

# Public Perception of Football Betting and the Birth of Deviant Behaviour among Youths in the South–South Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria

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DOI: 10.56201/ijssmr.v9.no6.2023.pg29.46

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## **Abstract**

*Football betting has erroneously become a source of livelihood formillions of Nigerian youths, regardless of the fact that it is viewed as an ignominious activity that should be shunned by all and sundry. Sequel to this, this study examined public perception of football betting and the birth of deviant behaviour among youths in the south–south geo-political zone of Nigeria. Three research questions were formulated to guide and attain the objectives of the study. Survey research design was adopted and a total sample of 1200 respondent was selected through purposive sampling technique. The Social exchange theory of George Homans provided the theoretical underpinning for the study. Among the findings, the study showed that football betting has become a money-spinning, enchanting business enterprise and hundreds of thousands of young Nigerians at present view it as a viable alternative to provide for their necessities. The study also revealed that football betting has become addictive and is therefore increasing the rate of deviance in the society. Based on this, the study concluded that as an addictive phenomenon, every hand must be on deck to curb the case of growing deviant behaviour amongst Nigerian youths. Sequel to this, the study recommended amongst others, that any arrangement directed at cutting back the harmful consequences of football betting should be well thought-out and, must be in line with public health goals. Further, government should intensify efforts to organize seminars to reduce the patronage of betting by young Nigerians, the supposed leaders of tomorrow. Finally, parents must provide worthy reorientation to encourage their wards to give up betting as well as hire psychologists and counselors to help out.*

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**Keywords:** South-south geo-political zone; On-line football betting; Livelihoods; Addiction; Gen z

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## **1. Introduction**

There is no precise account of when man began playing and watching football. Any attempt to inquire about it would to a large extent not escape when football betting emerged. If truth be told, playing and watching football was purely for entertainment and relaxation purposes, but nowadays, it has been turned into a huge commercial venture and, is unconsciously derailing the proper development of youths and pushing them into deviance. Sequel to this, it is viewed as a disreputable activity that should be shunned by all and sundry. Despite this, football betting has ceased to be recreational game and grown into a multi-million dollars enterprise.

In their discourse, Muhammad& Adam (2018) asserted that contemporary football started in England towards the close of the 17th century. During this era, playing and watching football was purely for entertainment and relaxation purposes. Explaining further, Muhammad et al (2018) argued that the game of football was played by young people from rich families and also by high-status schools teams. But with the growth and popularity of football soaring higher than imagined, the need to form an association to oversee its development was conceived. This initiative birthed the English Football Association in 1863 and thereafter, the first sets of rules to govern the game of football were instituted by the end of the 19th century. Forty one (41) years after the launch of Football Association in England ([www.english-online.at/sports/soccer/europeanfootball.htm](http://www.english-online.at/sports/soccer/europeanfootball.htm)), the Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) was founded in 1904 to manage the game of football worldwide.

As earlier observed, the practice of playing and watching football matches for relaxation has transcended into a huge economic enterprise through betting; it has become addictive, particularly with meaningful jobs beyond the reach of Nigerian youths. But the risk and insecurity inherent in football betting are heart-breaking because the bets placed during matches are distrustful in spite of the fact that winners are seemingly expected at the end of games. Whether it is admitted or not, the public view of football betting is that of an outright gambling, a habit that is easy to initiate, but extremely hard to bring to an end. Appallingly, the increasing concern given to football betting has become a source of headache to a number of families whose children have continued to exhibit maladaptive conduct such as distress, suicidal, dreariness, disenchantment, loss of concentration, truancy, mental health struggles (depression) and the like. Besides, it is even more unspeakable that these young people have time after time obtained loans from friends dubiously to place bets on football matches and looking forward to winning, but instead of victories as envisioned, bankruptcy has become their partner as they hardly ever win. As they continue to place bets without winning as imagined, some kind of irreversible damage is being done to them psychologically.

From different schools of thought, the engagement of youths in football betting has been attributed to unemployment. Among the many captivating features of today's football betting are the uses of the Internet and other hi-tech inputs to place bets online or at designated offices of the betting companies faster, easier and with convenience. This was in contrast to when betting was analogically played. In line with this new development, the re-branding of football betting as an online activity has become more attractive to the young people who in their millions have profoundly been addicted to the deviant act. Despite this, it has become a multi-million Naira (country's currency) industry as millions of hard-to-believe followers eagerly support the business with their bets and expecting to win. While football players work harder to justify their high earnings, majority of Nigerian youths are daily being driven by the cargo-cult mentality. Cargo-cult is simply the belief that someday, without any exertion whatsoever, a fairy ship will dock in the harbour laden with every goody everyone has always dreamed of possessing. Thus, with cargo-cult mentality, what counts is simply football betting to acquire such a ship. But if there were meaningful jobs, would young people be devotedly involved in football betting? Youth unemployment in every nook and cranny of the society has become one of the fundamental developmental challenges facing Nigeria at the moment.

