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EXTENT OF STUDENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN SPORTS BETTING IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MUMIAS EAST SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT: *Effective curriculum implementation can be challenging in an environment where other factors are competing for the learners' attention. One such factor in Kenya is sports betting. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of students' involvement in betting on learning process among secondary schools in Mumias-East Sub-County, Kenya. Based on the study, this paper presents and discusses the findings on the extent of students' involvement in betting. A causal-comparative design was used in the study. Respondents included 369 students, 206 parents and 21 class teachers obtained by stratified random sampling. Data was obtained by use of questionnaires, and analysed using frequencies, means and percentages. The study found that 30.9% (n=369) of students were involved in sports betting. Therefore, there is high student involvement in betting, with more male students involved than female students. Most parents are not aware of whether or not their children engage in betting. Majority of students who bet own personal phones. Those who bet lose their bets more times than they win. Based on the results of the study, the Kenya government should review gambling regulations and legislation to include laws that prohibit school-going students from betting, since most students who bet are aged 18 years and above, meaning that they enjoy legal protection albeit being school students.*

KEYWORDS: extent, students, involvement, sports betting, secondary schools, Mumias, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Sports betting is an activity that has gained acceptance and popularity across the nations globally, both in developed countries and developing countries. A large number of developed nations have had an unusual expansion in gambling attraction, accessibility and acceptance. Moreover, governments that have legalized gambling continue to net significant revenue through taxes (Rickwood *et al.,* 2010). Gambling in these nations has become a multibillion-dollar enterprise with revenues being used to finance government budgets (Derevensky *et al.*, 2010). Due to increase and spread of gambling, most countries have found it necessary to put in place regulations

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and legislation. Nevertheless, researchers continue to observe rising concerns over prevalence of illegal adolescent gambling.

In Denmark, a study was conducted by Kristiansen, Trabjerg and Reith (2015) on first gambling experiences among youths. This was in light of the concern that many youths were getting involved in gambling. The study was longitudinal and qualitative. Kristiansen *et al.* captured the progression of teenage gamblers and examined how societal factors and culture had a bearing on their gambling behaviour. They emphasized on how young people are introduced to the practice, and the social settings of these first gambling encounters. Symbolic Interactionist Approach guided the study. It was revealed that a gambler's first experiences occurred in a social medium, and that social settings, such as family as well as peers contribute to these early experiences. Evidence from the study suggested that initiation into gambling was a social process that involved a transfer of knowledge and skills. Overall, the young people started gambling majorly through interacting with those within their social plexus. This agrees with the Social Learning theory advanced by Albert Bandura (1977), which posits that learning occurs through social interaction. The study by Kristiansen *et al.* contributed greatly to the knowledge base on how children are initiated into betting. However, it but did not go further to examine if and how their learning consequently may get affected.

Elton-Marshall, Leatherdale and Turner (2016) conducted a study to examine adolescent involvement in land-based and internet gambling in three provinces of Canada. This was in response to the concern that gambling was impacting on the public health of adolescents due to the sudden growth of new technologies in gambling and increased opportunities for gamblers to place their bets. The purpose was to investigate land-based as well as online traits of adolescent gamblers among adolescents in Ontario, Newfoundland/ Labrador and Saskatchewan provinces before online gambling which had been legalized was implemented. Survey design was used. Data were collected from 10,035 participants, who were in 9^{th} to 12^{th} grade using questionnaires. The study outcomes showed that 6% of the participants had been involved in gambling in the preceding 3 months. Sport betting was the commonest of all online gambling that participants were involved in. 9.1% of the adolescents also reported to have engaged in internet poker, and 9.0% engaged in simulated gambling on Facebook. More adolescents who gambled online obtained "high" or "low to moderate" scores in severity of problematic gambling than those who were only land-based. The study concluded that though at the time of the study there had been restrictions on online gambling, adolescents still participated in gambling more than they had done before when there were no restrictions. Technology was also being used to gamble, such as "video games" and simulations of wagering.

