



Betting and education attainment: Case of basic school students in Sene East District, Ghana

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Abstract

The study investigated betting and educational attainment of basic school students in Sene East District, Ghana. The study used a naturalistic research approach. Ten participants were sampled using the snowball sampling technique. Interview guides (semi-structured) and report cards were used to gather data in this study. The data collected was analysed thematically. The study's findings were public basic school students in Sene East District engaged in betting to get money to cater for themselves and have fun, and betting negatively influenced the educational attainment of basic school students in Sene East District. It was recommended that guidance coordinators should organise programmes for teachers and parents that would entice them to check students' school attendance.

Keywords: Betting, education attainment, Ghana, pathological gambling, and sustainable development goals

Introduction

Betting or wagering, commonly known as gambling, involves staking something valuable on an event with the anticipation of gaining material goods or money (Potenza *et al.*, 2011) ^[27]. Throughout history and in certain cultures, gambling has been viewed as socially deviant or immoral. The third edition of the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual clinically recognized it as a health disorder in 1980 (Corn & Schaefer, 1999) ^[15]. Gambling can give rise to behavioral, emotional, relational, and financial issues, leading to a diagnosable condition referred to as problem and pathological gambling. In the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (4th ed., text revision; DSM-IV-TR; American Psychiatric Association, 2000) ^[1], problem and pathological gambling fall under the category of impulse control disorders. Pathological gambling is the most severe form of problem gambling. The introduction of updated diagnostic criteria in the fifth edition of the DSM (DSM-V) in May 2013 identified pathological gambling as a behavior that can progress to addiction. Recognizing similarities between problematic gambling and substance abuse, health practitioners and researchers have classified gambling as an addiction (O'Brien, 2010) ^[23]. The most severe consequences of gambling-related issues manifest in the form of serious penile problems.

Gambling has become a notable concern among college students, with the prevalence of problem gambling among this demographic being approximately three times higher than that among adults (Schafer & Korn, 2002) ^[28]. An estimated 2.6 million students are identified as problem gamblers, experiencing adverse consequences due to their gambling activities (Lostter *et al.*, 2012) ^[19]. Gambling is a commonplace activity among students, often taking the form of casino or online betting.

Ghana, situated in Africa, boasts lenient gambling regulations, featuring diverse options like land-based casinos, lotteries, and sports betting, established by the National Lotto Act of 2006. In response to illegal gambling establishments, the Ghana Gaming Commission intervened in 2007, enabling licensed major gambling companies to provide extensive gaming services, including sports and betting. These companies frequently serve as sponsors for renowned sports teams (Vaughan Williams, 2007) ^[29]. Oversight of Ghana's gambling laws is maintained through several conscientious bills, including the Casino Licensing Act of 1975. This regulatory framework has created a landscape where gambling thrives and contributes significantly to the country's entertainment and economic sectors.

Sene East District was created by a legislative instrument (LI 2091) on March 9, 2012 from the erstwhile Sene District

(now known as Sene West) and inaugurated on June 28, 2012 in Kajaji, the district capital. Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2021)^[13].

The district has three cellular telecommunications networks available to all communities. These cellular networks are MTN, Vodafone, and Tigo. However, Vodafone and MTN are the major service providers with significant network coverage in the area (GSS, 2021)^[13]. It is through these telecommunication networks that students use to patronise emergency betting. Providing adequate access and quality of education in the district has been a priority of the government and the District Assembly. Although the educational sector takes the most significant percentage of the assembly budget annually, conditions in most schools are still not encouraging. The district has a total of 130 schools, comprising 54 pre-schools, 54 primary schools, 22 junior high schools, and 2 senior high schools. School facilities in the Sene East District are inadequate (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021)^[13]. At least 42% of all elementary school classroom facilities must be rebuilt or rehabilitated. About 46 percent of the schools in the district are under trees and have to close when it rains. The question is, can going to school under stress compel students to be absent from school and engage in betting? Most students visit betting centres in the community during and after school hours. Parents, chiefs, and some opinion leaders have attempted to stop these children.