It is in view of the menace of the high rate of youth unemployment that KPMG, Global audit and tax advisory firm, projected that Nigeria's unemployment rate will rise to 40.6% as compared to 2022's

37.7 % (Usen, 2023). With this high youth unemployment projected, KPMG detailed that “unemployment be a major challenge in 2023 due to the limited investment in the private sector that will result to low industrialization, and slower than required economic growth. As a result, the economy cannot absorb nearly 4-5 million jobless young people. Explaining further, it is estimated by the Trading Economics Global Macro Models and Analysts that youth unemployment rate will increase by 58.00 percent by the end of this quarter. In the long-term, the Nigeria youth unemployment rate is projected to trend around 57.00 percent and 56.00 percent in 2024 according to econometric models.

From this frightening statistics on youth unemployment, it does simply suggest that there are no other sustainable and available jobs with which to generate income except football betting, a deviant activity that is strongly addictive. Thus, in the absence of nothing worthy to embark upon, there has been this unusual yearning for football betting as a means to an end, particularly amongst majority of young people due to the horrifying statistics on youth unemployment. Going by this, the dependence on football betting like no other is now an obsession. Consequently, football betting has continued to impoverish youths who believe so much in the unending optimism of winning. Despite the abundant natural and human resources for development in the country, there is this unflattering judgment by a team of scholars that out of 20 million pupils in primary schools, only six million (30%) would get to high schools, and out of one million yearly applicants for university education, only 150,000 (15%) gain admission (Bello, 2023). Sustaining his position statistically, Bello averred that out of about 100,000 graduates from different tertiary institutions in the country yearly, less than 30,000 of them get into regular employment. By implication, the balance of 70,000 should be embracing football betting as an alternative. In other words, the Nigerian society has increasingly become saturated with idle youths. Young people who are daily being exposed to fantasy, glorification of violent demeanor from videos and football betting as the only viable career worth embracing. With this mindset, football betting has remained a means to an end, an unsustainable job that contributes to the creation of deviance and the disorganization of young people. Recently, the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) said unemployment rate would rise to 37 percent this year, four points ahead of NBS’s 2020 data, but in reality, it is approaching 56% as the number of unemployed, underemployed and unemployable youths keep soaring daily.

However, while lamenting the plight of young people patronizing football betting shops, Lopez-Gonzalez et al (2017) aptly described them as ‘out-of-place’. With this appellation, it is obvious that the world, particularly the Nigerian society is in a very terrible mess unless and unless something drastic is done to curtail the ugly trend associated with football betting. Thus, this work specifically examined the public perception of football betting as it has increased deviant behaviour among youths in the south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Despite the outrageous condemnation of football betting, it has become a money-spinning and enchanting business enterprise to stake and gain financial increase. The zeal to gamble has caught up with Nigerian youths via football betting and a greater proportion of them is at risk. Following the mania, group interaction due to unemployment has been the key issue dragging youths into football betting. Aside from being a risky business, the rate at which young people are participating in the

activity daily is not only worrisome, but that its addictiveness and prevalence in every nook and cranny of the society has been damaging the psyche of youths. Admittedly, football betting is not an illegal activity, but hundreds of millions of youths involved in it have become deviants and addicted to it. Still, for those who are unemployed, their rate of deviance is frightening. What is more, the American Psychiatric Association (2013) observed that gambling has, no doubt caused untold pains and hardship to individuals, families leading to mental health disorder, substance abuse, marital dysfunction, debts, and low productivity. Unfortunately, the costs, including the consequences and potential internet threats of online activities are rarely understood by majority of these young people deeply immersed in it.

Based on the following, the main objective of this study focuses on the public perception of football betting and the birth of deviant behaviour among youths in the south–south geo-political zone of Nigeria. Other objectives include:-

- i) To determine the relationship between the intense participation in online football betting and youth unemployment
- ii) To evaluate the loss in online football betting and the indescribable psychological effects on bettors in the south-south geo-political zone of the country
- iii) To examine the effects of participating in online football betting and the mania to earn extra income in the south-south geo-political zone of the country.

From the following, it is obvious that this study would contribute to understanding football betting; particularly these days that it has rapidly become major source of livelihood to a legion of young people in the south–south geo-political zone of Nigeria. But prior to this, three research questions were formulated to guide the study. These include:

- (i) What is the relationship between the obsession with online football betting and unemployment amongst millions of young people in the south–south geo-political zone of Nigeria?
- (ii) How does the loss in online football betting psychologically effect bettors in the south-south geo-political zone of the country?
- (iii) Is there any connection between participating in online football betting and the mania to earn extra income among participants in the south-south geo-political zone of the country?

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1 Social Exchange Theory**

There are many versions of exchange theory. In this study, the proponent of the exchange theory employed in this study is that propounded by George Homans. In his submission, social behaviour as exchange, exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, are more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two people or groups (Homans 1958, 1961). Homans contended that the crux of social exchange theory rests on three basic propositions of success, stimulus, and deprivation-satiation. According to the success proposition, when individuals relating with others are rewarded for their actions, they tend to repeat the actions. For stimulus proposition, the more often a given stimulus has resulted in a reward in the past, the more likely an individual will respond to it. Finally, in deprivation-satiation proposition, Homans posits that the more often in the recent past a person has received a particular reward, the less valuable any further unit of that reward becomes. Generally, the kernel of the Social Exchange theory is highlighted hereunder.