Many nations in the continents of Africa and Asia have experienced unprecedented growth in gambling. There has been expansive legalizing of multiple conformations of gambling on an international plane, perhaps due to its perceived socio-economic benefits (Derevensky *et al.*, 2010, p. 359). In Turkey, involvement of young people in online betting has drawn much popular concern. Reports have indicated that problematic online gambling among adolescents is more pervasive than is being estimated. Because of this, Aricak (2018) conducted a study on problematic online betting among Turkish adolescents. It examined the degree of involvement in problematic betting, common traits among youths who are involved in betting, and to determine how the nature

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of the family affects betting involvement amongst young people in Turkey. A total of 6116 adolescents of ages between 12 to 18 in Istanbul were surveyed to find out their extent of internet use for gambling. A total of 756 adolescents, that is, 12.4%, indicated that they were involved in internet betting while 176 participants, that is, 2.9%, were found to be problematic online gamblers. Further data thus were obtained from the 176 problematic gamblers of whom 14.8% were female adolescents. Internet addiction was found to positively correlate with duration of which one betted. About 60% of those involved indicated that they had preference for internet betting. All participants knew someone who betted online. Concerning relationship between the nature of family and internet addiction among problematic gamblers, participants from unstable family backgrounds scored higher in internet addiction than those from stable families. Results also indicated that almost 25% of the participants began internet betting between ages 10 to 12 years.

In Uganda, Ahaibwe, Lakuma, Katunze and Mawejje (2016) carried out a study in Kampala city, Uganda, on the socio-economic effects of gambling. The study focused on determining: the extent of participation in gambling in Kampala; effects of gambling on societal economy as well as people's welfare; effectiveness and adequacy of the existing regulations and legislation on gambling. Results of the survey indicated that about one out of four of all adults had gambled in one way or another during the previous one year prior to the study. Involvement in gambling was determined by gender, employment status, level of income and age. It was also found that the economically disadvantaged in society spent a higher proportion of their earnings to gamble than the rich did. In addition, there was evidence that most aspects of gambling legislation had become moribund, and could not address the changing approaches and exponential growth of the gambling industry. The study recommended that there should be protection of all and sundry from the adverse consequences of gambling by limiting gambling availability and accessibility. To the contrary, gambling is now more available, accessible and private due to increased ownership and access to phones and internet.

In Kenya, betting is not illegal. It is however put in check by a board in charge of licensing and control of betting. Laws regulating this industry in Kenya were promulgated in 1966 when betting was introduced. According to Betting Act 131, the age of participants was restricted to above 18 years, betting in public areas became illegal, and tax was to be levied on betting companies (Republic of Kenya, 1966). This Act has been, however, almost obsolete having been ratified at a time prior to the era of internet technology and mobile phones. In 2017, it was revised. It however still has conspicuous lapses and loopholes, which are responsible for the current challenges being faced within the industry and its entire scope of impact (Mwadime, 2017). As opined by Yawe and Ssengooba (2014), most countries in Africa lack an adequate regulation and legislation that can protect those who are vulnerable and underage, ensuring fairness in the games, addressing matters of legal enforcement, and providing restrictions plus systems to prevent laundering of money.

The prevalence reports of betting in Kenya are worrying. GeoPoll (2017) conducted a rapid survey involving young people aged between 17years to 35 years in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, South Africa and Uganda. Kenya was found to be on the lead in number of youths who betted, followed by Uganda and Ghana at 76% and 57% respectively. Ghana scored the lowest (42%). Despite adolescent betting being an illegal activity, it is clear that youths are engaging in betting.

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Derevensky and Gupta (2000) found that the betting prevalence rate among adolescents was higher than adults.

A study conducted by Mwadime (2017) in Nairobi city, Kenya, explored the implications of sports betting in Kenya: Impact of robust growth of the sports betting industry. It examined how betting was affecting the Kenyan people. The study looked into how technology influences the level and nature of betting involvement, how betting affects users who are "vulnerable", and the level of regulations and legislations on the practice. The study findings showed that majority of participants who were bettors were males aged below 40 years. Additionally, the greatest source of money used for sports betting was salaries. This was an indication that individuals in employment were more likely to bet than unemployed persons and entrepreneurs. Majority bettors placed their stakes online more than once per week. The study found that the most common brand in sports betting was SportPesa, and that mobile money services provided bettors with convenience and privacy. Social media also positively affected sports betting in by providing bettors with information. Most bettors had knowledge that betting was a type of gambling. They believed that they had the ability to start or stop betting behaviour at will and therefore persisted to engage in betting.

