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Correlates of Adolescents' Involvement in Gambling-related Behaviour in Ondo City, Nigeria: Advocating Educative Programmes to Curb the Act

Omoniyi, T. O., Department of Arts & Social Sciences Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan and Matthew, A. M., Faculty of Education, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria

Abstract

The study assessed the correlates of adolescents' immersion in gambling-related behaviour in Ondo city. The study adopted the survey design of correlation type. It will help to understand association between identified variables. The population of the study comprised all adolescents, who are within the age of 13 and 19 years, in Ondo city. Ondo city comprised two local government areas of Ondo West and East. Simple random sampling was used to select 800 adolescents from schools and community centres, while structured questionnaire was developed comprising validated scales to measure Variables-Media Influence $r = 0.72$; Childhood Experience $r = 0.78$; Gambling Venue Accessibility $r = 0.72$; Cognitive Bias $r = 0.72$; and Peer Influence $r = 0.91$; were used for data collection. Finding revealed that the rating of gambling-related behaviour among adolescents was high ($\chi^2 = 2.64; 2.5$). Also, there are positive significant relationships between adolescents' involvement in gambling behaviour and media influence ($r = -.073, p (.040) < .05$); gambling venue accessibility ($r = -.087^*, p (.014) < .05$), peer influence ($r = .110^{**}, p (.002) < .05$) but had no significant relationship with childhood experience ($r = -.032, p (.370) > .05$) and cognitive biases ($r = -.049, p (.171) > .05$). It is recommended that there is need for implementing comprehensive educational programmes in schools and community to curb media influence, peer pressure as well as indiscriminate siting of betting centres in and around the neighbourhood.

Keywords: Gambling related behaviour, peer pressure, media influence, childhood experience, gambling accessibility.

Introduction

The phenomenon of gambling and its associated behaviours among adolescents has garnered increasing attention from behavioural researchers, policymakers, and healthcare professionals in recent years (Russell, Croker, & Viner, 2019). Gambling is an act of wagering money or valuables on an uncertain outcome with the hope of winning additional money or prizes (Guerin & White, 2018). It involves risk-taking and can encompass various activities, from games to sports betting and lotteries. It can be a source of entertainment and excitement for many people, but it is essential to be aware of the potential risks. It has become

increasingly prevalent and concerning issues in recent times in Ondo city. Adolescence is a developmental period marked by exploration, curiosity, and susceptibility to peer influences, making adolescents particularly vulnerable to engaging in risky behaviours such as gambling. It is a critical developmental period characterised by exploration, risk-taking, and the formation of identity (Uwiduhaye, Niyonsenga, Muhayisa & Mutabaruka, 2021).

During this time, adolescents may experiment with various activities, including gambling, which can have both short-term and long-term consequences on their well-being. Gambling among adolescents is a concern, as some studies suggest that a significant portion of young people engage in gambling activities (Adenugba, Akhuetie & Umeokoro, 2018). However, prevalence rates can vary depending on several factors. It is believed that various factors such as location, culture, socioeconomic status, easy access to online gambling platforms and exposure to gambling advertisements can contribute to its prevalence.

Gambling-related behaviour related to gambling encompasses a wide range of actions and attitudes exhibited by individuals who engage in gambling activities. Some of the key behaviours associated with gambling include increased gambling frequency, chasing losses, lying about gambling, borrowing money, or selling possessions, borrowing money, or selling possessions, preoccupation with gambling, neglecting responsibilities, mood swings, continued gambling despite negative consequences. People may find themselves gambling more often than they originally intended, leading to frequent participation in gambling activities (Afe, Ogunsemi, Daniel, Ale & Adeleye, 2018). After experiencing losses, individuals may feel compelled to continue gambling to recoup their losses, even if it means risking more money than they can afford to lose. It is to be noted that gamblers may conceal the extent of their gambling activities from family, friends, or loved ones, often due to feelings of shame or guilt.