- (a). Most gratification among human beings comes from others
- (b). People have access to information about social, economic, and psychological aspects of their interactions that allows them to consider alternative, more profitable situations relative to their present situation
- (c). People are goal oriented in a freely competitive system
- (d). Exchange operates within cultural norms
- (e). Social credit is preferred over social indebtedness
- (f). The more deprived the individual feels in terms of an act, the more value the individual will assign to it
- (g). People are rational and calculate the best possible means to compete in rewarding situations

From the foregoing, it is essential to observe that individuals as rational actors will always engage and continue to be involved in rewarding actions, especially if such rewards meet their social, cultural, psychological and economic goals. On the other hand, within capitalist context, it is fundamental to observe that exchange activities are not done benevolently; social exchanges are exploitative and individuals will engage in actions and encourage others to engage in similar actions that promote small capitalist interest of surplus value. By implication, this implies that capitalists function within exploitative dictates rather than within reciprocal dictates. Put in a different way, individuals who are involved in the exchange interactions in capitalist societies are rational in their quest to maximize profits; unfortunately, this is contrary to Homans' thesis.

As it stands today, the present day generation of Nigerian youths, popularly known as the "Gen z" are dangerously growing up in environments where football betting has fraudulently being regarded as a harmless recreational and entertaining activity. While the deviant behaviour intensifies, it is regrettable that they have become addicted to betting on daily basis; they hardly admit that most of the matches played that have huge bets on are manipulated through sale-out by certain players who make avoidable mistakes. These mistakes often come in form of rough tackles resulting in penalties or goalkeepers letting in a cheeky ball pass by into their nets. As generally upheld, 'these intentional mistakes' signaled the scoring of long-awaited goal to forestall any big win by those who had placed



bets on the opposite direction. It is no surprise that most league clubs have betting partners, and are therefore sponsored by betting websites to the extent that some modern stadia have had their naming rights claimed by these wealthy organizations. In applying the social exchange theory, it is obvious that youths see football betting as a must game to be played because the spirit on it is one that erroneously guarantees them livelihood through winning. However, the lack of public awareness on the dangers of football betting amongst youths is tearing the Nigerian society apart as the incidence of deviance has enveloped the activity.

## **2. Material and methods**

### **2.1 Study area**

The study area of this research was conducted in some selected states in the south–south geo-political zone of Nigeria. There are six states in the south-south geo-political zone of the country. Out of the six, four, namely, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Cross River and Bayelsa states were purposively selected for this study.

### **2.2 Research instrument**

Survey research design was employed in this study. This research design was preferred because it has the ability to collect large samples from the population, describes, and interprets the relationships that exist between the variables under study. The study employed the purposeful sampling technique that enabled the researcher to apply his discretion to select respondents for the study. This is essential because of the fact that the sampled respondents are made up of respondents who understood what the focus of the study meant. The target population involved in this study consisted of 1200 respondents purposively drawn from each of the four states selected in the south-south geo-political zone of the country. Each state was given equal and independent opportunity to be selected or not selected in the study. By implication, each of the four states produced 300 respondents. A structured questionnaire was administered on all the 1200 respondents drawn to find answers in line with the research questions formulated. The content and face validity of the instrument ensured questions that respondents were familiar with the subject matter were asked. To test the research questions, qualitative method was adopted and analyzed.

## **3. Conceptual Issues**

### **3.1 The development of football and a brief history of football betting**

It is still very uncertain when people started playing football. Though there have been some speculations regarding the origin; the first held that ancient Egypt was the starting point. Some thought China as the foundation, while others argued that Rome was the home. Regardless of its beginning, it is generally agreed that modern football started in England at the close of the 17th century where it was played by young people from rich families as well as between school teams. Following this, the first sets of rules were made in England (1863) when the first ever Football Association was founded. Ever then, the game of football had spread throughout the world, particularly towards the end of the 19th century.

Forty one years after the inauguration of football in England and its subsequent spread to the different parts of the globe, the International Association of Football currently known as Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) was formed 1904. Since its formation, FIFA has developed to become the most important and powerful football organization in the world to the extent that it currently organizes the football world cup tournament every four years and also superintends all

countries' national leagues in which teams played against one another for national, continental and world championship titles either directly or indirectly. Interestingly, nineteen years (19) after the emergence of FIFA, precisely in 1923, football betting surfaced. Bookmakers like Littlewoods became among the first to propose football betting outside Old Trafford. It is imperative to state that betting was not only restricted to football, but also to horse races, and other sporting tournaments. Throughout this era, football pool (bet) was played by those in their forties and early sixties. As the game advanced, a new scoring formula where punters get points based on how close their guesses were to the result of up to 12 games to the actual score. In other words, football betting then was simply a system of placing a bet on teams that were about to play and winners emerging after the football matches had been completed for pleasure and entertainment. Bottles of expensive wines such as champagne were popped to celebrate winnings. Despite this pleasurable merriment, there were some particular interest groups and individuals who placed bets with some amount of money or any precious item on teams and when these bets went as predicted, whatever prizes staked were won by the victors. This practice was primarily to boost the financial power of bettors.