Mwadime (2017) also established that many who engaged in gambling knew risks associated with the same, such as addiction. Most bettors felt that the government was not doing enough to prevent the negative consequences of betting. Rather, the government focused more on making maximum revenues through taxes imposed on the companies. It was observed that presence and access to mobile money transfer services greatly promoted betting among the Kenyan populace. Additionally, social media was the most commonly used wellspring of information and decisions on betting. Finally, the study observed that there needed be a framework of policy to guide advertisements of betting activities and betting companies countrywide so as to reduce exposure to children who are underage.

Statement of the Problem

Rising fascination of youths in sports betting in Kenya is alarming, and has precipitated an outcry among parents and society at large (Sanga, 2017). Among the nations in the sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya leads in the number of youths engaged in betting (GeoPoll, 2017). If such levels of youths' involvement in betting continue unchecked, the future economic productivity of Kenya as well as other nations may be at stake as young people de-value work, and spend most of their time betting in hope of hitting a jackpot fortune. Staking one's financial future on a probability of one in a million is preposterous, and a nation that espouses such a trajectory of wealth creation wrecks herself and her people. Further concern is that some of these youth gamblers are of school going age, and this may affect their learning. Adolescent gamblers experience mental distortions, and cannot properly and correctly reflect about their life of tomorrow (Cosenza & Nigro, 2015). This thus raises a question of whether or not such "cognitive distortions" may affect the students' learning in school.

Various studies that have been done show rising student involvement in betting. Enwereuzor, Ugwu and Ugwu (2016) found that students were spending excessive time with smartphones participating in internet gambling. In addition, research has found that most problematic gamblers start betting before 14 years (Kam, Wong, So, Un & Chan, 2017). This is the age at which most

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students join secondary school in Kenya. Demographics like age, financial status and gender have also been indicated to have sway on one's involvement in betting (Aflakpui & Oteng-Abayie, 2016). However, effects of students' involvement in sports betting on learning process among secondary school students has not been researched, thus there lacks substantive data on the same. The effect of the rising involvement in betting on learner achievement is yet to be investigated. Therefore, this current study examined the extent and motivators of students' involvement in sports betting in public mixed day secondary schools in Mumias East Sub-County.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Mumias East Sub-County in Kakamega County, Kenya. It adopted a causal-comparative design was employed. The study targeted 4936 students of Forms II, III and IV of all 22 public mixed day secondary schools in the Sub-County, their parents (4936 parents) and 121 class teachers. The total target population was 9,993 participants. Stratified random sampling was applied to obtain 2 (out of 5) schools from the sub-urban category and 5 (out of 17) schools from the rural category. This is because the target population had two mutually exclusive groups which comprised of 17 secondary schools in purely rural areas and 5 schools located in fairly urban settings.

The sample of students comprised of eighteen 18 students from each class, that is, Form 2, Form 3, and Form4, including 9 boys and 9 girls per class, from 7 selected schools. This totalled to 378 students. Students were selected by simple random sampling, thus giving every participant equal likelihood/ probability of selection. With the assumption of one parent for every student sampled, the sample of parents similarly consisted of 18 parents per class, from the classes whose children had been randomly sampled for involvement in the study. This totalled to 378 parents. Parents who hailed from the neighbourhood of the selected schools (approximately 2-kilometer radius), and whose children were in classes that had participated in the study were randomly sampled for interviewing. The sample of class teachers consisted of all class teachers of the classes whose students had been sampled. This meant that each class teacher whose class was involved in the study was automatically a respondent as well. This made a total of 21 class teachers. For schools that had more than one stream per class, one was selected and hence its class teacher.

Data for the study was collected by use of questionnaires, document analysis and interviews. All information having been collected and collated, instruments were cross-checked to isolate wrong, non-complete or invalid data. Detected errors and omissions were corrected to improve the quality. This was followed by data coding as per research questions of study. The data was then captured in a computer for analysing by use of SPSS version 21. Data was analysed quantitatively by frequencies, means and percentages as well as using inferential statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Extent of Students' Involvement in Sports betting

The research investigated the level of students' involvement in sports betting. This was achieved by students being asked to state if they had ever betted on sports or not. Responses were as summarized in Figure 1 below.

