

AN APPRAISAL OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND GAMBLING IN ABA METROPOLIS, ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

Azogu Adigwe Felix
Rhema University Aba
Abia State, Nigeria

Abstract

Unemployment is huge socio-economic challenge in the country. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) puts youth unemployment in Nigeria at 55.4%. In the midst of the growing unemployment, the young ones are devising means of surviving. The social, economic, physical and psychological impact cannot be overemphasized. With the advent of satellite television, broadband Internet penetration in the country coupled with the smart mobile telephone, a new door has been opened for the youths to engage themselves in recreational and moneymaking ventures. Gambling (sport betting) is fast becoming a very popular past-time endeavor for them. Studies have shown the prevalence of youth participation in sport betting. This study examined the nexus between youth unemployment and sport betting. Survey method was adopted, using questionnaires and interviews to collect data. From the findings, many of the young people who participate in sport betting are unemployed. They see sport betting as a means of earning income. Unemployment is contributing in driving many youths into participating in sport betting. A significant percent of the respondents place bets on sports (88.7%).

Keywords: Unemployment, Gambling, Sport Betting, Youth

1. Introduction

Unemployment is one major developmental challenge confronting most developing countries in recent times. Nigeria has a very high unemployment rate especially among the youth. According to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (UN DESA. 2019) the unemployed youth figure in Nigeria jumped from 15 per cent in 2015 to 35 percent in 2018. Again, Nigeria has a very young population with over 50% of the population falling within the youth bracket. High youth unemployment issue in the country has received and still receiving various attentions over the years but, with little success. Various Governments, Non-Governmental organisations, individuals and Cooperate Bodies have made efforts in addressing this problem through different means such as skills acquisition,

entrepreneurship, vocational trainings and other empowerment schemes. Despite these efforts, the numbers of unemployed youths have continued to rise. The extensive nature of this problem can be seen in the various categories of the unemployed youths. Among them are university graduates, holders of National Diploma certificates, skilled and semi-skilled, literate and illiterate. They make up the large pool of the unemployed youth in the country. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2018), put the figure of the unemployed youth in the third quarter of 2018 at 55.4%. This is a huge number given that it represents a significant number of the total population of close to 200 million people.

The hopelessness of this condition seems to be driving the young ones into engaging in all manner of activities in order to survive or make ends meet. Gambling has become one popular past-time activity that is taking much attention of these youths with prospect of serving as an income-yielding venture. The form of gambling here refers to the sport betting outlets. The legitimization of sport betting in the country has suddenly opened a thriving money-spinning business for betting companies in the country. The social habit of betting among the young people who are mostly unemployed and underemployed is growing across the country.

This paper examined the nexus between unemployment and the prevalence of youth involvement in gambling, albeit sport betting in Aba.

2. Statement of the problem

Youth unemployment is no doubt a serious challenge in the country, the high rate of unemployment has kept on rising over the years. This situation has a lot of implications on the economic and social life of the youth in the country. About 52.65% of the entire youth population of the country is unemployed. And this translates to 22.65 million persons aged 13-35 years being unemployed. Nigeria has the third highest rate of joblessness in the world after South Africa and Greece (PriceWaterCoopers PwC.2019).

The country also has a very high rate of poverty. The country harbours the highest number of persons living below the poverty line in the world according to World Poverty Clock. Brookings Institute, 2018). This may be partly attributed to the security challenges in the country such as Boko Haram insurgency, kidnappings, internet fraud and other criminal activities.

Many young persons are taking up the challenge to cope, survive or escape the crushing poverty surrounding them. These are manifest in many ways and determined efforts by them such as migrating to other countries for better chances, engaging in crime and criminal activities such as kidnapping, fraud, rituals and Internet scam.