Oyebisi, Alao, & Popoola, (2012) explained that some young individuals resort to borrowing money from others, taking out loans, or selling personal belongings to finance their gambling habits or cover gambling debts; excessive thoughts about gambling, planning future gambling sessions, or reliving past gambling experiences can indicate a preoccupation with gambling. It is also believed gambling can lead to neglect of important obligations such as work, school, family, or social commitments as individuals prioritise gambling activities over other responsibilities. Studies by Temitope (2019) have affirmed that several consequences of gambling-related behaviour manifest in fluctuations in mood, irritability, anxiety, or depression and lot more. This

occurs because of gambling-related stress, losses, or conflicts arising from gambling activities. Despite experiencing negative consequences such as financial difficulties, relationship problems, or legal issues, individuals may continue to gamble compulsively (Ucheagwu, Okoli & Ugokwe-Ossai, 2019). These behaviours can be indicative of gambling-related problems or addiction and may require intervention or support from mental health professionals, counselors, or support groups. Recognising these signs early on can help individuals seek assistance and address any underlying issues associated with their gambling behaviour.

Various prevention efforts have been put forward to addressing gambling-related behaviour. Some have focused on education, thus, promoting healthy alternatives, and limiting access to gambling opportunities for minors. According to Surujal & Akinwale (2017), gambling among adolescents typically can be addressed using a combination of education, awareness-raising, and intervention strategies. This is designed to raise awareness, provide information, and promote healthy attitudes and behaviours regarding gambling. Scholars like Newall, Moodie, Reith, Stead, Critchlow, Morgan & Dobbie (2019) have said that it can be driven by a collaborative effort involving multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, schools, community organizations, healthcare providers, parents, and the gambling industry itself. It is believed that schools, community organisations, and public health initiatives can provide education and awareness programmes to adolescents about the risks associated with gambling, including the potential for addiction, financial harm, and negative consequences on mental health and relationships (Surujal & Akinwale 2017).

Thus, by implementing comprehensive strategies that combine education, support, regulation, and community involvement, efforts to prevent and address gambling among adolescents can help promote healthier behaviours and reduce the prevalence of problem gambling in this population. By incorporating these components into educational programs, stakeholders can empower adolescents to make informed choices, resist gambling-related pressures, and develop healthy attitudes and behaviours regarding gambling.

However, this problem persists. It is believed that factors like access to gambling, either online and offline, peer influence, and media portrayal of gambling can contribute to its prevalence among young people. Hence, with the rise of gambling-related behaviour, researchers suggested the need to assess correlates of this social issue with a view to addressing this critical challenge. The author did a baseline analysis as well as a deep dive into literature to

discover some salient factors such as cognitive biases, peer pressure, media influence, childhood experience and gambling venue accessibility, that may be responsible for manifestation of gambling-related behaviour among adolescents in the light of the efforts put in place to address this issue. Hence, these variables are conceptualised and explained within the context of gambling-related behaviour among adolescents.

According to Temitope (2019), cognitive biases are systematic patterns of deviation from rationality or logical judgment, which often occur unconsciously. These biases can affect our decision-making process, leading to errors in judgment, interpretation, or memory. They arise from various factors such as information processing shortcuts, emotional influences, or social pressures. Examples include confirmation bias, where we seek out information that confirms our existing beliefs, and availability heuristic, where we rely on readily available information rather than considering all relevant facts. This occurs when individuals rely too heavily on the first piece of information they encounter (the "anchor") when making decisions, even if that information is irrelevant or arbitrary. People tend to overestimate their own abilities, knowledge, or the accuracy of their judgments.

This can lead to taking excessive risks or making faulty decisions. This bias refers to the tendency for people to prefer avoiding losses over acquiring equivalent gains. In other words, the pain of losing is typically felt more strongly than the pleasure of winning, leading to risk-averse behavior. The way information is presented or framed can significantly influence decision-making. People may react differently to the same information depending on how it is presented, even if the underlying content is the same. Also known as the "I-knew-it-all-along" effect, this bias involves perceiving past events as having been more predictable than they were. It can lead to an inflated sense of foresight or judgment.