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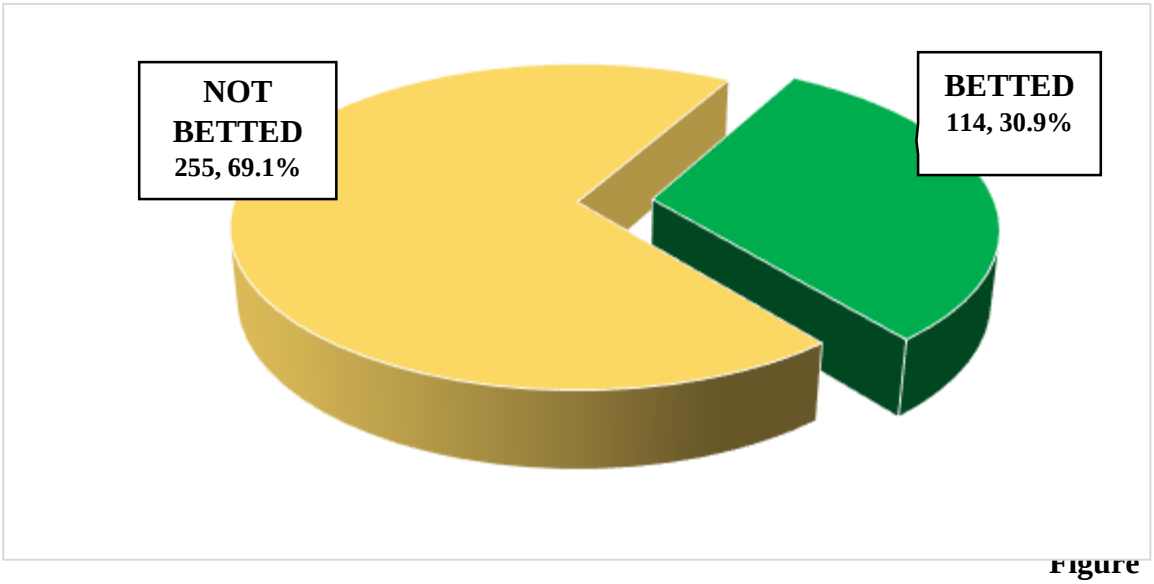

Figure 1: Students' responses to the question "Have you ever betted on sports?"

The above prevalence rate of 30.9% is higher than the 12.4% which Aricak (2018) found among Turkish adolescents. This means that sports betting is on the rise. A GeoPoll (2017) survey found an even much higher rate of 76%. The high prevalence rate, however, could be due to the fact that the GeoPoll survey involved young people in a wider age range of 17 to 35 years, most of whom have national identity cards and can own phones and bet more freely, unlike secondary school students. This rising betting prevalence could be due to desire to get money (Koross, 2016) and admiration of those who win coupled with increase in gambling advertisements.

Extent of Betting Involvement by Gender

The level of students' involvement in sports betting by gender was as shown in Figure 2.

