

PSYCHOLOGICAL CORRELATES OF GAMBLING BEHAVIOUR AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

The study examined psychological correlates of gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State. The design for the study was correlational research design. The population of the study comprised of all 9636 students in senior secondary class two from 3 Local Government Areas (Obio/Apkor, Ahoada East, and Eleme) in the 3 Senatorial Zones of Rivers West, East, and Rivers South of Rivers State, Nigeria. A sample of 963 participants was randomly and independently selected using purposive sampling technique from the 40 schools in the sampled 3 Local Government Areas in Rivers State, Nigeria (Obio/Apkor, Ahoada East, and Eleme). An instrument titled “Adolescent Gambling Behaviour Index” (AGBI) was used to collect data for the study. The Cronbach Alpha reliability was used to establish the internal consistency reliability coefficient 0.76 for the Adolescent Gambling Behaviour Index (AGBI). Responses to the research questions were analyzed with mean and standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment correlation and independent sample t-test respectively, while the corresponding hypotheses were tested with independent sample t-test and linear regression. The findings of the study showed that gender, peer group and location relate significantly to gambling behavior among secondary school students in Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that schools should enforce strict disciplinary measures prohibiting any form of gambling among students. Moreover, periodic seminars and orientation programs should be organized to educate students on the effect of gambling on their academics and social behaviour.

Key words: Psychological correlates (Self-Esteem and Emotional Intelligence) and Gambling Behaviour

Introduction

Gambling is commonly described as any activity in which something of value is risked on the outcome of an event when the probability of winning or losing is less

than certain (Korn and Shaffer, 1999). Etel, Tabchi, Bou, Hlais and Richa (2013) explained that when a person gambles, he or she is placing an item of value at risk, in an attempt to gain something of even greater value. Gambling can be understood

as the established practice of staking money or other valuables on games or events of an uncertain outcome (Binde, 2005). It is a form of behaviour that has been identified to have serious consequences on gamblers health, interpersonal relationships, study-habit, academic performance, and has been reported to be related to some criminal behaviour (Oyebisi, Alao, & Popoola, 2012).

Gambling is based on a combination of skills or chance or both and something of value that can be won or lost (Kassinove, 1996). Young people including secondary school adolescents are a high risk group for gambling and gambling problems (Moore, 2013). A high prevalence of gambling participation has been observed in different secondary school adolescent populations, (Etel, Tabchi, Bou Khalil, Hlais & Richa, 2013). Secondary school students engage in a wide range of gambling behaviours, including playing lottery, poker/cards for money, casino games (i.e., slots/poker machines), horse racing, betting on sports and internet gambling (Burger, Dahlgren, & MacDonald, 2006).

Gambling issues among adolescents have generally gotten very little or no attention as such; there are few writings on adolescent gambling. Nevertheless,

adolescent by all indication, seem to be especially crucial in considering gambling practices given the likely dangers associated with gambling practices. Studies have shown a high prevalence of gambling among young people in Rivers state and much of this practice takes place in schools (Eneh & Stanley, 2004). Statistics revealed that in Rivers state a significant proportion of secondary school adolescents engage in various forms of gambling (Naria bet, Bet9ja lotto plus, MTNQuest 4 Football, Merry bet etc) (Nigeria Communications Week, 2017). This trend is particularly prevalent among adolescents, wherein adolescents are constantly seen in game centers, pool shops, and under canopies along streets where gambling activities take place. The situation is such that adolescents have to predict the outcome of matches in order to win money or other materials. The higher the number of matches predicted the higher the expected outcome if the prediction is right at the end of the match. The researcher has also observed that secondary school students particularly those in boarding schools, usually use their meals, beverages, cloths and other personal items to gamble among their peers.