Nowadays, online football betting has been re-branded and made more attractive, especially targeting the adolescents who in their millions have become profoundly involved in this deviant act. Among the captivating features of today's betting is the use of the internet and other hi-tech inputs which makes it easier, accessible and quick to place a bet online or at designated offices of the betting companies. This was in contrast to when betting was analogically played. Following this innovation, it has become noteworthy to forecast which football club can win against another; this forecast has become a multi-million Naira industry because millions of incredible and passionate football supporters support the business with their bets (money). Put differently, football betting involves supporters predicting the outcome of matches and placing their bets (money) to match with their stakes. If the predictions are correct, the bet are rewarded with stipulated winnings.

Despite the contemptuous attitude towards football betting, it has regrettably, in this day and age, moved to the next level: online, courtesy of the Internet and other modern technologies. In Nigeria, it is really unfortunate that millions of youths depend on football betting to eke out a living nowadays; low income earners bet between N100 to N200, while the high income earners bet thousands of naira or more, although these high income earners customers are decisively in the minority (Akinlosotu, et al., 2019). Needless to say that when young people begin to depend on football betting as an economic survival strategy, it implies that there is a whole lot of wrong with the system of democracy in Nigeria. At the moment, democracy does not care for the people; neither do the people have a say in it or benefit from it. Democracy has become a disorderly contraption to perpetually dehumanize millions of youths seeking for meaningful jobs. For Chukwu and Ngban (2018), there has been no stable socio-economic environment for private enterprise and the Nigerian political class has capitalized on this lacuna to turn the supposed Nigeria's democracy into money making ventures for self aggrandizements. Little wonder, government is not serious to create jobs for the hundreds of millions of Nigerian youths pushed into football betting as an economic survival strategy

### **3.2 Gambling /Football betting as a big global business**

Nigeria's population is estimated to have reached over 200 million plus now with more than half the population less than 30 years of age without access to gainful employment. Most worrisome is that

thousands of young people are being graduated every year from different higher institutions with confidence to secure employment either from government or private sectors, but in reality no vacancy exists!

Majority of the population is very passionate about sports, particularly football. Obviously, it is agreed that their love for football birthed their desire to participate in betting as well. Thus, a visit to betting shops is usually distressing when one takes into account the huge number of youths with pieces of paper preparing to place their bets. Bookmakers have turned these different betting shops based on their incredible sponsorship offers into enticing youths to place a bet. Since the introduction of online football betting sites, football betting has increased significantly and is raking in billions of dollars yearly. Unfortunately, football betting has become addictive globally. With the introduction of technology into the industry, the number of clients across the globe has increased tremendously. In effect, they are doing everything in their power to make accurate forecast and win material comfort. In achieving this goal, bets are nowadays placed on numerous football matches. It is currently estimated that the football match betting industry (online and offline) is worth between \$700 billion and \$1 trillion per annum, and soccer betting accounts for almost 70% of this ([www.betxchange.com/soccer-betting-industry/](http://www.betxchange.com/soccer-betting-industry/)).

Some schools of thought have estimated that with over 30 betting sites operating in the country and many more still to emerge, about 60 million young Nigerians have deeply become engaged in the betting enterprise. In other words, football betting is experiencing a massive surge in Nigeria, and is consequently having a huge impact on the economy given the fact that it has made Nigeria become the second largest online gambling market in Africa, behind South Africa, with a Gross Gaming Revenue (GGR) of \$58 million in 2018, according to a report by top accounting and auditing firm, PwC (2020). The report projects that the country's GGR will rise by 16% over a five-year period.

There are five major leagues in world football, namely, the English premier league, Spanish premier La Liga, Italian Serie A, German Bundesliga and the French league. In each of these, it is now a common sight to see young Nigerians waiting to place their bets on any of the five, particularly the English premier league. It is really very appealing when one switch on one's television set to observe from advertorial from mega betting houses solely to attract young people into participating. According to Daily Trust (2016), some of the criteria for winning include: predicting the team that will win a football match, predicting the team(s) that will qualify for a competition or the first to qualify; predicting the player who will score/amount of goals to be scored in a match; predicting the player who will receive the first yellow/red card and/or the number of cards that will be received, and so forth. However, with the always winning ridiculousness being preached by bookmakers with their sweet and sugar-coated mouth, many Nigerian youths have been fooled and as a consequence, incurred huge debts that come with undesirable consequences from folks that give them the credit from predicting wrongly.

Nigeria's betting industry has not been growing in isolation, but rather moving along with other industries, notably the banking, information technology and telecommunications industries. The inter-relationship between these sectors can best be described as symbiotic, with each benefiting from the other. Since the revolution of the gambling industry in early 2000, its modernization has expanded in scope and attracted more participants than ever. In 2020, the global gambling market hadan



estimated size of \$443 billion. According to Business day (June 5, 2020), that is about \$50 billion more than Nigeria's gross domestic product, and it is expected to rise to \$200 billion in the next seven years. According to a report by KPMG, an accounting firm, Nigerians ploughs about \$5.5 million into football betting every day, totaling an incredible \$2 billion a year. Bet9ja, the biggest betting brand in Nigeria, returned a monthly turnover of \$10 million as at 2016 (Business day, June 2020). As betting continue to grow at a meteoric rate, it has also affected the economy.