However given the popularity of European football across the continent and its massive followership in the country, many betting companies are tapping into this huge fan base to draw the people into sport betting/gambling. This is now a growing incidence across the country. Many see it as a “cool” way of earning a steady income. The popularity of sport betting in the country can be attested to by the growing number of persons that participate in it and the also growing number of sport betting companies registering to provide a platform for bettors. Gambling represented by sport betting is taking root in the social life of many young persons in the country. The youth gambling culture can be linked to different factors but idleness occasioned by unemployment and underemployment can be a major driving force. The technological advancements in mobile telephony and broadband internet penetration across the country coupled with the satellite television platform which enables live broadcast of matches across Europe contributed to the rapid growing number of participants.

Gambling has some severe negative effects for instance addiction. Gambling addiction has severe negative consequences economically, socially and psychologically. Studies have shown that majority of customers of these sports betting outfits are young people and gambling is also an adolescent behavior. Giving the prevailing socio-economic situation in the country, gambling seems to be providing false hope and temporary succor for the youths. Can unemployment among the youth be contributing to their indulging in sport betting? How pervasive is the incidences of gambling among the youths in Aba? These are the basic questions that this work sought to provide answers to.

3. Objective of the study

This study examines the nexus between unemployment and youth involvement in gambling behavior.

2.1 Research questions

- i. Does unemployment among the youth contribute to their participation in gambling.
- ii. Is gambling as represented by sport betting pervasive among the youth in Aba.

4. Literature review

Unemployment is global trend with economic, social, political and psychological dimensions. The developing economies are usually burdened with high prevalence of the phenomenon. According to Africa development Bank Group report (2016) one-third of Africa's 420 million youth aged 15-35 is unemployed and discouraged, while another third is vulnerably employed. The unemployment situation has been blamed on slow economic growth due to low investment leading to low job creation and low economic activities, lack of strategic planning and increase population. More so, poor educational standard and curriculum contribute. In Nigeria more than half of the population is unemployed. Youth unemployment in the country is quite high. The National Bureau of Statistics puts the unemployment figure among the youth at 23.1% as at the last quarter of 2018. NBS report also states that 3.4 million uneducated persons are unemployed, while the rural areas harbour 6.8 million unemployed resident compared to 4.7 million of urban residents.

The table below shows the breakdown of unemployment figure among the youth by sex and residence from 2008-2012.

Year	Percentage of Unemployed youth that are female	Percentage of unemployed youth that are in rural areas
2008	58.50	54.68
2009	57.82	50.77
2010	54.52	47.59
2011	50.85	59.95
2012	55.42	53.25

Source: NISER, 2013

Unemployment has some negative effects in any society. The attendant consequences of youth unemployment affect the overall economic development of the country, the

peace and security and its social and political progress. The Manpower Group (2081) argued that youth unemployment if not properly addressed can result to lost of a generation of young people in developing and developed countries.

Researches have established a link between unemployment and high rate of crime. Nigeria is faced with myriad of social unrest and serious security challenges that are largely carried out by young persons. Across the country there are cases of insurgency, armed banditry attacks, cattle rustlings, herders attacks on farming communities and kidnapping in the northern and middle belt areas of the country, internet fraud, ritual killings, armed robbery, kidnappings and cult related violent clashes in the southern part. The problems of human trafficking and drug peddling are dangerous venture that people are exposed to when constrained by harsh economic conditions. The risky migration route to Europe by some exposes them to modern day slave traders, international prostitution rings and untimely and unwarranted deaths in the desert and the high sea. The joblessness of vast percentage of these young persons can be blamed for the rate of crime and criminality in the country. Idleness in the midst of crushing poverty can lead to unthinkable. They idle youths are easy recruits for nefarious and criminal activities. According to Elijah and Nsikak, (2013) there is a positive correlation between youth unemployment and crime. Adegoke (2015) also found out that there is a relationship between youth unemployment and security challenges. Many studies have established the fact that there is a positive correlation between unemployment and crime (Adejumo and Tayo-Olajubulu 2009, Akande and Okuwa 2009, Kirby 2011, Lamido 2013). Unemployment, loss of job which can lead to poverty deprive people of their purchasing power and the means to pay their bills. Situations like this can make some individuals vulnerable to crime and violent behavior.