As a result of technological development and availability of internet facilities, the

level of adolescent's engagement in gambling behaviour in Rivers State is increasing. This is a big problem among this population. Present indication shows that more and more adolescents are involving themselves in this activity; some have even perceived it as a source of income and abandon other activities that can provide them with better income for the future. Recent data shows that Nigerians spend about 1.8 billion naira daily on online sport betting (Online Sportnews, 2015). A public opinion poll revealed that gambling and betting is becoming very popular in Nigeria, particularly amongst the country's bulging youth population and sports fans aged between 18–35 years (NOIPolls, 2017). While some people benefit from this activity, majority tend to lose their money in this activity. Studies have shown that if gambling situations are displayed to adolescents, most will take part to some degree. At present, when contrasted with past years, adolescents live in a period of expanded gambling accessibility (internet betting, shopping coupons, scratch cards, lotteries, raffle-draws, etc); they are presented with the various form of gambling such that they feel gambling is normal. Adolescents are motivated to gamble for a number of reasons including: entertainment, to win money, the sensation of winning, the thrill of the game, to

escape stress/problems, peer influence, gangsterism, socio-economic status, greed, and so on. As opposed to the common aim of gambling for financial increase in grown-ups, adolescents' gambling is frequently reported as a chance to mingle. It is seen as an avenue to relate with others as opposed to a chance to win money.

The participation in gambling by secondary school adolescents is a major problem which can cause serious health risks; pose academic challenges, abnormal heart rhythms, anxiety, irritability, insomnia, and sensory disturbances. Although, adolescents who participate in gambling feel that engaging in it helps reduce tension, frustration, boredom and sometimes help them stay awake all night or increase their mental alertness. However, experiences of some gamblers have shown that engaging in gambling carries a high price tag which often leads to fatality, drug use, smoking, suicidal and gangsterism. When gambling behaviour increases, it may produce negative consequences in the adolescent's financial, social, and overall health. Some of these negative health and social consequences of gambling on adolescents may include; gambling disorders, family dysfunction and domestic violence, alcohol and other drug problems, psychiatric conditions, suicide and suicide attempts, significant

financial problems, and criminal behaviour. A major consequence of gambling among secondary school adolescents is poor academic performance, truancy and increased school dropout. Gamblers often show signs of depression, withdrawal, mood swings and have difficulties establishing close friendships or maintaining social networks, often replacing friends with gambling associates.

There are debates that self-esteem may relate to gambling behaviour among adolescents. For instance Harter (1990) stressed that around one-half of adolescents in the world struggle with low self-esteem which may lead to delinquency, gambling, self-inflicted behaviours, suicide, and eating-disorders. Lightfoot, Cole and Cole (2008) suggested that individuals who have low self-esteem are more prone to engage in risky behaviours and develop gambling addictions. They further explain that, perhaps poor self-esteem is a starting point for adolescents becoming involved in gambling. Other studies point out that engaging in gambling activities has a negative effect on one's own self-worth (Kaare, Mottus, & Konstabel, 2009).

Emotional intelligence is conceptualized as the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this

information to guide one's thinking and actions. Kaare, Mottus, and Konstabel, (2009) observed that, individuals with lower levels of emotional intelligence are at a greater risk of developing problem gambling and other self-destructive behaviour. According to Kaur, Schutte, and Thorsteinsson (2006), those who have lower levels of emotional intelligence run a greater risk of problem gambling. Furthermore, they reported that individuals with a higher emotional intelligence perceive themselves as more competent and successful, thus better able to handle any gambling tendencies they may have. From the foregoing therefore, the researcher is motivated to examine psychological correlates of gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study examined psychological correlates of gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. Determine whether self-esteem relate to gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State.
2. Examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and

gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does self-esteem relate to gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does emotional intelligence relate to gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

1. Self-esteem does not significantly relate to gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State.
2. Emotional intelligence does not significantly relate to gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study comprised of all the 9636 students in senior secondary class two from 3 Local Government Areas (Obio/Apkor, Ahoada

East, and Eleme) in the 3 senatorial zones of Rivers West, East, and Rivers South of Rivers State, Nigeria. A sample of 963 participants was randomly and independently selected using purposive sampling technique from the 40 schools in the sampled 3 Local Government Areas in Rivers State, Nigeria (Obio/Apkor, Ahoada East, and Eleme). Three instruments titled; Adolescent Gambling Behaviour Index (AGBI), Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) were used to collect data for the study. The instruments were designed on a four point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) =4, Agree (A) =3, Disagree (D) =2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1. The Cronbach Alpha reliability was used to establish the internal consistency reliability coefficient 0.76 for the Adolescent Gambling Behaviour Index (AGBI), Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) 0.78 and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) 0.69. Responses to the research questions were analyzed with mean and standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment correlation and independent sample t-test respectively, while the corresponding hypotheses were tested with independent sample t-test, linear regression.