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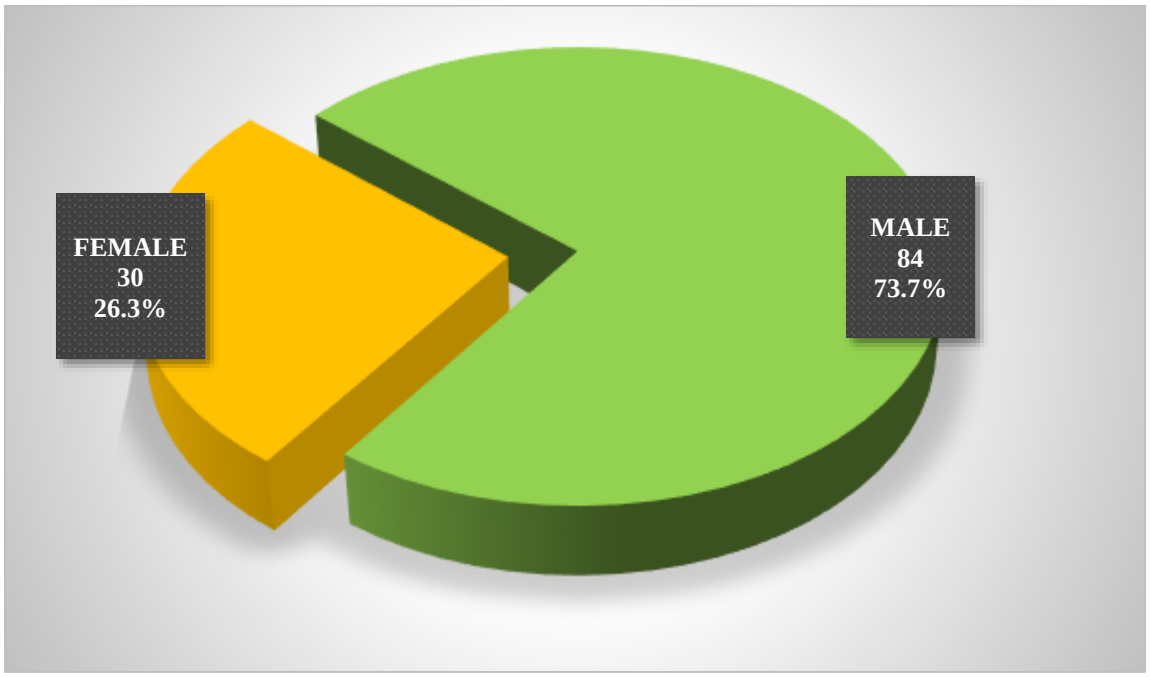

Figure 2: Students whose response was "Yes", by gender, to the question "Have you ever betted on sports?"

The study found that there were more male students than female students involved in betting. Out of the 114 students who betted, 84 (73.7%) were male while 30 (26.3%) were female. The class teachers also observed that there were more male students ($\bar{X}$ =3.29) involved in betting than female students ($\bar{X}$ =2.05) as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Responses of Teachers on Betting Involvement by Gender

Question	None	Very few	Some	Many	$\bar{X}$	SD
Do you know any male students who are involved in betting?	0	0	15	6	3.29	0.463
Do you know any female students who are involved in betting?	3	14	4	0	2.05	0.590

The gender difference obtained in this study differs from what Kam, *et al* (2017) obtained, which indicated that more females (55.7%) than males (44.3%) gambled. The gender difference in Kam, *et al* (2017) study may, however, be because the number of female participants recruited in the study (629) was much greater than that of male participants (370), unlike the current study in which the number of male and female participants was almost equal (187 males and 182 females). The gender difference in the current study agrees with Aricak (2018) who found more males (85.2%) involved in betting than females (14.8%). Aflakpui and Oteng-Abayie (2016) similarly found higher prevalence in male than female participants. Reasons for this gender disparity are unclear, but as Apicella, Crittenden and Tobolsky (2017) opined, "the hunter- gatherer males are more risk-

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seeking than females". This could also be due to the fact that more males go out to watch football than females, even at night, hence more exposed to gambling adverts than their female counterparts.

Parents' Knowledge of Betting Involvement by their Children

When parents were asked "Does your child engage in Sports Betting?", their responses were as shown in Figure 3 below.