The spike in unemployment rate among the youth in the country coincided with the rise in security challenges such as militancy, kidnapping, internet fraud, ritual killing, cult related violence, armed banditry and many other crimes. The rise in aggressive behavior or disposition being experienced in the country can be traced to frustration engendered by failed hopes and dreams.

5. Youth and Gambling

Gambling has been identified as a common behavior among adolescents. Some people who participate in gambling during their adolescence years do so for various reasons; some took it as a form of leisure to relax, to socialize, to experience some excitement and also to win money. For them gambling losses are simply the price of entertainment in much the same way as cinema or football tickets are cost of a good time.

The term ‘gambling’ is a broad concept that includes a range of different activities, including: betting on out come of sporting activities such as horse racing, football matches, or gambling machines, gambling in bingo halls, amusement arcades and casinos as well as playing the lottery and on the internet.

Gambling is the practice of staking/betting of money or something of value (often referred as ‘the stake’) on an event with an uncertain outcome with the hope of winning more than what one stakes. It is a global phenomenon and can be a life experience for many young people. Sport betting is one type of gambling that is becoming very popular among the Nigeria youths. The granting of licenses to sport betting companies across the country to carry out their business has legitimized the practice. The country has a large fan base for `European football clubs who passionately follows the clubs activities week in week out. This has made it very easy for the betting companies to attract customers who not only enjoy the game but also have a promise of earning from their passion. Globalization and technology have made all sorts of gambling opportunities available to young people world over. (Volberg et al. 2010; Griffiths and Parke 2010; Gupta and Derevensky 2000). Anyone with a smart phone can visit gambling sites and place a bet. Africa and Nigeria are not left out. Sport betting is fast becoming a culture among Nigerian youths. According to a survey carried out on gambling/sport betting in Nigeria, a significant proportion of them (77%), attested to the high prevalence of betting and gambling in their localities; south-west (92%) and south-south (91%). Sport betting is seen as a means of earning money by many today among the youths. (Ngozi Okonjo Iweala Polls, 2019).

The existence of different betting shops and betting companies in towns and communities in the country makes it easy for the people to participate. Their activities are also aggressively promoted through different media platforms including online.

In the last few decades, Nigeria has witnessed an unprecedented growth in mobile phone subscriber base and broadband internet penetration coupled with satellite television providers who make it possible for viewers to watch matches across Europe. The country has a very youthful population who are football enthusiasts. The licensed sport betting companies leveraged on the huge youthful football enthusiastic fans to lure them into participating in sport betting. This sector is slowly emerging as a lucrative segment of the economy. Betts are waged across the different football leagues in Europe and beyond. The most popular are the English Premier league, the Spanish La liga, the Italian Seria A, the German Ligue and many others.

The various clubs in Europe have thousands of fans in Nigeria who religiously follow their games and progress. Some are fanatical in their support for these foreign club sides. The popularity of sport betting in the country can be attested to by the survey recently carried in the country by KPMG in 2016. According to this survey, 60 million Nigerians between the ages 18-40 are involved in active sport betting, while 4 out of every 10 Nigerians are involved in gambling. Akinlosotu, Imandojemu and Aina. 2019 attributed youth participation in gambling to factors such as ego, recreation and relaxation, resource accumulation, therapeutic purposes, adherence to group norms or addiction. In a report by the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in the Vanguard of August, 2014; about 60 million Nigerians between the ages of 18 and 40 spend up to 1.8 billion naira on sport betting daily with an average investment of 3,000 naira per day. The readily available betting shops across the nooks and crannies of the country, may be leading to problem gambling habit among the youths. Recent studies in the field show that problem and pathological gambling are becoming common among the youths (see: Hardoon, K. 2003; Calado, F. et el. 2017; Derevensky and Guppta 2000; Jacobs, 2000). Problem gambling among the youths can lead to adverse outcomes such as strained relationship, delinquency and criminal behavior, depression and even suicide (Derevensky and Gupta, 2004 quoted in Carmen, M. et el. 2005).

