



PERCEIVED HEALTH DISORDER AND SPORT BETTING AMONG UNIVERSITY OF UYO STUDENTS IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study adopted correlational design to examine the relationship between perceived health disorder and sport betting among University of Uyo students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Two research questions were posed which were translated into two null hypotheses. The population for the study consists of all the final year students of which a sample of 220 students were selected via purposive, simple random and accidental sampling techniques in University of Uyo students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The instruments titled "Perceived Health Disorder and Sport Betting questionnaire (PHDSBQ)" was developed by the researcher and validated by experts and used for data collection. The reliability of the questionnaire using Alpha Cronbach Method gives an average index of 87. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment. Correlation Coefficient at .05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that perceived anxiety and depression significantly relate with sports betting behaviors among university students in Uyo Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It therefore concluded that sports betting behaviors among university students depend on depression and anxiety disorder. Based on finding and conclusion of the study, it was recommended amongst others that Universities should expand mental health resources, including counseling services and wellness programs, to provide students with the necessary support to manage mental health disorders effectively.

KEYWORDS: Perceived health disorder, depression, anxiety disorder, sport betting

INTRODUCTION

Sports betting has emerged as a significant concern among university students in the local context, with increasing participation rates and associated risks.

It has become increasingly popular among university students, driven by the accessibility of online platforms and the normalization of gambling in popular culture. This trend raises concerns about the potential for gambling-related harm,

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especially among those already experiencing mental health issues (Petry et al., 2021). Many students engage in sports betting as a form of entertainment or coping mechanism, often unaware of the potential negative consequences on their mental health, academic performance, and financial stability.

Sports betting involves placing wagers on the outcome of sporting events, often viewed as a form of entertainment. Among university students, sports betting has gained popularity, with many engaging in this activity as a social or recreational pastime. However, the potential for gambling-related harm is significant, particularly for students who may use betting as a coping mechanism for stress or mental health issues. Students who participate in sports betting may be at increased risk for developing gambling-related problems and associated mental health disorders (Akpa, Agbor-Obun & Umoh, 2024; Ibok, & Masor, 2024). Approximately 40% of college students engage in sports betting, with many reporting that it serves as a form of entertainment and social interaction. Students with pre-existing mental health disorders are more likely to engage in risky gambling behaviors, potentially exacerbating their health issues. A growing number of university students are participating in sports betting, driven by easy access to online platforms and the normalization of gambling culture within society. Participation in sports betting may negatively impact academic performance. Students who engage in gambling may experience distractions, reduced study time, and increased stress levels, which can hinder their educational outcomes. There is a concerning correlation between sports betting and mental health issues, including anxiety and depression.

Many students turn to gambling as a way to cope with academic stress and social pressures, which can exacerbate existing mental health problems. The financial implications of sports betting can be severe, leading to debt and financial instability. Students often lack the financial literacy to manage their gambling behaviors, resulting in risky betting practices. There is a significant lack of awareness among university students regarding the risks associated with sports betting. Educational institutions often do not provide adequate resources or support to help students understand responsible gambling practices.

The increasing prevalence of sports betting among university students presents a multifaceted problem that requires urgent attention. Addressing this issue involves understanding the underlying factors driving participation, the mental health implications, and the need for effective interventions and educational programs to promote responsible gambling behaviors.

Perceived health disorders encompass a range of psychological and physical health issues that individuals believe they may be experiencing. Among university students, common perceived health disorders include anxiety, depression, and stress-related conditions. Research indicates that the transition to university life can exacerbate these issues due to academic pressures, social challenges, and lifestyle changes (Hunt et al., 2021). According to Gibbons et al. (2020), nearly 30% of university students reported significant levels of anxiety and depression, often linked to academic performance and social pressures. Perceived health disorder refers to an individual's subjective interpretation of their health status, including mental and physical health issues. For university students, perceived health disorders can encompass a range of conditions, including stress, anxiety, and depression, often exacerbated by the challenges of university life. This perception can influence students' behaviors, including their willingness to seek help or engage in health-promoting activities (López-González et al., 2022).

The relationship between perceived health disorders and sports betting is complex. On one hand, students may turn to gambling as a coping mechanism for stress and anxiety. On the other hand, gambling can lead to further psychological distress, creating a vicious cycle of mental health deterioration (López-González et al., 2022). A qualitative study by McCarthy et al. (2021) found that some students perceive sports betting as a way to escape from their academic and personal pressures. Conversely, the same study noted that students who gamble frequently reported higher levels of anxiety and depression, suggesting that while gambling may provide temporary relief, it ultimately contributes to a decline in mental health. Perceived depression is increasingly recognized as a significant mental health issue among university students. A local study by Rahman et al.