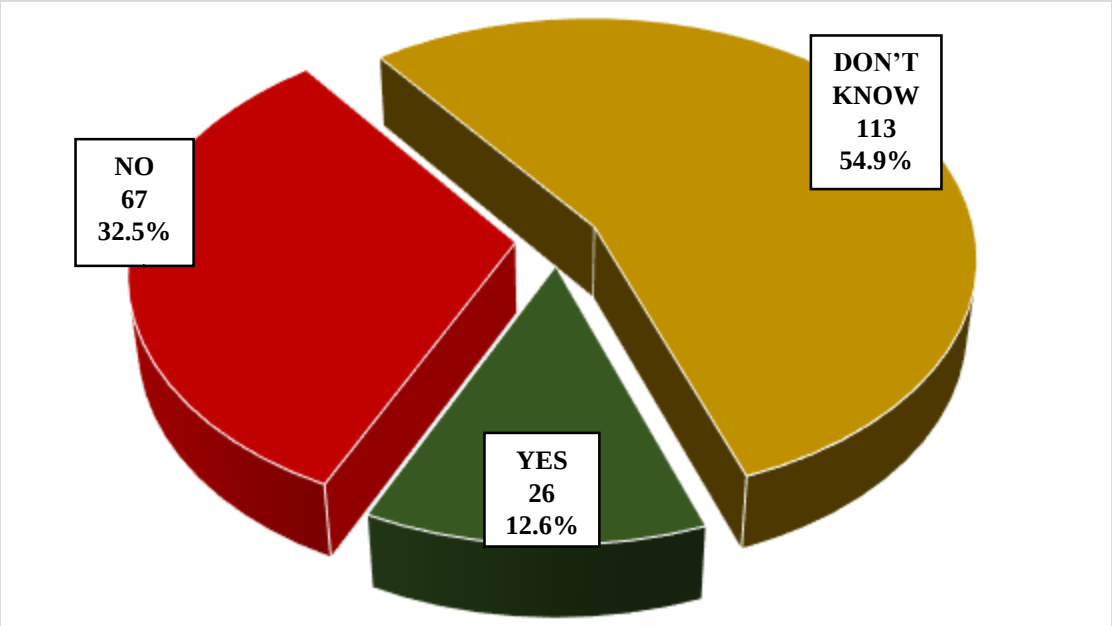

Figure 3: Parents' responses to the question "Does your child engage in sports betting?"

A majority (113, 54.9%) of the parents did not know whether their children were involved in betting or not. Only 26 parents (12.6%) said their children were engaging in betting while 67 (32.5%) said they were not. This means that most parents are not in touch with the lives of their children, and lack knowledge of what their children are going through. This is a serious lapse in the 21st century parenting.

This was confirmed by students' response to the question of whether or not those involved in betting were accountable to persons in authority (parents, teachers or religious leaders) concerning the practice. The results were as summarized in Figure 4 below.

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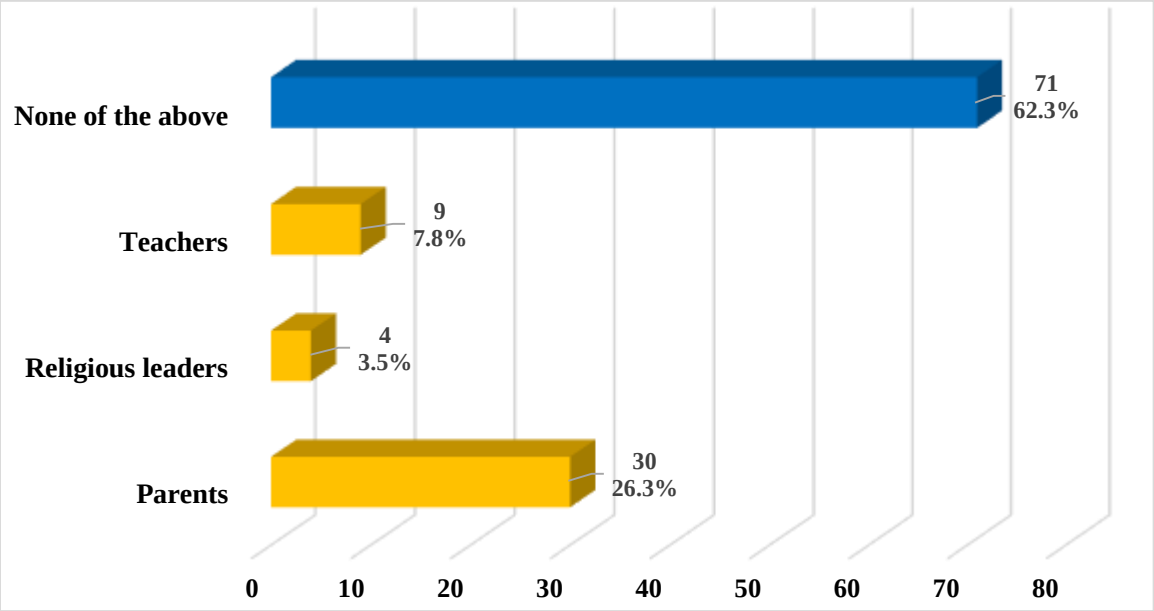

Figure 4: Students responses to the question "If you bet, who among the following are aware of your involvement in betting?"