Despite the harm caused to youths, it has been argued that football betting is a blessing to the Nigeria's economy given the fact that it has aided the improvement in banking and payment systems. Bookmakers now have affiliations with banks, payment gateways and telecommunications companies, and leading to a significant increase in the activities in these sectors, and consequently boosting their revenue. Imagine being charged N50 for every deposit you make via Quick teller or internet banking; or being deducted N30 every time you fund your account via the mobile USSD service. Now think about the millions of deposits made into betting accounts per day. Surprisingly, football online betting has suddenly turned out to be a flourishing investment threatening to dominate the economy of most countries in the world. According to Business day (2020), with an estimated turnover of \$3 – \$5 million dollars every month, the betting companies have found a gold mine in Nigeria. Evidently, with this kind of mind-boggling sums of money flying around, it is hardly shocking that the Nigerian government is tightening tax laws, and pulling more from the revenue generated by betting companies (Business day, June 5, 2020) rather than the damage being done to her youth population as a result of unemployment. This seems to explain why the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), the agency tasked with assessing and collecting tax in Nigeria, recently moved to impose a 7.5% value-added tax (VAT) on betting activities in the country. This basically means that bettors pay an extra 7.5% for every stake. For every N100 they stake, an extra N7.50 is paid, adding up to N107.5 (Business day, June 5, 2020). However, while both the bookies and the bettors kicked against this extra tax, and argued that it would turn people away from betting, and ultimately lower the revenue. The government was only interested in raking in more money as tax from football betting. This extra tax at a glance initially appeared to curb the patronage of Nigerian youths from betting, but in reality it is far from it! It is a mere coincidence. Let none be deceived

The gambling industry, of which football betting is part and parcel of, is regulated by the National Lotteries Board and guided by the National Lotteries Act of 2005. In Lagos alone, over 10,000 gambling outlets and over 100,000 participants have been recorded (Lagos State Lottery Board [LSLB], 2017). As of March 2018, 33 promoters were registered to promote gambling. It is meaningful to state that the gambling industry has diversified into lotteries and online football betting. In a poll conducted by News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) as cited by Muhammad and Adam (2018), N1.8 billion is spent on sports betting daily in Nigeria. It is not surprising that young Nigerians are heavily involved in betting. Further, the poll stated that 60 million young people are into betting and gambling enterprise. For Ayomide (2017), the statistics is not surprising as Nigeria is a football crazy country that has a huge youth population. Nowadays, online football betting has become a big global business; in Nigeria, it is now taxable and regulated as a legitimate business (Requirement of Online Sports Betting in Lagos 2015; National Sport Policy of Nigeria 2009). For instance, according to Statistical Portal (2015), even though it may be difficult to accurately estimate the total value of global sports betting due to the inconsistency in the regulatory and financing environments, it is currently

estimated that the football match betting industry (online and offline) generates between \$700 billion and \$1 trillion per annum, and betting accounts for almost 70% of this (www.betxchange.com/soccer-betting-industry/). According to Business day, South Africa is currently the continent leader due to its robust land-based industry, which overshadows all others on the thirty million square kilometer stretch of land. Nigeria is in second place, and it could soon be vying for the top spot.

In a related development, the Delta State Lottery was launched by the immediate past governor, Ifeanyi Okowa, in line with his state wealth creation policy. Surprisingly, he expressed hope that it would empower a lot of people in Delta state, south-south Nigeria by providing jobs and positively impacting on the lives in the state. Buttressing his conviction, he asserted that:

It is our strong hope that Delta State Lottery will be a game-changer in the lives of our people. We hope it will re-distribute income to our people, because the high point of this game is the job creation aspect; more people in Delta state would be employed through this process.

He concluded that all over the world, proceeds from lottery had been used to fund projects executed by governments. In spite of this, the unemployment rate in the country has remained high, particularly in all the four states purposively selected for this study in south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria. Aside from this, Oxford economics (2017) as cited in Mwesigwa (2018) declared that being involved in football betting attracted finances in a number of ways, and one of such has been the high Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita recorded in different countries. In Italy, it made U\$35.273 Million; Spain, U\$34.882Million, and France U\$40.083million. Further, Mwesigwa (2018) stated that the contribution from direct employment, in terms of sports betting activities, attained approximately 100,000 jobs in Uganda. What was more, 130,000 of both indirect and induced jobs were sustained thereby leading to an overall employment contribution of 200,000 jobs. In another strand of thought, Mwesigwa (2018) argued that football betting in Ugandan contributed UGX2billion to GDP, the financial contribution, combining central – and local government taxes grew to UGX3.4 billion. This estimate was in agreement with UGX4.3billion of direct economic contribution generated, and UGX1.4billion of acquisition taxes as well as UG1.2billion of personal revenue tax paid by participants of betting. All these accounted for a net increase comparative to the conditional exclusive of official football betting, and UGX1.6billion of indirect contribution. In all these glorifications of the economic benefit of betting in Ugandan and its outright endorsement, Mwesigwa (2018) did not state the type of jobs generated. Unfortunately, Mwesigwa has found allies in Nigeria as it is also being erroneously argued in some quarters that the sharp increase in the number of betting companies operating in Nigeria has provided more employment opportunities, with thousands of Nigerians now working for both the local and foreign companies.