(2021) reported that approximately 45% of students surveyed exhibited symptoms consistent with depression. Contributing factors included academic stress, social pressures, and financial instability, which are prevalent in university settings. Sports betting has been identified as a coping strategy for some students dealing with perceived depression. Perceived depression refers to the subjective experience of depressive symptoms, which may include feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a lack of interest in activities. Among university students, perceived depression can significantly impact academic performance and social interactions. Research has shown that many students experience these symptoms due to stressors related to academic demands, social relationships, and life transitions (Gibbons et al., 2020; Akpa, Ekpenyong & Emmanuel, 2024; Anam & Ahueeansebor, 2017). The relationship between perceived depression and sports betting among university students is an emerging area of research that highlights the psychological and behavioral challenges faced by this demographic. As mental health issues become increasingly prevalent in university settings. A study by Hunt et al. (2021) tracked students over time and found that those who engaged in sports betting were more likely to report worsening depressive symptoms. This suggests that while gambling may initially provide a distraction, it can ultimately contribute to a decline in mental health. The empirical evidence underscores the need for targeted interventions to address both perceived depression and gambling behaviors among university students. Universities should consider implementing mental health support services that specifically address the risks associated with gambling, as well as promoting healthy coping strategies for managing depression (López-González et al., 2022). As mental health issues continue to rise in this population, it is crucial for educational institutions to develop comprehensive strategies that address both mental health and gambling behaviors to promote overall well-being. Research by Nguyen and Lee (2022) found that many students engage in sports betting as a form of escapism, seeking temporary relief from their depressive symptoms. However, this behavior can lead to a cycle of increased financial stress and deeper depressive feelings.

A study by Simpson et al. (2022) followed students over an academic year and found that those who engaged in sports betting reported an increase in depressive symptoms over time. This underscores the need for interventions that address both mental health and gambling behaviors simultaneously. The empirical evidence highlights the necessity for targeted interventions that address perceived depression and sports betting among university students. Local universities should consider implementing comprehensive mental health programs that include education on responsible gambling practices and provide resources for managing depressive symptoms, such as counseling services and peer support networks (Kumar et al., 2023; Ibok, Ogar, Bassey, James & Udo, 2024). As mental health issues continue to rise, it is crucial for educational institutions to develop strategies that address both depression and gambling behaviors to enhance overall student well-being.

Perceived anxiety disorder encompasses the individual's recognition and experience of anxiety symptoms, which may manifest as excessive worry, restlessness, or physical symptoms like increased heart rate. In the context of university students, perceived anxiety is often linked to academic pressures, financial concerns, and social challenges. Studies indicate that a significant proportion of students report anxiety symptoms, which can interfere with their academic success and overall well-being (Hunt et al., 2021; Akpa, Ekpenyong & Emmanuel, 2024; Akpa, Anam & Akah, 2024; Anam & Nanjwan, 2016). The interplay between perceived anxiety disorders and sports betting among university students is a growing area of concern in mental health and gambling research. As university life can be particularly stressful, understanding how anxiety influences gambling behaviors is crucial for developing effective interventions. Research indicates that anxiety disorders are prevalent among university students, with studies showing that approximately 30-40% of students report experiencing significant anxiety symptoms (Gibbons et al., 2020). Factors contributing to this anxiety include academic pressure, social challenges, and transitional life changes associated with higher education. McCarthy et al. (2021) found that students often engage in gambling activities as a way to alleviate feelings of

anxiety, seeking the thrill and distraction that betting provides. However, this behavior can lead to negative consequences, including increased anxiety and financial stress. Gainsbury et al. (2020) reported that students with higher levels of anxiety were more likely to participate in sports betting. This suggests that gambling may serve as a maladaptive strategy for managing anxiety, leading to a vicious cycle where gambling exacerbates anxiety symptoms. Perceived anxiety disorders are prevalent among university students, often exacerbated by academic pressures, social expectations, and transitional life changes. A study conducted by Smith et al. (2021) found that approximately 35% of students reported experiencing significant anxiety symptoms. These symptoms were linked to various factors, including exam stress, financial concerns, and social isolation. For many students, sports betting serves as a coping mechanism for managing anxiety. A study by Johnson and Lee (2022) highlighted that students often engage in sports betting to escape their worries and seek excitement. While this behavior may provide temporary relief, it can lead to increased anxiety and financial stress, creating a cycle of dependence. A survey study by Tan et al. (2023) revealed that students with higher levels of anxiety were more likely to participate in sports betting. The findings suggest that gambling may serve as a maladaptive strategy for coping with anxiety, further exacerbating mental health issues. A study by Chen et al. (2022) followed students over a semester and found that those who engaged in sports betting reported worsening anxiety symptoms over time. This underscores the need for interventions that address both anxiety and gambling behaviors simultaneously. The empirical evidence highlights the necessity for targeted interventions that address perceived anxiety disorders and sports betting among university students. Universities should consider implementing mental health programs that incorporate education on responsible gambling and provide resources for managing anxiety, such as counseling services and stress management workshops (Nguyen et al., 2023). As mental health issues continue to rise, it is crucial for educational institutions to develop comprehensive strategies that address both anxiety and gambling behaviors to promote overall student well-being.

