r = .059, P > .05$), Friends social support positively and significantly correlated with gambling behaviour ($r = .238, p \leq .01$), Significant others social support negatively correlated with gambling behaviour but not significant ($r = -.036, P > .05$), and peer relations negatively and significantly correlated with gambling behaviour ($r = -.146^*, P \leq .05$).

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression results of Social support (Family, Friends and significant others) predicting undergraduates gambling behaviour.

Variable	R2	Df1(df2)	F	SE	β	T	Sig
Model 1	.118	3(219)	9.750**	2.42			
FAM					-.355	-1.91	.057
FRI					.573**	4.680	.000
SO					.072	-.557	.573
Model2	.047	1(218)	10.760**	2.360	-.434		
FAM					-1.266**	-3.996	.000
FRI					.844**	5.940	.000
SO					.683**	2.741	.007
PR					-.434**	-3.505	.001

Dependent variable: Gambling behaviour, * $P < .05$, ** $P < .01$, GB = gambling behaviour, FAM = Family social support, FRI = friends social support, SO = significant others social support and PR = Peer relations.

Table 2 above shows the results of the hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis which predicted undergraduates' gambling behaviour from social support (family, friends and significant others) and peer relations. Model 1 shows that social support contribution to the understanding of gambling behaviour was significant, $R^2 = .118$, $F(3,219) = 9.75$, $p \leq .01$. Model 2 shows that when peer relations are added in model 2 the result shows a significant reduction of $R^2 = .05$, $F(1,218) = 10.76$, $p \leq .01$.

The results also indicated that friends social support and peer relations were a significant predictor of gambling behaviour ($\beta = .573$, $p = .01$, $\beta = .434$, $P = .01$) while family and significant others social support was not a significant predictor of gambling behaviour ($\beta = -.355$, $p = .057$, $\beta = .072$, $P = .573$).

Discussion

The present study examined social support (family, friends and significant others) and peer relationships as predictors of gambling behaviour. The correlation result revealed that Friends social support positively and significantly correlated with gambling behaviour. The other subscales of social support show that family social support is positively correlated with gambling behaviour but not significant while significant others social support negatively correlated with gambling behaviour but not significant. Table 2 model 1 result revealed that social support (friends) positively and significantly predicted gambling behaviour. The other subscales of social support (family) predicted gambling behaviour negatively but not significant while social support (significant others) predicted gambling behaviour positively but not significant. This shows that an increase in social support (friends) relates to an increase in gambling behaviour and a decrease in social support (friends) relates to a decrease in gambling behaviour.

Theoretically, this result is in agreement with the subjective norm component theory of planned behaviour by Ajzen (1985, 1991). Subjective norm refers to what is considered acceptable or tolerable behaviour in a group or society. It captured the total social pressure that the environment exerts on an individual to perform or not perform a given behaviour. This subjective norm encompasses two sub-components: injunctive norm and descriptive norm. Injunctive norm refers to perceptions concerning what should be done while descriptive norm describes perceptions of significant others such as family members, and friends performing. These subjective norms most especially descriptive norms mean that undergraduates are influenced by friends to engage or not to engage in gambling behaviours in society. Empirically, Rasanen et al., (2016) finding to some extent is related to this present finding.

The finding showed that friend social support was positively and significantly associated with problem behaviour while family and significant others' social support negatively related to problem behaviours. Moreover, Petry and Weiss, 2009 studies consistently found that social support is related to gambling treatment outcomes in pathological gamblers. Parrado-Gonzalez and Leon-Jarego (2020) finding is related to this finding. The finding revealed that for adolescents with high family support, exposure to gambling advertising

did not promote favourable attitudes towards gambling and gambling frequency had less effect on problem gambling.

The second finding of the study revealed that peer relationships negatively and significantly correlated with gambling behaviours. Table 2 results revealed also that peer relationships negatively and significantly predicted gambling behaviour among undergraduates. This shows that as peer relationships is increasing gambling behaviours will be decreasing and verse versa. Theoretically, this result is in agreement with perceived behavioural control (PBC) component of the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). PBC refers to the extent to which people believe that they are capable of performing a given behaviour, that they have control over its performance. Empirically, the present finding is in agreement with Savolainen (2019) result which revealed that youths who identified strongly with offline peer groups were less likely to engage in problem gambling while strong identification with online peer groups had the opposite effect. In another study, Bozzato, et al., (2020) related this finding. The finding revealed that gambling, several game types, some motivations to gamble, and at-risk/problem gambling were more concern among males than females

Implication of the study

The findings of the present study have some practical implications. First, friends' social support is a significant factor in gambling behaviour among undergraduates. A practical implication for this finding is that an increase in friends' social support brings about an increase in gambling behaviour and vice versa. Again, Peer relationship was found to be a significant factor in gambling behaviour of undergraduates. A practical implication for this finding is that a decrease in peer relations brings about an increase in gambling behaviour among undergraduates and vice versa. This link is not only in efforts in academic and social conditions but also individuals with friends social support and good peer relationships indicated that they are successful in other health-related behaviours such as forming good study habits and saying no to vices.

Limitation of study and suggestion for further Research

One of the limitations of the present study is that participants were selected from one public University in an urban area (Nnamdi Azikiwe

University, Awka). Also, this study utilized only self-report measures for gambling behaviour, social support and peer relationship, these may not correspond with behaviour. Moreover, the study is cross-sectional and correlational and therefore causality cannot be inferred. The population size is small and caution should be taken in the interpretation of the results. Therefore, further studies could select samples from other public and private universities and may consider other predictor factors such as neighbourhood disorder, family relationship and locus of control. Also, Nigeria has six geopolitical zones and samples could as well be selected from them so that the result can have more external validity.

Conclusion

The results have implications for policymakers who work with undergraduates' development, welfare and management. This implies that social support and peer relations are important factors related to gambling behaviour among undergraduates. Therefore, friends' social support and peer relations should be encouraged as factors that are likely to increase or lessen gambling behaviour among undergraduates. Finally, results showed the contributions of the study variables; the roles of social support and peer relations on gambling behaviour. These research findings are hoped to encourage researchers to explore other possible related variables that will contribute positively or negatively to understanding gambling behaviour. This is because understanding variables that are related to gambling behaviours will widen the understanding of gambling and give an edge to those who are interested in curbing gambling problems.

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