Most disappointing of all arguments is one that holds that football betting companies have aided the Nigerian economy by forming partnerships and signing sponsorship deals with several organizations, both in the sports and entertainment industries. For example, the European bookmakers, 1xBet have had partnerships with the Nigeria Football Federation and the League Management Company, while Bet9ja, up until early 2019, were title sponsors of the Nigerian National League, the second tier of the Nigerian league system. Bet9ja also have a multi-million

dollar sponsorship deal in place with popular reality TV show, Big Brother Naija. Bookies have injected a lot of money in the Nigerian media, bankrolling several shows and events across radio and television. Disappointingly, no one seems to count the damages done to the psyche of our young people through this out of the ordinary form of sponsorship. Out of a labour force of 80.2 million, about 21.7 million Nigerians were unemployed (Onyekwere, 2021). This figure clearly exceeded the population of most countries in Africa. Among young Nigerians aged between 25 and 34, the largest bloc of the labour force, the unemployment rate currently stands even higher, at 30.7%. The report was particularly uncomplimentary for the regime of erstwhile President Muhammadu Buhari, who had no blue print for youth unemployment

In Nigeria, precisely in Delta State, one of the selected states in the south-south geo-political zone of the country, the Effurun, Delta State Gaming/ Lotto Commission setup under CAP 86 is charged with regulating the gaming industry and practice in Delta State, and the management have undertaken strategic initiatives to make Delta state a gaming hub in Nigeria. In other states of the south-south, the expansion of the gambling/betting industry in light of technological advancements has seen the introduction of new conditions for establishing offices. Amongst the conditions, the regulatory agency listed the following:

- i) All Gaming outlets MUST NOT located far from ANY primary or secondary school in the State.
- ii) All mandatory payments as stipulated in Gaming Laws MUST be paid within the stipulated period.
- iii) All gaming outlets MUST NOT entertain anyone below the age of 18yrs.

All these are well crafted regulations, but none has been adhered to in practice. Of the three regulations, the ones bothering on location of betting shops and age limits have been hard to enforce. This is because no one whose remuneration depends solely on the number of tickets sold per day would want to chase away any underage patronizing his enterprise or locate one's office far from participants whose are mostly jobless youths and their mentees in secondary schools.

### **3.3 Online football betting mania and deviant behaviour among Nigerian Youths**

There has been the feeling of rejection and personal failure amongst young people willing and able to work, but cannot find any sustainable work (Chukwu, 2021). Unfortunately, the thought to become entrepreneurs in order to establish own enterprises has clearly been wrestled down by bogus banks' collateral beyond their reach. Viewing the plight of these unemployed young people deeply engaged in football betting dampened one's enthusiasm about the economic mismanagement of the country resources by successive leaders. From all intents and purposes, the mismanagement has unleashed unprecedented hardships on youths to an extent that they have assimilated the culture of gambling and online football betting as survival strategies. The frustration faced by every young person willing and able to work, but cannot find employment or even establish own enterprises is coming against the background that Nigeria is ranked as the sixth biggest producer of oil in the world and also a leading producer of natural gas. In the midst of all, there is this erroneous impression that football betting companies operating in Nigeria has provided more employment opportunities, with thousands of Nigerians now working for both the local and foreign companies. What a hypocritical assertion!

As the crackpot statement continued to gain attention, it is imperative to state that so-called employment being created by betting offices are purely jobs that fall under what the economists tagged under-employment! The remunerations obtained are hardly sustainable as they are purely based on commission of bets sold daily!

Regardless of the so-called impact on Nigeria's economy, it remains a deviant act. Football betting violates the social norms and expectations of the Nigerian society. Whether online or otherwise, it is not a norm anywhere in spite of the fact that government has continued to grant licenses to companies to operate the business. Admittedly, deviance is relative, but its relativity cannot stand the test of time in this context because majority of people frown at and also condemn its practice. Many young people, including some adults have been become lazy, insolvent and irresponsible in their day to day dealings with their families due to their indulgence in football betting. Lending credence to its deviant nature, Chukwu (2016) contended that when an individual deviated from the agreed norms, and engaged in behavioural patterns that tended to fracture any of the agreed norms of the society; such an individual was without doubt, a deviant. In essence, football betting is deviant practice and the bettors, deviants.

Going by the never-ending patronage of gambling, lotteries and, most especially football betting among young Nigerians, it is generally being upheld that the country is dangerously breeding deranged generation addicted to betting. Without counting the cost, many young people are today inflexibly engaged in football betting to the detriment of the collective goal of the society. Whether it is admissible or not, the opening of betting viewing centers at daybreak and closing late in the night presents opportunities to youths to bet anytime they wish is increasing the rate of deviance in the Nigerian society.