Results and Discussion

Research Question One: To what extent does self-esteem relate to gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State?

Hypotheses One: Self-esteem does not significantly relate to gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment correlation on the relationship between self-esteem and gambling behaviour among adolescents

Category	N	r	Sig.	Remarks
Self-esteem				Not
Gambling behaviour	963	-.036	.268	Statistically significant

Table 1 revealed that the Pearson Product correlation coefficient r was calculated to be -0.036 . This showed that there is a negative low relationship between self-esteem and gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State. The relationship between self-esteem and gambling behaviour of -0.036 is not statistically significant at 0.268 when

compared to the alpha level of 0.05 . Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between self-esteem and gambling behaviour is accepted. This thus implies that, self-esteem does not significantly relate to gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State.

Research Question Two: To what extent does emotional intelligence relate to gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State?

Hypotheses Two: Emotional intelligence does not significantly relate to gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment correlation on the relationship between emotional intelligence and gambling behaviour among adolescents.

Category	N	r	Sig.	Remarks
Emotional intelligence				
Gambling behaviour	963	.066*	.039	Statistically significant

Table 2 revealed that the Pearson Product correlation coefficient r was calculated to be 0.066. This showed that there is a positive high relationship between emotional intelligence and gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State. The relationship between emotional intelligence and gambling behaviour of 0.066 is statistically significant at 0.039 when compared to the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. By implication, emotional intelligence significantly relates to gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. The findings of the study showed that there is a negative low relationship between self-esteem and gambling behaviour among adolescents in Rivers State. Therefore, self-esteem does not significantly relate to gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State. The null hypothesis was retained.
2. The findings of the study rejected the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between emotional

intelligence and gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State. Thus this showed that emotional intelligence significantly relates to gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

Self-Esteem and Gambling Behaviour

The findings of the study showed that self-esteem does not significantly relate to gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State. The null hypothesis of no significant relationship between self-esteem and gambling behaviour was retained. The findings of this study however disagrees with the study by Hirsch & DuBois (1991) who observed that around one-half of adolescents struggle with a low self-esteem which may lead to delinquency, self-inflicted behaviours, suicide, gambling and eating-disorders.

Kaare, Mottus and Konstabel (2009) also explained that having a low self-esteem influence an individual's decision to engage in gambling as a recreational activity, and as the behaviour increases and becomes problematic this further decreases the individual's self-esteem.

Emotional Intelligence and Gambling Behaviour

The findings of the study rejected the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State. It was thus deduced that emotional intelligence significantly relate to gambling behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State. The result of this study agrees with an earlier study by Kaur, Schutte, and Thorsteinsson (2006) who explained that those who have lower levels of emotional intelligence run a greater risk of problem gambling. They further reported that individuals with a higher emotional intelligence perceive themselves as more competent and successful, thus better able to handle any gambling tendencies they may have. Inderjit, Nicola and Einar, (2007) also showed that lower emotional intelligence is related to less self-efficacy to control gambling behaviour. Furthermore, Steven, Nicki and Sabura (2014) found an inverse relationship between mindfulness and problem gambling severity, thus suggesting that emotional intelligence can serve as both a mediator and predictor of problem gambling and other psychological distresses.

Conclusion

Gambling has been conceptualized as the act of betting or wagering of money or something of value on an event that has an uncertain outcome with the possibility of winning money or materials. The participation in gambling by secondary school adolescents is a major problem which can cause serious health risks; pose academic challenges, abnormal heart rhythms, anxiety, irritability, insomnia, and sensory disturbances. This has shown that emotional intelligence relates significantly to gambling behaviour among students in Rivers State, whereas self-esteem did not.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommended the following;

1. Periodic seminars and orientation programs should be organized to educate students on the effect of gambling on their academics and social behaviour.
2. Parents and care givers should endeavour to check and moderate the activities of their children from time to time. This will help in reducing some mischievous activities that are carried on by adolescents' both at home and in school.

3. Schools should enforce strict disciplinary measures prohibiting any form of gambling among students.

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