Study for the theoretical concept

Social exchange theory is founded on three fundamental propositions: success, incentives, and deprivation-satisfaction. The success proposition posits that individuals, when rewarded for their actions in social interactions, are inclined to repeat those actions. Incentive propositions suggest that the likelihood of an individual responding to a stimulus increases with the frequency of its association with positive outcomes in the past. The diminishing-satisfaction proposition contends that the more a person has been rewarded with a particular stimulus in the past, the less valuable additional units of that reward become. This principle extends to situations where punishment is avoided. Rational actors, driven by their psychological, social, economic, and cultural goals, tend to engage and persist in rewarding actions. Social exchange theory thus illuminates the dynamics of human behavior in social interactions, emphasizing the role of rewards, incentives, and the diminishing satisfaction of repeated experiences.

The concept of sustainable development goals

Globalization is widespread in the twenty-first century. This growth requires the creation of alternative future scenarios on a global basis. United Nations named it Rio+20 Result Sheet. "The Future We Want", forms the basis of future scenarios, the Universal Declaration of Planetary Rights: UN Agenda 2030/SDGs.

All 193 nation-states endorsed these planetary rights in September 2015, representing a global approach to tackling global instability in economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

SDGs are highly appreciated by people all over the world. However, the objectives have three important flaws: First, dividing sustainability into three aspects (economic, society

and environment) is an inadequate selection of dimensions. The causes and consequences of development are quite diverse. Poverty is linked to security challenges such as state-building and peacekeeping.

The UN Agenda 2030 lacks humanitarian, non-military approaches to security, such as crisis prevention, non-violent conflict resolution and peace-building. Furthermore, the term "sustainability" does not appear in the SDGs. As a result, there is an unresolved relationship between those dimensions and sustainable development.

Secondly, the SDGs have a desirable nature rather than a rights-based approach such as an enforceable global agreement. However, there is a need for a legal framework for inter-governmental discussions as a global and democratic governance structure will result in greater accountability, dependability and compliance. There is no consensus on making the SDGs legally binding. A review process marks the most significant concession with respect to legal duties under the auspices of the "High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development" (HLPF). In this situation there is a serious need to strengthen global legal institutions and establish good international cooperation. According to Harris Gleckman, Senior Fellow at the University of Massachusetts, "Any nation that believes it is under a major foreign military threat can ask the United Nations Security Council to take action and maintain peace and security."

Third, participation possibilities are irregularly distributed, and some actors are completely excluded from participating. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen participatory approaches, bring together policy makers and marginalized people, and organize forums to recognize the importance of indigenous populations in protecting their knowledge. Professor Chika Ezenya of the University of Rwanda believes that intellectual and mental freedom is more important than political freedom for African countries (Ezenya, 2014)^[10]. This points to the issue of indigenous knowledge by claiming that innovation and creativity can be based on local knowledge. Therefore, there is a need for a more concrete commitment to include marginalized groups, primarily indigenous populations, in the operationalization process of the SDGs.

Today, 70 years after the founding of the United Nations, sustainable development remains a highly contested paradigm in development politics. Over the next 15 years, the Sustainable Development Goals will need to be tested to see whether they represent a different future. Meanwhile, the World Bank declares it will effectively end world poverty by 2030 (World Bank, 2014, p. 1)^[30]. The OECD emphasizes the huge increase in income inequality globally (OECD, 2014: p. 21)^[24].

The betting concept

Gambling, also known as betting, refers to placing bets with monetary value in sports where chance at least partially determines the outcome.

Sports betting differs from other types of gambling in one essential way. Whereas in other gambling products the probabilities of winning are known with certainty, and the law of large numbers dictates profits for organizers because the odds are in their favor, in the sports betting market players can only estimate their subjective probabilities.

(Levitt, 2004) ^[17]. In other words, although various types of gambling involve risk but not uncertainty, sports betting involves both risk and uncertainty (Figlewski, as cited in Levitt, 2004) ^[17]. As a result, in sports betting, bookmakers can be profitable in the long run (and betting organizers can be unprofitable) if they can determine the probabilities of sporting events more accurately than other market participants.