These findings imply that many of the students involved in sports betting do so in secrecy. The Kenyan law prohibits those whose age is below 18 years from engaging in betting. Therefore, for fear of the legal consequences or possible victimization by those in authority (parents, teachers and religious leaders), the students would thus prefer to bet undercover. Hing, Russell, Gainsbury and Nuske (2016) explained that bettors cherish privacy because "gambling attracts considerable public stigma which has deleterious effects."

For those who indicated that they betted, their extent of involvement in terms of betting activities such as internet browsing, engagement in betting debates and discussions, sourcing of funds for betting as well as extent of possible effects such heartbreaks, anxiety, suicidal tendencies and addiction to betting was asked. The participants indicated their responses on a rating scale of 1 to 5, ranging from "Never", "Rarely", "Sometimes", "Many times" up to "Almost always".

Print ISSN: ISSN 2054-6351 (print), Online ISSN: ISSN 2054-636X (online)

Table 2: Students' Responses on Extent of their Involvement in Betting Activities

		N	R	ST	MT	AA	$\bar{X}$	SD
How frequently do you bet in a month?	F	0	25	58	18	12	3.15	0.89
	%	0	6.8	51.3	15.9	10.6		
Do you ever spend time browsing for information related to betting?	F	28	29	39	11	7	2.96	1.27
	%	24.6	25.3	34.2	9.6	6.1		
Do you ever engage in betting debates and discussions?	F	19	21	34	16	23	3.03	1.35
	%	16.8	18.6	30.1	14.2	20.4		
Have you ever won from betting?	F	43	37	25	8	0	1.98	0.95
	%	38.1	32.7	22.1	7.1	0		
Do you ever borrow money in order to place the bets?	F	66	18	20	4	5	1.80	1.13
	%	58.4	15.9	17.7	3.5	4.4		
Have you ever used funds meant for school to bet?	F	91	8	8	1	4	1.41	0.96
	%	80.5	7.1	7.1	1.8	3.5		
Do you ever feel heart-broken when you lose money after betting?	F	32	13	20	18	30	3.01	1.58
	%	28.3	11.5	17.7	15.9	26.5		
Do you ever feel anxious after placing the bet?	F	23	16	28	14	32	3.14	1.49
	%	20.4	14.2	24.8	12.4	28.3		
Do you ever feel suicidal when you lose money through betting?	F	59	15	19	5	15	2.13	1.44
	%	52.2	13.3	16.8	4.4	13.3		
Have you ever tried to quit betting but found it difficult?	F	54	14	15	14	16	2.33	1.51
	%	47.8	12.4	13.3	12.4	14.2		

The study revealed that 75.4% of those who betted had ever spent time browsing the internet for information related to betting. The internet is a major source of information that influences betting decisions. In addition, 61.9% had ever engaged in betting debates and discussions. Betting debates and discussions provide gamblers with an atmosphere to ventilate on their wins and losses, as well as compare information that informs betting decisions. A total of 41.6% had ever borrowed money for the purpose of betting. This means that desire for betting can be so strong as to push one to live beyond what they can afford. The data also revealed that students were betting to the extent that, at varied degrees, they had ever felt heart-broken (71.7%), anxious (79.6%), addicted (26.4%) and suicidal (47.8%). A total of 15 students (13.3%) indicated that they had felt suicidal "almost always" due to losing money through betting. This shows that students were betting to an extent that their mental and emotional health was being affected. It means that betting not only affects one's finances, it can also affect one's health. As explained by a clinical professor, "From a medical perspective, pathological gamblers are at increased risk to develop stress-related conditions, such as hypertension, sleep deprivation, cardiovascular disease and peptic ulcer disease" (Fong, 2005).