Carmen et al (2005) argue that “gambling, or gaming (the widely accepted industry terminology), is no longer a vice accompanied by negative connotations and stigmatization but rather a legitimate form of entertainment.” Lottery and sport betting companies deliberately engage in corporate social responsibility acts with proceeds of lottery sales such as funding of public education and health or other social welfare initiatives.

6. Gambling and Job creation

The gambling industry no doubt has given employment to thousands if not millions of young people across the country. With over 20 Betting Companies in the country running nationwide operations such as betting shops or outlets with agents who employ clerks, jobs are created directly or indirectly. These companies set up shops in central working offices while seeking to establish a wide network of affiliate agents who open bricks and mortar shops where customers come and place bets. Some individuals who are licensed agents for the Betting companies earn commissions on bets placed in their shops. Though the offline components thrive, these Sport Betting companies also operate online business model exploiting the country’s internet penetration. According to the Nigeria Communication Commission (2019) Internet users in the country have reached 97 million with half of the country online, the Betting companies recognize the need to establish viable online operations.

According to Business Monitor International (2018), there will be 182 million subscribers in 2021 from the current 153 million mobile phone subscribers in the country. The increased number of Internet subscribers will also increase the number of online bettors.

7. Theoretical framework

The analytical framework used in this work is the Social Generational theory. The concept of social generation was introduced by Karl Mannheim (1928/1952). According to him, social generation refers to “a particular cohort of individuals united in a self-conscious age stratum by specific collective response to a traumatic historical event or catastrophe, and constituting a concrete group with the necessary political awareness to become drivers of social change.” (Edmunds and Turner 2002 quoted in

Colombo and Rebughini 2019). This concept has been undergoing refinement as an analytical tool in sociological research on the youth. (see: De Martino, 1975; De Certeau, 1984; Lizardo and Strand, 2010; Edmunds and Turner, 2002; Colombo and Rebughini 2019). Colombo and Rebughini (2019) defined Social generation as “the subjective experience of the inadequacy of what is at hand to manage the complexity and novelty of mundane situations, with the impossibility of following consolidated and shared routines.”

Social generation provides one with useful analytical tool in explaining some shared experience of living in post-industrial or post-modern society. People are faced with the challenge of constructing new meanings and practices to adapt to historical situations. Though the theory is undergoing refinement, it provides necessary options in explaining the fluidity and constantly changing post-modern world. The fast changing nature of our world today makes it difficult to rely on shared experiences as reliable enough to deal with problems of today or the basis for ordering our tomorrow. In situation like this, analyzing how meaningful actions are constituted and deconstructed within historical-social framework; it is important to pay attention to the different situated and contextualized positions, relationships between capability/possibility and structural dimensions/system of categorization (Colombo and Rebughini 2019). Over the years various governments have failed in addressing the lingering problem of unemployment, a vast number of young people are facing dire challenge of daily survival, sport betting seems to offering a glimmer albeit in a short run hence the growing youth interest in that sort of gambling.

In the face of the worsening economic condition in the country, the opportunity offered by globalization, the youths are evolving strategies and means of coping with the situation. Gambling (sport betting) is offering a means for the youths to gain some finance in meeting their needs. The technological tools: smart phone, internet connectivity and satellite television provide the basis for placing bets on current games around the globe.

8. Methodology

The panel survey method was adopted in conducting this research. Aba metropolis was the chosen and a total sample of 150 was selected through a multi-stage sampling

technique. Questionnaires were distributed and interviews were carried out involving Sport betting shop agents and some young persons. The data collected were presented and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

9. Findings

This study was carried out to examine the relationship between youth unemployment and their increasing participation in gambling in Aba.

Table 1. Showing the demographic profile of respondents.

Demographic characteristics	frequency	percentage
Gender: Male	137	90%
Female	14	9.3%
Age: 14-17	10	6.6%
18-24	28	18.5%
25-29	39	25.8%
30-34	30	20%
35-39	24	16%
40-44	12	8%
45 and above	8	5.3%
Occupational status:		
Unemployed	78	51.7%
Students	18	11.9%
Trader/Artisan	51	33.8%
Others	4	2.6%

The above table shows that majority of the respondents are unemployed youths participate in gambling, 51.7 percent of the total respondents.

