INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY TRAITS ON GAMBLING BEHAVIOR AMONG YOUTHS IN ABEOKUTA, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to examine the influence of personality traits on gambling behavior among youths in a community in Abeokuta, Nigeria. This is because gambling has rapidly spread among young people in the world and is increasingly becoming a problem in Africa most especially Nigeria. Although, the advent of internet gambling has minimized physical aggression or combat between or among gamblers, but the economic loss, breaking of family ties as a result of impulsivity or uncontrollable gambling remain unabated.

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. A total of two hundred questionnaires were distributed, one hundred and ninety-seven (197) were collected. The research instruments for collecting the data comprises Gamblers Belief Questionnaire and the Big Five Personality Inventory. The following constituted the participants of the study drawn through a convenient sampling technique; greater proportion of the respondents, one hundred and thirty-seven (137; 69.5%) were males, while the other sixty (60; 30.5%) were females. Average age of respondents was 26.67 (SD = 5.10), ranging from 18 and 40 years.

The data were analyzed using independent sample t-test for all the five hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of this study revealed that participants who are high on the four of the dimensions of the personality traits such as Extraversion, Openness to experience, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness scored significantly higher on gambling behavior than those who are low on these traits, while those who are high on Neuroticism scored significantly lower on gambling behavior than those who are low on Neuroticism.This study recommend that government should make stringent regulatory policies to discourage easy accessibility to gambling activities. Mass awareness should be embarked upon to enlighten people about the inherent social-economic implications of gambling. These findings advance the understanding of the role of the dimensions of personality traits on gambling behavior among the youth and contributed to the growing knowledge in this regard.

Keywords: *Personality traits; gambling behavior; youth, Nigeria.*

INTRODUCTION

Gambling is an ancient form of recreation; there is archaeological and historical evidence of gambling in many ancient civilizations (Gabriel,1996). Gambling is an encompassing concept that include diverse activities, played in a wide variety of physical and socio-cultural settings, which is now appealing to different sorts of people and the activities are perceived in various ways by players and observers (Abbott, 2002; Walker, 1992). Failure to appreciate this diversity can limit scientific understanding and investigation of gambling and gambling problems. Another reason to note the differences between various forms of gambling arises from accumulating evidence that some types of gambling are more strongly associated with gambling-related problems than others (Abbott & Volberg, 1999).

According to (Rose, 1986), gambling includes any activity in which a person pays something of value (consideration) to participate in an event that presents the possibility of winning something of value (prize) whose outcome is probabilistic or determined at least in part by chance. However, there is often disagreement about precisely which activities constitute gambling. As one researcher has noted: Despite its apparent universality, the concept of gambling has no intrinsic meaning; rather, its meaning always depends on the socio-historical context in which it occurs. The convention is to define gambling narrowly in terms of financial transactions – the staking of money, or an item of economic value, on the uncertain outcome of a future event. It is significant that this definition excludes both informal private gambling, where money is merely circulated among players without generating a profit, and investment in the stock market, where speculation is for long-term financial or commercial gain (McMillen, 1996, pp. 6-7).

People differ in their perceptions and reasons why they participate in gambling activities. For most people, gambling is generally perceived as a positive experience. However, for a select few perceptions, gambling is associated with addiction. Some persistent gamblers develop significant, debilitating problems that also typically result in harm to people close to them and to the wider community i. e it is maladaptive in nature (Abbott & Volberg, 1999).

Gambling problems exist on a continuum and there is mounting evidence that such problems may not necessarily be chronic and progressive (Abbott & Clarke, 2007; Abbott et al., 2004). Gambling is risky when it includes a broad range of gambling behaviors (e.g., persistently betting more than planned or spending more time gambling than intended, and chasing losses) as well as cognitions (e.g., superstitions, illusions of control, and misunderstandings about the nature of probability and randomness) and consequences (e.g., borrowing money to gamble, selling of properties, health and relationship problems).

The prevalence of gambling addiction might vary according to the cultures, settings and measurements. According to a gambling industry statistic (The National Gambling Control Commission, 2014), the prevalence of gambling addiction in Korea was 7.2%. When using the same measurement, the prevalence is much higher than that of the United Kingdom (2.5%), France (1.3%), and Australia (2.4%). In the United States, 85% of undergraduate students have gambled, and 23% of them gambled weekly (Indiana Prevention Resource Center, 2010). Similarly, in Korea, 70% of pathological gamblers started their first experience with gambling before the age of 20 (Rhee, Kim & Kim, 2003). The prevalence of gambling addiction in undergraduate students is 11%, which is twice higher than that for adults (Kwon & Kim, 2011).

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) has classified pathological gambling as an Impulse Control Disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, (APA, 2013), describing it as a diagnosable mental disorder in cases where there is evidence of loss of control over gambling, progression of time and/or money spent gambling, preoccupation with gambling, and a disregard for the consequences of continued involvement in gambling. In the literature, pathological gambling and problem gambling are terms used to refer to gambling behavior that is not under control, resulting in negative consequences over a range of life domains. Comparing the two terms, it is frequently interpreted that pathological gambling represents a more severe manifestation than problem gambling (Reith, 2007).