Perceived health disorders among university students have emerged as a critical concern within the local context, affecting their overall well-being, academic performance, and social interactions. As students navigate the challenges of higher education, many report experiencing a range of health issues, including mental health disorders, physical ailments, and stress-related conditions. A significant number of university students perceive themselves as suffering from mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression. This perception is often linked to academic pressures, social isolation, and transitional life changes, leading to a growing mental health crisis on campuses (Anam, Nsor & Ukpata, 2025; Akpa, Anam, & Akah, 2024; Anam, 2016). In addition to mental health issues, students frequently report physical health problems, including fatigue, sleep disturbances, and lifestyle-related conditions. Poor nutrition, lack of exercise, and irregular sleep patterns contribute to these health concerns. There is a pervasive stigma surrounding mental health issues that prevents students from seeking help. Many students may not recognize the signs of health disorders or may feel ashamed to discuss their struggles, leading to untreated conditions. Perceived health disorders can significantly hinder academic success. Students experiencing health issues may struggle with concentration, motivation, and attendance, ultimately affecting their grades and overall educational experience. Many universities lack sufficient mental health resources and support services to address the needs of students. Limited access to counseling, educational workshops, and health resources can exacerbate the challenges faced by those dealing with perceived health disorders. The rising prevalence of perceived health disorders among university students presents a multifaceted problem that requires immediate attention. Addressing this issue involves understanding the contributing factors, enhancing awareness and education, reducing stigma, and improving access to mental and physical health resources to promote the well-being of students in the local context.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between perceived health disorder and sport betting among University of

Uyo students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seek to establish

i) the relationship between perceived depression and sport betting among University of Uyo students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

ii) the relationship between perceived anxiety disorder and sport betting among University of Uyo students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Statement of hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study:

i) There is no significant relationship between perceived depression and sport betting among University of Uyo students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

ii) There is no significant relationship between perceived anxiety disorder and sport betting among University of Uyo students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study area was University of Uyo in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The research design used for this study was the correlational survey design. The researchers used this design to established the relationship between perceived health disorder (in terms of depression and anxiety disorder) and sport betting among University of Uyo students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The population for the study consists of all the final years students of 13 faculties in University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Multistage sampling techniques was used to select all the final students. Simple random sampling technique was done used to select 3 faculties for the study. In doing this, the name of all the thirteen faculties were written on a pieces of papers, folded and mixed in the basket. The researcher blindly three papers one after the others. The name of faculties whose appeared on the pieces of the paper were used for the study. From each selected three faculties, accidental sampling technique was used to 220 final years students for the study. The sampling techniques adopted for this study accidental sampling technique. Accidental random sampling, also known as convenience sampling, is a non-

probability sampling technique where individuals are selected based on their availability and willingness to participate rather than through a random selection process. This method was used since most of students were not available at the time of conducted research and even some that were available were not willing to participated in the exercises. The researcher only used those that are available and were willing to participated in the research study

The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire titled "Perceived Health Disorder and Sport Betting". The questionnaire was made of 38 items, with 10 items to measure each sub-level in terms of perceived depression and perceived anxiety disorder and 18 items measuring sport betting of the students. The questionnaire was based on four point scale of strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. The instruments were face-validated by four experts, 2 experts from Measurement and Evaluation, two experts in Human Kinetics and Health Education, both from the University of Calabar. Corrections were pointed out by the experts and adjusted by the researchers and the document was considered valid. The reliability of the questionnaire using Alpha Cronbach Method gives an average index of 87. Since the reliability index is above 0.50, the estimates were considered high enough for the study. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programme was used to analyze the data collected. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was for the three hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at 05 level of significance.

Presentation of results

The result of the analysis is presented in Tables 1 and 2. The hypotheses were tested at .05 significant level.

Ho₁ There is no significant relationship between perceived depression and sport betting among University of Uyo students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is perceived depression while the dependent variable is sport betting. In testing this hypothesis, mean, standard deviation of micro perceived depression and sport betting were computed, compared and correlate using Pearson Product Moment Correction. The results are presented on Table 1.

Table 1: Person Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between perceived depression and sport betting (N= 220)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value
Perceived depression	220	24.789	3.721	.833	.000
Sport betting	220	44.892	4.878		

*Significant at the .05 level, df =218

The result presented on Table 1 shows that there is a significant positively high relationship between perceived depression and sport betting among University of Uyo students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria ($r=.833$; $p=.000$). With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative was retained at the 0.05 level of significance. The positive r-value indicated that the more they students are depress , the more they engage in sport betting . On the other hand, when they do not depress, the lesser they tend to involve in spot betting.