The majority of the respondents are below the age of 35; 71 percent of the entire respondents are within this age bracket.

The data also revealed that a significant number of them consider gambling as income source (66.8%). The frequency of their participation ranges from daily to weekly and occasional bettors.

10. Discussion

The findings reveal a prevalence of gambling (sport betting) among the youths in Aba (88.7%) and majority of who are unemployed. Majority also considers it an income

source. And this perception has serious consequence; it can lead to addiction. The findings also corresponds with similar works there were carried in in Oyo, Edo Ekiti and other parts of the country (Akinsolotu et el. 2019; Bankole, 2019; and Omanchi S and Okpamen K, 2018).

Though no significant positive impacts were seen but some respondents believe that their wellbeing can be changed in a second through big wins. It was also observed that there is a strong peer influence. Many of the respondents were introduce into sport betting by friends.

11. Recommendations

There is an urgent need for the Government at all level to take steps towards proper regulation of the Sport betting in the country. It is becoming a danger to the teeming youths across in cities and villages and a lured into it. If urgent steps are not taken to control it, the country may in no distant future be grappling with gambling problems among the young people.

Comprehensive and sustained efforts towards tackling the huge unemployment problem in the country should be carried on by the governments.

12. Conclusion

The work revealed a growing problem of youth participation in gambling activities occasioned by lack of employment. The young people are investing their little resources in sport betting with the hope of escaping poverty through sheer luck. The government should quickly address this festering behaviour that has dare consequences. Huge amount of time and energy are expended by their young people in following the games across the globe even and the tensely anticipate positive outcome from the stakes week in week out. Frustration, depression and aggressive behavior can result from this. The time and energy of these young people can be channeled to productive uses rather than allow them wallow in perpetual illusion of changing their fortune through gambling.

References

- Abati, R. (2009). Nigeria's Unemployment Crisis. <http://www.nigeriavillagesquare.com>
- Abbott, D.A, & Cramer, S.L (1993). Gambling Attitudes and Participation: A Midwestern Survey. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 9, 247-263.
- Abdi, T.A, Ruiter, R.A, and Adal, T.a. (2015). Personal, Social and Environment Risk factors of Problematic Gambling among High School Adolescents in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 31(1),5972.
- Adebayo, A. (1999). Youth Unemployment and National Directorate of Employment Self Employment Programmes. *Nigerian Journal of Economics and Social Studies*, 41(1),81102.
- Adewoye Wasiu Olalekan (2010) Youth Unemployment in Nigeria. <http://www.lagosstate.gov.ng/index.php?page=ministrylist&mtitle=Local+Government+Area>
- Africa Development Bank Group (2016).Jobs for Youth in Africa: Catalyzing Youth Opportunity Across Africa. www.afdb.org/s.pitamber@afdb.org
- Agbala, E.S. (2016). Mapping the Nigeria Gaming Industry: Legal and Socio-cultural Factors. *American Gaming Lawyer*.Autumn 2016. <http://www.imgl.org/sites/...>
- Akanle, O. and Fageyimbo, K.T. (2016). "European Football Clubs and Betting among the Youths in Nigeria". *Journal of Soccer and Society*, pp.1-20. Doi: 10.1080/14660970.2016.1267625 (Accessed 15/01/2020)
- Akinlosotu N.T, et el (2019). Sport Betting and Nigerian Youths: A Study of Sports Betting in Edo State. *International Journal of Business Marketing and Management (IJBMM)*. vol.4. 9. (Accessed 15/01/2020. www.ijbmm.com)
- Bankole E.T. (2019). Pattern and Prevalence of Gambling Behaviour among Youths in South-West Nigeria: A Case Study of Youths in Oyo and Ekiti State. *British Journal of Psychology Research*. European Centre for research Training and Development UK. (Accessed: 17/02/2020. www.eajournals.org)
- Baffoe-Bonnie, J. (2011). "The Dynamic Impact of Structural Adjustment Policies on Labour Market and Macro-economic aggregates in Sub-Saharan Africa". *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, vol.20 No.4,pp.829-957