Furthermore, the literature uses the terms football betting and soccer betting interchangeably. Football betting, as defined in this article, is the wagering of monetary and non-monetary resources on the outcome of football matches. Football is the most commonly used concept in Ghana, and we decided to use it because Better and others have used it in context. Football betting is prevalent in many civilizations (Moore and Ohtsuka, 2007; Frey, 2006) ^[20, 11]. Football has evolved as a social and economic activity with widespread appeal across all classes, genders, races, sexualities and other social categories, particularly in Africa and beyond, with huge growth potential (Cooky, 2009; Anderson, 2007; Crawford, 2003) ^[5, 2, 6]. While professional literature has demonstrated that football is entertaining, the importance of technology in the strong impact the sport has on people should never be overlooked. Satellite and television digitization have been fundamental driving forces that have made football available to people even in the most communication-poor areas of the world, thereby expanding the fan base (Cook, 2009; Anderson, 2007) ^[5, 2].

Reasons for participation in betting

Connisk (2003) ^[4] has also found that when the opposition to the perception that gambling provides utility from the joy of participation, standard economic theory leaves gambling without appropriate clarification. Their argument is centered on the reasons for undesirable economic behaviors like purchasing insurance and portfolio diversification due to risk aversion. In contrast, a strict aversion to risk entirely excludes gambling. It is challenging to comprehend why people simultaneously pay to reduce risk (insurance) and increase risk (gambling). Connisk argues that, just as economists largely neglect the analysis of nutrition-related effects in relation to health, they should not only idealize food priorities in terms of financial impacts but also understand gambling's marginal utility by integrating it with an appropriate utility model. He juxtaposes the utility of extreme gambling with a detrimental utility model, capable of elucidating patterns of risk-taking in small-stakes gambling and high-stakes lotteries, which are intriguing from the perspective of conventional economic theory. The risk-averse individual. Thus, when gambling is seen as a form of entertainment or consumption, its negative expected value can be viewed as the cost of the pleasure derived from it.

The individual motivations underlying betting behavior have also been characterized in other social sciences. According to Bruce and Johnson (2002) ^[3], there are two types of speculators: smart and inexperienced. They say that sophisticated speculators place bets to increase their wealth because betting is an intellectual challenge. This approach views betting as a professional activity following strict guidelines and systematic rules to maximize financial gain. As a result, these bettors enjoy the social aspects

surrounding the successes and losses of their bets without an emphasis on monetary gain.

Combining the two ideas above to uncover why people participate in sports betting, we can conclude that it is important to place the value of gambling within the framework of expected utility theory, but the amount of this utility varies significantly between individuals. May vary. Some people place bets only to increase their fortune. Betting has its usefulness for others. This study examines sports betting as a wealth maximization strategy from the perspective of a savvy bettor. However, the study does not rule out the existence of inexperienced bettors. Unsophisticated gamblers account for a large portion of the "unsophisticated" betting volume. This skews the odds, which, in turn, can be exploited by the "efficient money" of sophisticated speculators (Paul and Weinbach, 2005b; Kotlyar and Smirnova, 2012) ^[26, 16].

The concept of educational attainment of students in Ghana

The youth are the backbone of every nation. Therefore, a well-educated youth today ensures a better future tomorrow. A country suffers tremendously if its youth are not adequately educated. There is no doubt that today, young people have unlimited and unprecedented access to a better life due to significant technological developments (Owusu-Ansah, 2003) ^[25]. It is an undeniable fact that formal education has made today's youth brighter than ever before; it has broadened their minds' scope, improved their critical thinking, and made the youth more creative, innovative, and capable of using their ideas to bring about significant economic growth in a nation. Ghanaians have also embraced education, and until today, every Ghanaian strives to give their children the best education they can afford. However, it seems Ghana does not realise the full benefits of education as it is being hampered by youth unemployment (Owusu-Ansah, 2003) ^[25].