Positive peer influence can include encouragement, support, and the promotion of healthy behaviours and attitudes (Surujal & Akinwale, 2017). For instance, peers may motivate each other to study harder, participate in extracurricular activities, or engage in positive social interactions. However, peer influence can also have negative effects, such as encouraging risky behaviors, substance abuse, or conformity to unhealthy social norms. Adolescents may be especially susceptible to peer influence as they navigate social relationships and seek acceptance from their peers. Understanding the power of peer influence is important for parents, educators, and policymakers to promote positive peer relationships and provide support for young people to resist negative

influences. Building strong social skills, fostering open communication, and promoting critical thinking can help individuals navigate peer influence in a constructive way.

Another variable of concerns is the accessibility to gambling venues and shops refers to the ease with which individuals can access physical locations where gambling activities take place, such as casinos, betting shops, or arcades with gambling machines. The availability and proximity of these venues can significantly influence gambling behavior and addiction rates in a community. Areas with high accessibility to gambling venues may experience greater rates of gambling participation and problem gambling. This is because easy access makes it more convenient for individuals to engage in gambling activities impulsively or excessively. Moreover, vulnerable populations, such as low-income individuals or those with preexisting gambling problems, may be particularly affected by the presence of gambling venues nearby (Torrance, John, Greville, O'Hanrahan, Davies & Roderique-Davies, 2021). Policymakers often consider regulating the location and density of gambling establishments to mitigate potential negative consequences, such as addiction, financial hardship, or social problems. Additionally, public health initiatives may focus on raising awareness about the risks associated with gambling and providing resources for individuals seeking help for gambling-related issues (Uwiduhaye, Niyonsenga, Muhayisa & Mutabaruka, 2021).

Media influence is also a variable of concern in this study. It is believed that portrayal of gambling in the media, including movies, television shows, and advertisements, can shape attitudes and perceptions towards gambling among adolescents and young adults. Djohari, Weston, Cassidy, Wemyss & Thomas (2019) explained that positive depictions of gambling can normalize the behaviour and increase its appeal. Blau and Whitby (2020) remarked that media influence can play a significant role in shaping gambling-related behaviour. Thus, portrayals of gambling in movies, TV shows, and advertisements can glamorize it, making it seem like an exciting and lucrative activity (O'Loughlin & Blaszczynski 2018). This can lead to increased interest in gambling and potentially encourage risky behaviour, especially among vulnerable populations like adolescents, young adults, youth and, among individuals with gambling addiction issues. It is essential for media outlets to portray gambling responsibly and for individuals to be mindful of the influence it can have on their behaviour (Guerin & White, 2018). For instance, celebrities endorsing gambling products or appearing in advertisements can further enhance the allure of gambling. Their influence can make gambling seem trendy or fashionable, especially among younger audiences who admire them.

It is believed that childhood experiences can play a role in shaping gambling-related behaviour later in life. This is because individuals who have experienced trauma or adverse childhood experiences, such as abuse, neglect, or household dysfunction, may be at increased risk of developing gambling problems later in life (Ayandele, Popoola & Obosi 2020). These experiences can contribute to the development of maladaptive coping mechanisms, including gambling, to escape or cope with psychological distress (Reith, Wardle & Gilmore 2019). In the same vein, growing up in a household where gambling is prevalent or normalized can influence a child's attitudes and perceptions about gambling (Newall, Moodie, Reith, Stead, Critchlow & Morgan, 2019). This is so because, exposure to family members who gamble frequently may increase the likelihood of later engaging in gambling activities. It is also evident that children often learn behaviour by observing their parents or caregivers (Oyebisi, Alao & Popoola, 2012). If parents engage in gambling-related activities, their children may view it as a normal or acceptable behaviour and may be more likely to gamble themselves in the future.

Statement of the problem

Despite the growing concern about adolescent gambling behaviour globally, there is a noticeable gap in empirical research focusing on the correlates of adolescents' involvement in gambling-related behaviour within the specific context of Ondo City, Nigeria. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the interplay of various factors influencing adolescents' involvement in gambling-related behaviour. Thus, by exploring the influence of media exposure, childhood experiences, peer pressure, cognitive biases, and gambling accessibility, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the determinants of adolescent gambling-related behaviours in Ondo City. Existing literature has highlighted the impact of these factors individually on adolescent gambling-related behaviour. However, limited empirical research has been conducted to understand how these factors interact within the unique socio-cultural context of Ondo City, Nigeria. Specifically, the variable of study remains underexplored. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by conducting a thorough empirical investigation, employing correlation approaches in Ondo City. By identifying the nuanced relationships between media influence, childhood experiences, peer pressure, cognitive biases, gambling accessibility, and adolescent gambling behaviors, this research aims to inform evidence-based interventions and policies tailored to the specific needs of adolescents in Ondo City, ultimately contributing to the promotion of healthy adolescent development and the prevention of gambling-related harm in the local government area.