Ho₂ There is no significant relationship between perceived anxiety disorder and sport betting among University of Uyo students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is perceived anxiety disorder while the dependent variable is sport betting . In testing this hypothesis, mean, standard deviation of micro perceived anxiety disorder and sport betting were computed, compared and correlate using Pearson Product Moment Correction . The results are presented on Table 2.

Table 2: Person Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between perceived anxiety disorder and sport betting (N= 220)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value
Perceived anxiety disorder	220	23.772	3.921	.789	.000
Sport betting	220	44.892	4.878		

*Significant at the .05 level, df =218

The result presented on Table 1 shows that there is a significant positively high relationship between perceived anxiety disorder and sport betting among University of Uyo students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria ($r=.789$; $p=.000$). With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative was retained at the 0.05 level of significance. The positive r-value indicated that the more they students perceived anxiety disorder , the more they engage in sport betting . On the other hand, when they do not perceived anxiety disorder, the lesser they tend to involve in spot betting.

DISCUSSION OF FINDING

The result of the first hypothesis shows that there is a significant relationship between perceived depression and sport betting among University of Uyo students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This is because perceived depression is increasingly recognized as a significant mental health issue among university students and proportional number of university students perceive themselves as suffering from mental health disorders, such depression. This perception is often may result into academic pressures, social isolation, and transitional life changes,

leading to a growing mental health crisis on campuses. The finding agreed with Rahman et al. (2021) who reported that approximately 45% of students surveyed exhibited symptoms consistent with depression. The finding agreed with a study by Hunt et al. (2021) who found that those who engaged in sports betting were more likely to report worsening depressive symptoms. This suggests that while gambling may initially provide a distraction, it can ultimately contribute to a decline in mental health. Research by Nguyen and Lee (2022) found that many students engage in sports betting as a form of escapism, seeking temporary relief from their depressive symptoms. A finding agreed by Simpson et al. (2022) who found that those who engaged in sports betting reported an increase in depressive symptoms over time. This underscores the need for interventions that address both mental health and gambling behaviors simultaneously.

The result of the second hypothesis shows that there is a significant relationship between perceived anxiety disorder and sport betting among University of Uyo students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This is because perceived anxiety disorder encompasses the individual's recognition and experience of anxiety symptoms, which may manifest as excessive worry, restlessness, or physical symptoms like increased heart rate. In the context of university students, perceived anxiety is often linked to academic pressures, financial concerns, and social challenges. The finding agreed with McCarthy et al. (2021) who found that students often engage in gambling activities as a way to alleviate feelings of anxiety, seeking the thrill and distraction that betting provides. However, this behavior can lead to negative consequences, including increased anxiety and financial stress. The finding agreed with Gainsbury et al. (2020) who reported that students with higher levels of anxiety were more likely to participate in sports betting. The finding aligned with a study conducted by Smith et al. (2021) who found that approximately 35% of students reported experiencing significant anxiety symptoms. A study by Johnson and Lee (2022) highlighted that students often engage in sports betting to escape their worries and seek excitement. The finding agreed with a survey study by Tan et al. (2023) who found that students with higher levels of anxiety were more

likely to participate in sports betting. The findings suggest that gambling may serve as a maladaptive strategy for coping with anxiety, further exacerbating mental health issues. A study by Chen et al. (2022) found that students who engaged in sports betting reported worsening anxiety symptoms over time. This underscores the need for interventions that address both anxiety and gambling behaviors simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that perceived anxiety and depression significantly relate with sports betting behaviors among university students in Uyo Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Students experiencing anxiety disorders are more likely to engage in sports betting as a means of coping with their emotional distress. Similarly, those suffering from depression may turn to gambling as an escape from their feelings of hopelessness and isolation. This interplay between mental health issues and gambling behaviors underscores the need for targeted interventions that address both anxiety and depression to mitigate their impact on students' lives. By implementing these recommendations, educational institutions can create a supportive environment that fosters mental health awareness and responsible gambling practices, ultimately enhancing the academic and personal success of their students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were made;

i) Universities should expand mental health resources, including counseling services and wellness programs, to provide students with the necessary support to manage mental health disorders effectively.

ii) Educational institutions should develop programs that raise awareness about the risks associated with sports betting and the impact of mental health on gambling behaviors. Workshops and seminars can help students understand the consequences of their actions.

iii) Universities can collaborate with gambling organizations to promote responsible gambling initiatives. This includes providing resources on safe betting practices and encouraging students to seek help if they feel their gambling is becoming problematic.

iv) Universities should actively work to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues through campaigns and open discussions. Normalizing conversations about mental health can encourage more students to seek help when needed.

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