For that reason, in January, 2002, a committee was set up by the then-president of the Republic of Ghana, President John Kofi Agyekum Kuffour, to review the entire education structure of the nation with the view to arriving at findings that would make the system reactive to the problems of the Twenty-First Century. The theme of the reform was "Meeting the Challenges of Education in the Twenty-First Century." A detailed committee report explained the difficulties affecting the country's access to excellent and relevant education (Ghana Education Service (GES), 2004) ^[12].

The effects of betting on betters and society

Football betting, considered a form of economic exchange, serves positive capitalist objectives, contributing to employment and wealth creation for the upper class. However, it carries adverse consequences for both punters and society. Instances of suicide, marriage breakdowns, and the erosion of essential social capital are notable outcomes. Psychologically, football betting results generate worry and anxiety among fans, regardless of the outcome. Efforts have been made to categorize the impacts of gambling based on socio-demographic factors, revealing that people's characteristics play a significant role in shaping their reactions to issues like football betting. Research on youth and gambling is particularly conclusive, indicating that a

significant percentage of young people engage in gambling activities, with a notable portion exhibiting problematic behaviors such as sports betting. For instance, studies have found that between 60 to 80 percent of young people aged 13 to 17 gamble at least once a year, and 3-5 percent display problematic gambling behaviors (Derevensky & Gupta, 2000; Derevensky *et al.*, 2003) ^[9, 8]. Truancy, aggressive risk-taking behaviours, high rates of irritation, reduced educational performance, illicit drug use, lying, frequent borrowing, poor psychological adjustment, alcohol consumption, and more criminally severe behaviours, such as stealing, are all negative consequences of gambling, particularly among youth (Delfabbro *et al.*, 2009; Kessler, 2008) ^[7, 14].

Research objectives

1. Identify why public basic school students in Sene East District patronise betting.
2. Determine the influence of betting on the educational attainment of basic school students in Sene East District.

Methodology

The design used in this study is a descriptive survey, and qualitative methods were utilised to solve the objectives. Naturalistic studies are qualitative since they are conducted in real-world situations with open-ended inquiries in comfortable and known areas to the participants (Patton, 2002). The target population was 7,689 students from 76 basic schools (54 primary and 22 junior high schools) in Sene East District (Ghana Education Directorate Report, Sene East District, 2021) ^[13]. The accessible population was 667 students (Ghana Education Directorate Report, Sene East District, 2021) ^[13].

Sampling techniques were essential for credibility, richness, and data quality. From the accessible population of 667 students, 20 were selected using the snowball sampling technique (Lichtman, 2010) ^[18]. Thus, after selecting and interviewing the first participant, the snowball sampling technique was used to ask for help from the first participant to aid in the identification of other individuals who have a similar experience. The researcher then observed the nominated participants and continued in the same way until ten (10) students who were into emergence betting were obtained.

This study used an interview guide (semi-structured) to collect data. The interview guide was selected because it allowed the researcher to enter into the other person's perspective and better understand their perspective (Lichtman, 2010) ^[18]. Furthermore, the interview guide allowed a wide range of participants' understandings to be explored and essential aspects of the phenomena under study to be highlighted. Again, this allowed the interviewer to focus on the research objectives, yet opened new avenues for further questions (Nastasi and Schensul, 2005) ^[22].

The interview guide was developed with research objectives. The researcher developed this guide. The instrument focused on participants' demographic information (for example, gender, age, class, and so on) and the research questions. Furthermore, report cards were used to gather data in this study.

The dependent variable was the third-term results of the

2020/2021 The academic year of students in each school's core subjects (Mathematics, English Language and Integrated Science). The data included students' classroom exercises, tests, homework, and terminal examinations. Average performance of students in core subjects was calculated and measured as 1 = low performance (0–49), 2 = moderate performance (50–74), and 3 = high (75–100). The researcher determined this by placing the class scores into three different groups. Data on the academic performance of students is a dependent variable compared to other independent variables such as students, teachers, and household factors. It was also used as a criterion variable to establish which predictor variable predicted it.

Hence, the instruments used for the study were the interview guide and resulted in the 2020–2021 academic year in mathematics, English language, and integrated science.