Research Objectives

Generally, the study seeks to examine the correlates of adolescents' immersion in gambling-related behaviour in Ondo city. Specifically, the study seeks to;

1. assess the rating of gambling-related behaviour among adolescents.
2. examine the relationship between the independent variables of media influence, childhood experience, gambling venue accessibility, peer pressure, cognitive biases and adolescents' immersion in gambling-related behaviour.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of rating of gambling-related behaviour among adolescents?
2. Is there any significant relationship between; media influence, childhood experience, gambling venue accessibility, peer pressure, cognitive biases and adolescents' involvement in gambling-related behaviour.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey design of the correlation type. This will allow the researcher to understand how changes in one variable might correspond to change changes in another. By implication, it will help in determining, between two or more variables if there is statistical association between or among them. The population of the study comprised all adolescents, who are within the age of 13 and 19 years, in Ondo city. The study selected 800 adolescents from schools and community centres within the two LGAs. A comprehensive scale was used for each of the variables comprising validated scales to measure Media Influence $r = 0.72$; Childhood Experience $r = 0.78$; Gambling Venue Accessibility $r = 0.72$; Cognitive Biases $r = 0.72$; and Peer Influence $r = 0.91$. Data collected were analysed through descriptive statistics (mention the exact descriptive statistics and it was used for) and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to identify significant correlates of the gambling-related behaviour among the respondents.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Demographic information of participants

The demographic information of the participants shows that male was 277 (34.7%) and female 521 (65.3%). By implication, female students had the highest frequent. Also, those who falls between 15 and 17 years had the highest

frequency 434 (54.4%) while those between 12 and 14 years 97 (12.2%) had the least. By implication, they are adequate for the study.

Research Question 1: What is the rating gambling-related behaviour among adolescents?

Table 1: Mean response of Adolescents' Involvement in Gambling-related Behaviour

Sn	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Std
1	I engage in gambling activities (e.g., betting, lottery) regularly.	238 29.8	342 42.9	192 24.1	26 3.3	2.99	.819
2	I have lied to others about my gambling habits.	243 30.5	300 37.6	203 25.4	52 6.5	2.92	.902
3	I feel restless or irritable when trying to cut down or stop gambling.	156 19.5	207 25.9	263 33.0	172 21.6	2.43	1.034
4	I have borrowed money to gamble.	211 26.4	357 44.7	158 19.8	72 9.0	2.89	.901
5	I often think about gambling, even when not participating.	213 26.7	287 36.0	201 25.2	97 12.2	2.77	.977
6	I find it difficult to control my gambling habits.	319 40.0	312 39.1	129 16.2	38 4.8	3.14	.856
7	I neglect responsibilities because of gambling.	169 21.2	296 37.1	276 34.6	57 7.1	2.72	.876
8	I feel guilty after gambling, especially when losing money.	225 28.2	322 40.4	184 23.1	67 8.4	2.88	.914
9	I gamble to escape from problems or relieve stress.	138 17.3	220 27.6	283 27.6	157 19.7	2.42	.992
10	I chase losses by continuing to gamble in hopes of winning back money.	171 21.4	192 24.1	286 35.8	149 18.7	2.48	1.026
11	I gamble even when I cannot afford it.	238 29.8	301 37.7	187 23.4	72 9.0	2.88	.939
12	I hide the extent of my gambling from others.	157 19.7	239 29.9	243 30.5	159 19.9	2.49	1.021
13	Gambling causes conflicts in my relationships.	180 22.6	233 29.2	264 33.1	121 15.2	2.59	.999
14	I have skipped school or work to gamble.	151 18.9	253 31.7	239 29.9	155 19.4	2.50	1.009
15	I have experienced negative emotions (e.g., sadness, regret) after gambling.	147 18.4	178 22.3	300 37.6	173 21.7	2.37	1.019
16	I feel anxious when I cannot gamble.	224 28.1	259 32.5	199 24.9	116 14.5	2.74	1.023
17	I have spent more money on gambling than I planned.	154 19.3	183 22.9	285 35.7	176 22.1	2.39	1.033
18	I have been criticized for my gambling behavior	148 18.5	181 22.7	262 32.8	207 25.9	2.34	1.056
19	I have stolen money to gamble	245 30.7	179 22.4	221 27.7	153 19.2	2.65	1.108
20	Gambling has caused problems in my life	132 16.5	130 16.3	319 40.0	217 27.2	2.22	1.024
Weighted Average: 2.64		Threshold: 2.5					