-
- Bruce, A.C, and Johnson, J.E.V (2006). "Towards an Explanation of Betting as a Leisure Pursuit". *Journal of Leisure Studies*, vol.11.No.3, pp.201-218.
- Bruno, G.S.F., Tanaveer, M.C., Marelli, E.and Signorelli, M. (2017). "The Short-and Long-Run Impacts of Financial Crises on Youth Unemployment in OECD countries". *Journal of Applied Economics*. Vol.49. No.34, pp.3372-3394
- Binde, P. (2005). *Gambling Across Cultures: Mapping Worldwide Occurance and Learning from Ethnographic Comparison*. *Internal Gambling Studies*. 5(1), 1-27
- Braun, S.,& Kvasnicka, M. (2013). "National Sentiment and Economic Behavior Evidence from Online Betting on European Football". *Journal of Sports Economics*, 14(1), pp.45-64
- Chava Frankfort-Nachmias and David Nachmias (1996) (5th Ed.) *research Methods in the Social Sciences*. Hodder Education, United Kingdom.
- Calado, F., Alexandre, J., Driffiths, M.D. (2017). Prevalence of Adolescence Problem Gambling: A Systematic Review of Recent Research. *J.Gambl. Stud.*33, 397-424.{CrossRef} (PubMed).
- Calicchio, P.et el, (2015). *Taking the Odds Gambling Outlook: 2015-2019 South Africa-Nigeria-Kenya*. 4th Annual edition , December 2015. www.pwc.co.za/gambling.
- Delfabbro, P., and LeCouteur, A. (2003). The Social Determinants of Youth Gambling in South Australian Adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 26(3),313-330.
- Derevensky, J.L., Laurie Dickson, L. & Gupta, R. (2008). Adolescent Attitudes Toward Gambling. *Revista Brasileira De Terapias Cognitivas*, 4(1), 12-17
- Edoh, V.C., and Babatunde, O. (20015). *Prevalence and Determinants of Gambling Behaviours among Undergraduate Students (A Case Study of Federal University Oye Ekiti (Doctoral dissertation, Federal University Oye Ekiti)*
- Elijah Udo., and Nsikak Joshua (2013). *Youth Unemployment and Criminal Activities in Nigeria: An Empirical Assessment*. *Multi-disciplinary Journal of Research and Development Perspectives*. 2(3). University of Calabar.
- Emeh, I.E., Nwanguma, E.O and Abaroh, J.J (2012). *Engaging Youth Unemployment in Nigeria with Youth Development and Empowerment Programmes: The*

-
- Lagos State in Focus. Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business. Vol.4.no. 5. ijcr.webs.com
- George Ritzer (1996). Sociological Theory. McGraw-Hill Companies Inc. New York
- Gupta, R. and Derevensky, J.L., (2000). Adolescents with Gambling Problems: From Research to Treatment. Journal of Gambling Studies, 16(2-3), 315-342.
- Griffiths, M. (2003). Internet Gambling: Issues, Concerns and Recommendations. Cyber Psychology & Behaviour, 6(6), 557-568
- Masaba, A.Y., et al. (2015). The Socio-economic Impact of Sport Betting on Ugandan Youths. Global Advanced Research Journal of Social Science. <http://garj.org/garjss>
- Okon, E.O. (2015). Small and Medium Scale Enterprises, Employment and Income Generation in Nigeria: A Focus on Professional Sports Viewing and Betting Centres.
- Omobowale O.A. (2009). Sports and European Soccer Fans in Nigeria. Journal of Asian African Studies, 44(6), 624-634.
- Otaki Osana Alanana (2003). Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: Some Implication for the Third Millennium. Global Journal of Social Sciences, vol.2, no.1.
- Samuel, O.A and Okpamen, K.O. (2017). The Changing Patterns of Gambling in Benue State: The Case of Emerging Role of ICT in Contemporary Makurdi Metropolis. AASCIT Communication vol.5.no.2. 2375-3803