The validity of this research was established through member checks. These participant checks were provided throughout this study. During the transcription of the interviews, six participants were contacted to communicate the researchers' understanding of what they said. By sharing with participants what they said and the researcher's understanding of what was said, the researcher intended to offer them an opportunity to verify and add further commentary related to the phenomenon, if any. Six participants who were contacted confirmed the transcription of the interview data in the affirmative.

The data was analysed thematically. In analysing the interview data, the researcher coded the data according to patterns. The researcher then identified all the data related to the classified patterns. By piecing together the themes that emerged from the participants' stories, Later, the researcher looked for corroborations and contradictions and documented them accordingly.

Data presentation and Discussion

Demographic Information of Participants

Table 1 displays the findings of the demographic information of students.

Table 1: Distribution of Demographic Information on Students

		Frequencies
Gender	Male	7
	Female	3
Age	6-10 years	2
	11-15 years	5
	16 and above	3
Class	BS 4	0
	BS 5	1
	BS 6	1
	JHS 1	1
	JHS 2	3
	JHS 3	4
Times visiting the Centre	1-3	2
	4-6	5
	7-9	3
	10 and above	0
Hours Spent at the Centre	1-2	2
	3-4	3
	5-6	4
	7 and above	1

Source: Field Data, (2023)

(Total Number of Students=10)

Student demographic information distribution

From Table 1, most students (7) were males, compared to females (3). The results show that the study used more male than female students. However, the results show that male and female students were given equal opportunities in the study. The results further show that the majority of the students (5) were between the ages of 11–15 years, followed by 16 years and above (3) and 6–10 years (2). The results show that most of them were in the early adolescent stage. The data presented shows that since these students have started engaging in betting at this early stage if no proper measures are put in place, it could adversely influence their educational attainments.

The results also show that the majority (4) of the students were in JHS 3, followed by JHS 2, (3), JHS 1, (1), basic 6 (1), and basic 5 (1). The findings indicate that final-year students who were supposed to be in class regularly visited betting shops. Likewise, JHS 2 students who were also supposed to be at school while preparing for their final examination were also visiting the betting centres.

Moreover, the results show that most students visited the centre 4–6 (5) times, 7–9 times (3), and 1–3 times (2). The results show that these students were likely to have missed classes. The data presented could also infer that the parents of these children were likely not to have taken their parents' responsibilities seriously. The data presented could also connote that teachers and head teachers, in a way, are also not likely to have carried out their duties as expected.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that most of the students spent between 5–6 hours at the centre, followed by 3–4 hours (3), 1–2 hours (2), and 1–2 hours (2). The data presented shows that these students were likely to have missed classes. The data presented could also suggest that the parents of these children did not take their parental responsibilities seriously. The data presented could also connote that teachers and head teachers, in a way, are not likely to have carried out their duties as expected. The data presented could indicate that these students were truants. The data presented could infer that the more hours they spent at the centre, the more likely they missed classes.

Research Question One: Why do public basic school students in Sene East District patronise betting?

This question sought to identify why public basic school students in Sene East District patronise betting. The students' identities were hidden by representing them with codes for confidentiality's sake. For example, SD = student 1 to SD = student 10.

Students have varied reasons for patronising betting

Students were allowed to express their views on what motivated them to bet. It was deduced from their comments that students had various reasons for doing that. For example,

I am the one taking care of myself. So, sometimes, I use the money I get from the betting to take care of myself and buy books for school [SD: 6].

Another student said,

My parents do not have the money to take care of me. Therefore, I have to do so by taking part in betting. This has helped me to get to this level in my education [SD: 1].

Similarly, a student said

My parents are farmers, so sometimes getting us food to eat becomes a problem. For that matter, all the children have to find ways and means to cater for themselves. This was the reason why I started betting [SD: 9].

Likewise, one student said

I have lost my parents. So, I have to find ways and means to live my life. And one of the strategies I have been using is betting. I have to use the little money I get from friends for betting. I can get more money to look after myself and my schooling [SD: 5].

Additionally, one student said

My parents don't have enough money, and we are many in terms of children. Therefore, we must struggle to support them to care for us. For that matter, I frequently gamble to earn money to support myself and my younger siblings [SD: 7].