Table 1 shows the responses of mean response of adolescents' immersion in gambling-related behaviour. It reveals a weighted average of 2.64 which is higher than the threshold of 2.5. This implies that adolescents are highly immersed in gambling-related behaviour.

Research Question 2: What relationship exists between media influence, childhood experience, gambling venue accessibility, peer pressure, cognitive biases, and adolescents' immersion in gambling-related behaviour?

Table 2: Correlation Matrix Table on the five Independent Variables and Adolescents' Immersion in Gambling-related Behaviour

Variables	Adolescents' Immersion in Gambling-related Behaviour	Media Influence	Childhood Experience	Gambling Venue Accessibility	Peer Pressure	Cognitive Biases
Adolescents' Immersion in Gambling-related Behaviour	1.00					
Media Influence	-.073* (.040)	1.00				
Childhood Experience	-.032 (.370)	-.305* (.031)	1.00			
Gambling Venue Accessibility	-.087* (.014)	.160** (.000)	-.013 (.719)	1.00		
Peer Pressure	.110** (.002)	-.275** (.366)	-.025 (.488)	.092** (.010)	1.00	
Cognitive Biases	-.049 (.171)	.000 (1.000)	-.187** (.00)	.003 (.936)	.157** (.000)	1.00

Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 2 shows that there are positive significant relationships between adolescents' involvement in gambling behaviour and media influence ($r = -.073$, $p (.040) < .05$); gambling venue accessibility ($r = -.087^*$, $p (.014) < .05$), peer influence ($r = .110^{**}$, $p (.002) < .05$) but had no significant relationship with childhood experience ($r = -.032$, $p (.370) > .05$) and cognitive biases ($r = -.049$, $p (.171) > .05$).

Discussion of Results

Rating of gambling-related behaviour among adolescents

The result revealed that adolescents had higher immersion experience in gambling-related behaviour. This implies that adolescents are highly immersed in gambling-related behaviour. The result is in line with that of Uwiduhaye, Niyonsenga, Muhayisa & Mutabaruka (2021); Torrance, John, Greville, O'Hanrahan, Davies & Roderique-Davies (2021) whose submissions indicate that gambling-related behaviour among adolescents is on the rise, with a significant portion of this demographic engaging in various forms of gambling activities. Thus, understanding the scope and trends of adolescent gambling behavior is crucial for identifying at-risk groups and implementing targeted interventions. It is also not at variance with the works of Enwereuzor & Ugwu (2016) which affirms that the prevalence of such behaviour raises questions about the factors contributing to its rise, including societal influences, accessibility of gambling platforms, and potential psychological vulnerabilities among adolescents. Secondly, understanding the impact of high gambling-related behavior on adolescents' mental health, academic performance, and social relationships is crucial for devising effective intervention strategies.

Relationship between the independent variables of media influence, childhood experience, gambling venue accessibility, peer pressure, cognitive biases, and adolescents' immersion in gambling-related behaviour

The result revealed that there are positive significant relationships between adolescents' immersion in gambling behaviour and media influence, gambling venue accessibility, peer influence but had no significant relationship with childhood experience and cognitive biases. The works of Ayande, Oguntayo & Olapegba (2017), Owonikoko (2020); Russell, Croker & Viner (2019) and Temitope & Oyekola (2019) revealed that critical factors which may include peer influence, family dynamics, socioeconomic status, exposure to gambling advertising, and underlying psychological vulnerabilities such as impulsivity and sensation-seeking tendencies are correlates of gambling related behaviour among people especially young ones. In the same vein, Abayomi et al (2016), Blau, Benjamin & Whitby (2020) are in line with the result of this study. The

work agrees with that of Akanle & Fageyinbo (2019) which found that adolescent gambling-related behaviour revealed some concerning findings. The prevalence of high gambling-related behaviour among adolescents is higher than previously thought.