Of course, this breed of Nigerian youths often tagged 'the Gen z' are a generation of young people who have taken football betting as an obsession and do not even know when and how to put a halt to this deviant act until they are wholly shattered financially, psychologically and with nothing to live for. Since there are usually signs of anxiety, boredom, depression, minor psychiatric disorders, hopelessness, helplessness and low self-esteem displayed when predictions are inaccurate, how then can entrepreneurs of the industry maintain the maxim that "winners know when to stop" when no one wins consistently over a long period of time. Obviously the lack sustainable employment through which money can be gotten to meet basic needs such as providing food and shelter is really demoralizing. With the modern technological break-through, the football matches are beamed live on foreign television stations positioned in the betting stores. One of the dangerous trends observable among young people addicted to betting of all kinds, is the maxim that "winners know when to stop". But in reality, one could state that the maxim "winners know when to stop" is a fallacy because entrepreneurs are fully aware that these young people addicted to betting have no idea when to stop without a serious push from all concerned. This is because the effects of betting have always been spectrum of emotions, namely anger, sadness, confusion, stress, and depression, all combined to break spirit of the bettors when winning failed them. Thus, it is obvious that football betting has become inferior to the cancer of the bone-marrow. Aside from this, there is this ugly trend of incurring huge debts amongst Nigerian youths under the guise of betting to 'win big'.

In Nigeria, while bets accruing to betting companies are allegedly said to reach N5 billion daily, bettors on the other hand are currently seeing this huge amount as that that would be shared amongst them should they win the bet. Following this faulty perception, many of young people have decided to always keep aside certain amount of money for betting daily. This attitude for keeping aside some money for betting is said to have been strengthened by the sweet mouthed nature of bookmakers who have never ceased to further announce unbelievable winning bonus! As a result, there have been an increasing number of young people, the supposed leaders of tomorrow, in betting houses at all times of the day and, all days of the week, including Fridays and Sundays when they should have been in the mosque and church to up their spiritual development. Beside this observation, one of the ugliest sides of the betting business has emerged with the eruption of violence when predictions go wrong. Apart from this, youths have rather incurred huge debts that come with undesirable consequences from predicting wrongly (Muhammad & Adam, 2018). For example, during the violence over wrong prediction, the poorly constructed wooden shops equipped with four or five long benches, three television sets and satellite dishes are more often than not destroyed. In addition, there have been physical fights among the ardent supporters of these foreign football clubs leading to sever bodily injuries.

#### **4. Analyses of research questions**

This section deals with the testing of the analyses of research questions formulated to guide the study. Data collected from the research instrument were used for the analyses. The aim was to evaluate the public perception of football betting and the birth of deviant behaviour among young people in the south-south geo-political zone of the country. The research questions were assessed based on the responses from the field. Data were collected through the use of the questionnaire from the sampled respondents used for the study. Through a very rigorous approach and with the assistance of some colleagues who the researcher is very grateful to; all the 1200 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved, and all properly completed, thus giving 100% return rate.

#### **5. Discussion of findings**

**Research Question1: What is the relationship between the obsession with online football betting and unemployment amongst millions of young people in the south–south geo-political zone of Nigeria?**

From the analysis of the first research question, it was observed that there was a relationship between the obsession with online football betting and youth unemployment in the south-south geo-political zone of the country. According to the returned questionnaire, 1180 of the respondents representing 98.33% unanimously agreed that the aftermath of youth unemployment in the country has been their over indulgence in football betting to seek consolation in a country that has consistently been ravaged by corruption; a country where the ultimate aim of government is to waste the country's resources on non-economic productivity that does not create employment to engage young people who have become frustrated and hopeless. This result is in line with the submission of Gainsbury and Derevensky (2013) that those who bet online were more likely to be younger, and unemployed despite the one hundred (120) respondents (1.67%) who held contrarily position. This ugly trend is coming against the background of high level of poverty and unemployment in the country. The consequences of youth unemployment are usually devastating because the sense of negative response an individual



receives from friends, even family members in these trying times is disturbing. Besides, the feelings of guilt that an able-bodied youth capable of working feels depending on the financial support of friends or family members has driven majority of young people into football betting which they see as alternative source of livelihood.

**Research question 2: How does the loss in online football betting psychologically effect bettors in the south-south geo-political zone of the country?**

Data gathered from the second research question revealed that there was a relationship between loss in online football betting and the indescribable psychological pains and hardship of young people in the south-south geo-political zone of the country. Statistics from the field revealed that 1080(90%) of the respondents as against 120(10%) affirmed that online football betting has caused untold psychological pains and hardship on young people in the south-south geo-political zone of the country. This is buttressed by the finding that football betting has become addictive and Nigeria's youthful population, particularly the adolescent group which constitutes a great proportion of the country's population is at risk. Supporting this finding is the work of Griffiths & Wood, (2004) that held that the negative effects associated with excessive football betting have culminated in poor academic performance, moodiness, loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed, and interpersonal conflict). In effect, the constant addiction to football betting has resulted to series of mass failure in both internal and external examination and also creating a grave psycho-social problems leading to a high rate of deviance among young people in the Nigerian society. What is more, the American Psychiatric Association (2013) observed that gambling has, no doubt caused untold pains and hardship to individuals, families leading to mental health such as affective disorders, substance abuse, and stress-related symptoms. There is also the problem of conjugal conflict leading to separation and divorce, debts incurred, absenteeism, and legal (criminal offences) to the Nigerian society. Unfortunately, the consequences and potential internet threats of online football betting are rarely understood by majority of these young people deeply immersed in it.