Moreover, it was said emphatically that

Some of the friends have different reasons why they engage in betting. I enjoy betting, and this is making me go. Anytime I feel sad, I have to go for betting [SD: 2].

In furtherance, the student said

I have been betting for some years now, say three to four years. For that reason, I like betting a lot. It has been my habit of late. I always wish I got money for betting [SD: 3].

Another student said

I have been enjoying the games, especially when I bet on them. Because of that, I sometimes miss classes and come to the betting centre to watch and bet on games [SD: 10].

These comments by students imply that they visited the betting centres with different motives. The comments could also suggest that perhaps parents were not taking up their parental roles effectively; hence, the students were engaged in betting. The comments further connote that students engage in betting to get money to cater for themselves and sometimes their younger siblings. The explanations given by students could also infer that some enjoy betting; hence, they engage themselves in it.

Finding

As a result of these comments, it was concluded that public basic school students in Sene East District engaged in betting to get money to cater for themselves and have fun.

Research Question Two: How does betting influence the educational attainment of basic school students in Sene East District?

This question sought how betting influences the educational attainment of basic school students in Sene East District.

Betting negatively influences students' educational attainment:

It was evident from the comments given to the students that betting adversely influenced their educational attainment. For example, one student said, Sometimes I miss classes for the whole week. In this sense, I cannot catch up with whatever they learn. Therefore, I cannot perform well during examinations [SD: 4].

Another student said

My grade was nearly repeated because of my poor academic performance the last term. This came about because I was not going to school regularly. Instead, I spent most of my time at the betting centres [SD: 10].

Furthermore, a student said

I am not happy when I go to school. Meanwhile, when I get to the betting centre, I feel happy. However, this is affecting my performance in school. I want to stop going to the betting centre but cannot [SD: 6].

Likewise, one student said

My parents are not happy anytime I go to the betting centre. They've worn me down several times, but I can't stop going there. This has affected my academic performance of late [SD: 3].

More so, one student said

I was very clever when I started this school. But, as soon as I started visiting the betting centres, I began to experience poor academic performance [SD: 1].

Again, one student said

My betting engagement has negatively affected my academic performance [SD: 7].

However, one student was of a different view

As for me, I don't see betting negatively influencing my educational attainment. This is because I know the time I use for studying and the time I have to go to the betting centre. This has helped me maintain my academic performance level [SD: 1]. From these comments, it could be realised that students perceive that their patronage of betting negatively affects their academic performance. The results also indicate that students spent part of their learning time at the betting centres. This could infer that they missed classes and, for that reason, could not participate in the lessons taught. The results indicate that visiting betting centres negatively affected their academic performance.

Finding

From these findings, it was concluded that betting negatively influenced the educational attainment of basic school students in Sene East District.

Educational Implications

Lack of money and the desire to have fun made students engage in betting.

Betting negatively impacts student's educational attainment, which affects their academic performance.

Suggestions to stop students from engaging in betting

From the findings and conclusions results, the following recommendations are made;

1. Guidance coordinators at the basic schools should run guidance programmes for students to utilise their time by not spending it at the betting centres. This could enable students to excel in their academic performance. These programmes could also help them know the reason why they are in school and help them achieve that vision.

2. Guidance coordinators should organise programmers for teachers and parents to sanitise them in checking student's attendance. This could enlighten parents on what they are expected to do to keep their children away from betting. Also, teachers would be equipped with best teaching practices to help children find the school environment more enjoyable. This could help them stay at school and prevent them from betting.

Conclusion

The study aimed to investigate the betting and educational attainment of basic school students in Sene East District, Ghana. It is believed that the findings of this study will help stakeholders in education find mechanisms to curb the effects of betting and educational attainment on students. Based on these results, the following conclusions were drawn;

1. The data presented shows that public basic school students in Sene East District were involved in betting to get money to cater for them and have fun. The data presented could indicate that lack of money and the desire to have fun were the major reasons for students' engagement in betting.
2. Public basic school students' engagement in betting negatively impacted their educational attainment. The data also shows that students' academic performance was negatively affected when they engaged in betting.

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