Russell, Croker & Viner (2019) suggests that factors like peer influence, accessibility of gambling platforms, and exposure to gambling advertisements play significant roles in shaping adolescents' gambling behaviour. In terms of media influence, Temitope & Oyekola (2019) found that exposure to gambling advertisements, both online and offline, was strongly correlated with increased gambling behaviour among adolescents. Additionally, depictions of gambling in movies, TV shows, and video games also seemed to influence their perceptions and engagement with gambling activities. That is concerning, especially considering how prevalent gambling advertisements are in today's media landscape. Several adolescents are constantly being bombarded with messages which are directly or indirectly normalizing and glamorizing gambling. The study is also in line with the submission of O'Loughlin & Blaszczynski (2018) who affirmed that with the rise of online gambling platforms and social media, adolescents have easier access to gambling-related content than ever before.

Literature is also replete with the fact that there is a significant relationship between media influence and gambling-related behaviour among adolescents. Research has shown that exposure to gambling-related media, including advertisements, movies, TV shows, and video games, can shape adolescents' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours towards gambling. Media portrayals of gambling often glamorize and normalize the activity, depicting it as exciting, glamorous, and potentially lucrative. These representations can create a sense of desirability and social acceptance around gambling, particularly among impressionable adolescents. Furthermore, advertising for gambling products and services is pervasive across various media platforms, including television, radio, print, and online. Adolescents are exposed to a barrage of advertisements promoting gambling as a fun and rewarding pastime, which can influence their beliefs and intentions regarding gambling participation.

Moreover, the accessibility of online gambling platforms and social media further amplifies the influence of media on adolescent gambling behavior. Adolescents can easily access gambling-related content and advertisements online, increasing their exposure to gambling stimuli and temptations. The is not at variance with the finding of this study. It is important to recognize the role of media influence in shaping adolescent gambling behavior when developing

prevention and intervention strategies. It is believed that educating adolescents about the persuasive tactics used in gambling advertising and promoting media literacy skills can help them critically evaluate and resist media messages promoting gambling. Additionally, regulations restricting the advertising and promotion of gambling products to adolescents can help reduce their exposure to gambling-related media. By addressing the influence of media on adolescent gambling behavior, we can mitigate the normalization of gambling and promote healthier attitudes towards risk-taking behaviour.

The work is at variance with the works of Enwereuzor & Ugwu (2016) whose found indicates that the potential psychological vulnerabilities among adolescents, such as impulsivity and sensation-seeking tendencies could also contribute to high gambling-related behaviour. To corroborate, study by Djohari, Weston, Cassidy, Wemyss & Thomas (2019) indicates a significant correlation between high gambling-related behaviour and increased rates of depression, anxiety, and even substance abuse among adolescents. Thus, there are serious consequences to consider. Ultimately, addressing the accessibility of gambling venues requires a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach that involves collaboration between policymakers, community organizations, and stakeholders in the gambling industry. There is a significant relationship between gambling venue accessibility and gambling-related behaviour among adolescents. Guerin & White (2018)'s study has consistently shown that easy access to gambling venues, such as casinos, betting shops, or online gambling platforms, is associated with higher rates of gambling participation and problem gambling among adolescents.

Studies by Afe, Ogunsemi, Daniel, Ale & Adeleye (2022) have found that adolescents who live near gambling venues are more likely to engage in gambling activities compared to those who do not have easy access to such venues. The convenience and availability of gambling opportunities increase the likelihood of experimentation with gambling among adolescents, as they are more likely to be exposed to gambling stimuli and tempted to participate (Afe, Ogunsemi, Daniel, Ale & Adeleye (2022). Moreover, the accessibility of gambling venues can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, particularly among adolescents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Blau & Whitby, (2020). These individuals may have fewer alternative recreational options and face greater social and economic pressures, making them more susceptible to the allure of gambling.