**Research 3: Is there any connection between participating in online football betting and the mania to earn extra income among participants in the south-south geo-political zone of the country?**

From the third research question, field report revealed that a connection existed between online football betting and the mania to earn extra income. Going by the statistical result obtained from the field, a total of 1090 respondents (90.83%) as against 110 (9.17%) support that football betting has become a source of livelihood for young people. In buttressing this finding, it was revealed from the field those participants place bets on coming matches so that they would be able to earn a higher value as soon as the outcomes of the matches meet their bets. Concurring, Chikitora (2016) averred that the mania for extra income could be linked to the present day difficult economic realities where jobs are hardly ever found in Nigeria. Substantiating, Uzochukwu and Ohiri(2021) agreed with Parke, Harris & Parke(2014) that the high rate of poverty and the conventional desire to become rich overnight among young people has also birthed a new high-tech Internet regulatory framework that has succeeded in normalizing the action of placing a bet on the outcome of a football match faster and easier than ever. As a result, a subgroup of the community has unconsciously been formed with a very strong dynamic betting culture being sustained by youth unemployment In the face of this

frustrating and adverse economic condition, young Nigerians have developed the mania to seek information about gambling and football betting sites to explore every chance to know how they function in order to make some money for necessities. However, the negative effects of the craze to earn income have shown that those who stake/bet on football were found to have high gambling expenditure and gambling debts (Jiménez-Murcia, 2011). In a nutshell, the foregoing discussion has revealed, especially from reviewed literature that those who sought income through football betting had become heavily indebted

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

It is an indisputable fact that football betting has economic benefits for young people who participate in it, particularly in a country like Nigeria with high rate of youth unemployment, incessant job losses, and high inflation rates. Most worrisome is the fact that young people seem not to understand that the economic benefits of the enterprise do not outweigh the physiological and psychological trauma they go through for never winning as envisaged. Furthermore, due to the obsession young people have for football betting, they tend not see the negative implications of online football betting and perhaps, and this seemed to explain its rapid growth and the abundance of online football betting sites/companies in the south-south geo-political zone of the country. While the essence of this study is to specifically curb the case of growing deviant behaviour amongst young people in Nigeria, any arrangement therefore directed at cutting back the harmful consequences of football betting should be well thought-out and, must be in line with the four public health goals sketched out by Messerlian, Derevensky, Gillespie, and Gupta (2004). These templates include denormalization, protection, prevention, and harm-reduction – which taken together describe exploit required to tackle the dilemma associated with football betting among youth population. Elucidating further, social denormalization, within the context of the behaviour of young people obsession with football betting, means everyone must begin to rationalize and appraise the involvement of young people in football betting which was often and jokingly dismissed with the wave of the hand as harmless, but now as a menace bent on tearing the Nigerian society apart, particularly the south-south geo-political zone of the country. Similarly, denormalization when clearly understood could also mean bringing awareness to the marketing strategies adopted by the online betting industry, influencing social norms and attitudes of young people involvement in football betting thereby challenging contemporary myths and misconceptions of online betting addiction among young people and the general public. This, in essence, promotes realistic and accurate information about football betting.

From the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are proffered to finding explanations to the sociological implications of football betting and the case of deviant behaviour among young people in the south-south geo-political zone of the country.

1. There is absolute need for government to deepen efforts to develop infrastructure, create jobs including new economic empowerment opportunities to attract millions of young people away from football betting. Through this, the socio-economic deprivations of young people would be addressed. By implication, a big halt to the continued incursion of football betting into the psyche of young people would be put in place.

2. Aside from government, there should be community collaborations to encourage jobs creation. Put simply, communities should be persuaded to establish cooperatives in order to inspire new ideas about socio-economic development that would change the narratives of young people participating in football betting in the south-south geo-political zone of the country. In essence, when these developmental ideas have been articulated, government can then be involved to assist in implementing them for the overall security of young people. What is more, this collaboration to form cooperatives will promote self-confidence and self-awareness.
3. Since, the constant addiction to football betting has resulted to series of mass failure in both internal and external examination and also creating a grave psycho-social problems leading to a high rate of deviance among young people in the Nigerian society, there should be an urgent need for all hands to be on deck to train young people against being associated with excessive football betting that has culminated in their poor academic performance, moodiness, loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed, and interpersonal conflicts.
4. Besides, parents and guardians should wholeheartedly admit their failure to provide appropriate caution to their children in order to arrest this mania of football betting amongst them. In other words, there is need for parents and guardians to educate their children as they pass through the different stage of human development to help them identify football betting related behaviour whether online or otherwise as a deviant behaviour that should be resisted at all times regardless of the mouth-watering offers presented to participate in the enterprise.
5. Since young people do not usually see the negative socio-economic implications of football betting, setting up of appropriate national agency to reorganize the frivolous and appealing massive advertisement undertaking by online football betting companies is urgently required today than ever. In essence, there should be a new orientation programme to educate young people on the harmful consequences of football betting in the same manner Tobacco companies caution smokers that smoking is dangerous to smokers' health.
6. There is also the urgent need for the State legislatures in the south-south geo-political zone of the country to enact stringent laws to save people, not necessary the young people alone, but everyone from over-indulgence in football betting enterprises. Through this, all gambling/betting activities whether legal or not will be drastically reduced to the betterment of the Nigerian society, particularly the south-south geo-political zone of the country.

#### **Conflict of interest**

The Author does not have any conflict of interest as far this study is concerned.

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