The respondents betted at varied frequencies. A majority (51.3%) said they betted "sometimes" in a month, 15.9% betted "many times" while 10.6% betted "almost always". This betting frequency for students is determined by both convenience and availability of time, for example during evenings, weekends and school holidays. According to Hing, Russell, Thomas and Jenkinson (2019), betting frequency among regular bettors was determined by how much they were exposed

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to betting advertisements. They found that on each day that respondents interacted with advertisements, reasonable minorities reported increase amount betted as well as and frequency. In this study, since not all students owned phones, their betting frequency would thus be determined by availability and access to betting infrastructure.

The study found that 38.1% of students who betted had never won at all, while 32.7% won rarely. None had won their bets "almost always". Students may lack the requisite skills for analysing the betting odds, which leads to more losses than wins. In spite of these loses, 26.4% of those who betted were addicted to it, having tried to quit betting but found it difficult to stop. Schellenberg, McGrath and Dechant (2016) explained that this is because those who lose keep betting with a motivation to recover what they lost. Most bettors believe that they are able to begin and terminate their betting actions at will, and therefore continue engaging in betting hoping to win one day (Mwadime, 2017). This observation that people can continue betting despite incessant losses gainsays Sharpe and Tarrier's (1993) cognitive-behavioural theory, which explains that behaviour is started and maintained on the basis of reinforcement schedules through monetary rewards that lead to increased physiological arousal.

The students who answered "yes" to the question of whether or not they had ever betted were further asked how they accessed phones with which they placed their bets. The outcome was as summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3: How do you access the phone with which to place your bets?

	f	**%**
Have a personal phone	77	68.1
I use my parent's phone	17	15.0
I use a friend's phone	12	10.6
Other	7	6.2
Total	113	100.0

A majority of students (68.1%) who betted indicated that they had personal phones. Once a person is aged 18 years and above in Kenya, they have legal latitude to own and use phones. A total of 17 students (15%) betted using their parents' phones. This means that some parents allow their children to engage in betting, or they give their phones to their children without controlling what they do with them. The growth of internet technology and phones is what has made gambling opportunities more available and conveniently accessible to students, and hence the effects (Kristiansen *et al.*, 2015).

When teachers were asked how students access phones with which to place the bet, 66.7% said students owned personal phones, 19% said they used their parents' phones and 14.3% said they used their friends' phones. This is as summarized in Table 4.

Print ISSN: ISSN 2054-6351 (print), Online ISSN: ISSN 2054-636X (online)

Table 4: Teachers' responses to the question "How do students access phones with which to place their bets?"

	f	%
They own personal phones	14	66.7
Use their parents' phones	4	19.0
Use their friend' phones	3	14.3
Total	21	100.0

It was thus evident from this study that most secondary school students owned personal phones. According to Enwereuzor, Ugwu and Ugwu (2016), phones enhance gambling availability and accessibility. As Porter *et al.* (2016) observes, the smartphone is now an integral accessory of 'cool' youth, their economic status notwithstanding. Even in isolated countryside or rural villages, youths are increasingly having access (or ownership) of basic mobile phones. Porter *et al.*, however, further argued that this is not without negative effects, such as disruptions in sleep patterns of adolescents due to affordable night calls, losing of time in extended sessions on social media, harassment, cyber-crime and easily accessing pornography. Ott (2017) also affirms that there is increasing phone ownership among students in school, but argued that the mobile phones should be turned "from disturbing objects to infrastructure for learning".

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study show that there is high student involvement in betting. More male students are involved in betting than female students. Most parents are not aware of whether or not their children engage in betting. Majority of students who bet own personal phones. Those who bet lose their bets more times than they win. Based on the findings the study, betting awareness programmes should be put in place for parents, most of whom are not aware of whether or not their children engage in betting, and how they may ultimately get affected. Moreover, the Kenyan government should review gambling regulations and legislation to include laws that prohibit school-going students from betting, since most students who bet are aged 18 years and above, meaning that they enjoy legal protection albeit being school students. The Ministry of Education should create a programme to educate secondary school students on constructive use of phones and internet. This can help to turn phones among students from distractors of learning to enablers of learning. There should be inclusion of betting awareness in the school curriculum. It can be done by integration of the content into already existing subjects. This would help to make learners aware of betting and its ramifications on life as a whole.

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