The result is in line with Freund, Noble, Hill, White, Leigh, Scully, Sanson-Fisher & Lambkin (2022) whose submissions explained the connectivity of the

peer influence and adolescents. The author found that there is a significant relationship between peer influence and gambling-related behaviour among adolescents. This research consistently demonstrates that peers play a crucial role in shaping adolescents' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours towards gambling. Peer influence can occur through various mechanisms, including social norms, modeling, and direct encouragement. Adolescents may feel pressure to engage in gambling activities to fit in with their peer group or to gain social acceptance and approval. Additionally, observing peers participating in gambling activities may normalize such behaviours and increase adolescents' likelihood of engaging in similar activities themselves.

Moreover, the perceived popularity and social status of peers who engage in gambling can further reinforce the influence of peer groups on adolescents' gambling-related behaviour. This is because adolescents may view gambling as a means to enhance their social standing or to bond with their peers, thereby increasing their willingness to participate in gambling activities. It is to be noted that the relationship between gambling venue accessibility and gambling-related behaviour underscores the importance of implementing policies and regulations to limit the proliferation of gambling venues in communities, especially in areas with high concentrations of vulnerable populations. Additionally, providing adolescents with alternative recreational activities and promoting awareness about the risks associated with gambling are crucial for mitigating the impact of gambling venue accessibility on adolescent populations.

Conclusion

The study has shed light on the correlates of adolescents' involvement in gambling-related behaviour in Ondo city, Nigeria. Through a comprehensive analysis of peer influence, gambling venue accessibility, cognitive biases, childhood experience, media influence as determinants, significant insights have been gained into the underlying dynamics driving such behaviours among adolescents in Ondo city. The findings underscore the urgent need for tailored and educative programmes aimed at curbing the proliferation of gambling activities among adolescents. Thus, it is believed that by targeting both personal and environmental factors identified in this study, such programmes hold promise in fostering a more informed and resilient adolescent population, equipped to make healthier choices and resist the allure of gambling-related behaviours. In doing so, they can contribute to the promotion of holistic well-being and the cultivation of a more responsible and empowered generation in Ondo city and beyond.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to salvage gambling-related behaviour among adolescents.

1. There is need to strengthen regulations around gambling advertisements and promotions targeted at adolescents, both online and offline. There is need to advocate for evidence-based policies and regulations at the local, national, and international levels to reduce adolescents' exposure to gambling-related harm. This can be through the law enforcement agencies like the Police, Civil defense and paramilitary as well as ICT experts in ensuring age restrictions for accessing gambling platforms and strict penalties for those who target underage individuals should be prioritized
2. Local government authorities, schools, and even communities can help in the development and promotion of alternative recreational activities for adolescents that do not involve gambling can be encouraged. Thus, providing opportunities for social engagement, skill-building, and creative expression can help steer adolescents away from gambling-related behaviours.
3. There is need for government agencies, ministries and private individuals/NGOs to drive the implementing comprehensive educational programmes in schools to raise awareness about the risks associated with gambling and its potential consequences. These programmes should emphasise the importance of responsible gaming and provide resources for seeking help if needed.
4. Parents should be encouraged to actively engage with their children and monitor their online activities.
5. School teachers should implement peer-led education programmes that empower adolescents to educate their peers about the risks associated with gambling and how to recognise and address problematic behaviours. Peer influence can be a powerful tool in promoting responsible gaming habits.
6. The National Orientation Agency needs to develop media literacy programmes that help adolescents critically evaluate and understand the messages portrayed in gambling-related media, including advertisements, social media, and online content. Teaching media literacy skills can empower adolescents to make informed decisions and resist the influence of persuasive marketing tactics.
7. There is need for NERDC to incorporating financial literacy education into school curricula to teach adolescents about budgeting, saving, and the risks associated with gambling-related financial behaviors. Thus, equipping adolescents with financial management skills can help them make responsible choices regarding money and avoid excessive gambling.

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