Personality traits represent characteristic ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving, and are robust predictors of health-risk behaviors such as unsafe sex and dangerous driving habits (Krueger *et al*., 2000), important life outcomes like educational attainment, divorce, and longevity (Roberts *et al*., 2007), and mental disorders (Krueger *et al*., 2000). Literature reviewed implicates the role that personality traits play in shaping behavior, including behavioral disorders such as disordered gambling (Slutske *et al*., 2005). It is therefore surprising that a consensus has not yet been reached about the personality traits that are related to the propensity to gamble. Clearly there is much inconsistency and variability in the literature exploring the relationship between personality traits and gambling behavior. This variability may be a reflection of the true heterogeneous nature of problem gamblers, but it is also possible that it is a reflection of the variability in measures used and populations sampled. The literature demonstrates the use of a wide range of single construct measures to assess personality characteristics as they relate to gambling. It is possible that greater clarity and consistency in results are attainable through the use of a well-established approach to classifying and measuring personality. The Five Factor model of personality is uniquely suited to the task. The Five Factor model of personality and the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R) to assess these factors have been extensively researched and broadly applied (Costa & McCrae, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 2003). The five personality domains as outlined by Costa and McCrae are: Neuroticism (e.g., anxiety, anger, depression, impulsiveness); Extraversion (e.g., warmth, assertiveness, excitement seeking, positive emotions); Openness to experience (e.g., feelings, actions, ideas, and values); Agreeableness (e.g., trust, altruism, compliance, modesty); and Conscientiousness (e.g., competence, order, dutifulness, self-

discipline). Two studies have used versions of the NEO PI-R to investigate personality characteristics in pathological gamblers. First, Bagby et al. (2007), in a study of pathological gamblers and non-pathological gamblers, discovered that pathological gamblers scored significantly higher on the Neuroticism domain and significantly lower on the Conscientiousness domain, as measured by the NEO PI-R, relative to non-pathological gamblers. The second study, conducted by Myrseth, Pallesen, Molde, Johnsen, and Lorvik (2009), also compared pathological gamblers to non-pathological gamblers using the NEOFFI (a short version of the NEO PI-R) and found that high scores on the Neuroticism domain and low scores on the Openness to experience domain were related to pathological gambling. These two studies investigating this important personality taxonomy as it relates to problematic gambling, more research is required to clarify the relationship of the Five Factor domains and gambling, and to extend the generalizability of the findings. This was why this study was conducted to investigate how the dimensions of personality traits could influence gambling behavior.

HYPOTHESES

Based on the literature reviewed, the following hypotheses were postulated for testing:

1. Participants who are high on extraversion will score significantly higher on gambling behavior compared to those who are low on extraversion.
2. Participants who are high on openness to experience will score significantly higher on gambling behavior compared to those who are low on openness to experience.
3. Participants who are high on conscientiousness will score significantly higher on gambling behavior compared to those who are low on conscientiousness.
4. Participants who are high on agreeableness will score significantly higher on gambling behavior compared to those who are low on agreeableness.
5. Participants who are high on neuroticism will score significantly higher on gambling behavior compare to those who are low on neuroticism.

METHOD

Research Design

A descriptive cross-sectional survey was employed for this study. This design allowed for the accurate collection of primary data from the samples of the target population through the use of questionnaires.

The researcher adopted an Ex-Post Factor Design because the personality traits was not manipulated. The researcher was interested in seeing how the dimensions in the personality traits would influence the gambling behavior.

The independent variable (IV) for this study was the personality traits (the big five factors) while the dependent variable (DV) was the gambling behavior. The independent variable, personality traits has five dimensions (Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism).

Study Setting

The study settings comprised centers of gambling in selected communities of Sabo, Ayetoro, Adeun, Ogun Radio and Rounder in Lafenwa, Abeokuta, Ogun State. The reason for these places was because of the availability and willingness of online gamblers in these areas to participate in the research.

Sampling Procedure

The sample size was 200 gambling youths consists of males and females of Lafenwa community in Abeokuta, Ogun State. A non-probability sampling techniques of purposive and convenient sampling were used for selecting the participants for this study.

In purposive sampling method, the participants were selected based on the purpose of the sample, hence the name. Simply put, the researcher decided what needed to be known and found people who were willing to provide information by virtue of knowledge and experience. (Bernard 2002, Lewis & Sheppard 2006).
Then, convenience Sampling was used among the gambling youths. Convenience sampling (also known as availability sampling) is a specific type of non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in the study.

Research Procedure
The questionnaires were administered individually on the gambling youths who agreed to participate in the selected gambling centers in Lafenwa community in Abeokuta, Ogun State. A high level of confidentiality was ensured by not including names in the questionnaire. Also, a given time frame of less than an hour for filling the questionnaires was allowed. Of the two hundred (200) questionnaires distributed, one hundred and ninety-seven (197) were retrieved and used for data analysis. Informed consent was obtained from all participants by telling them that participation in the study was voluntary; and that only those who are willing and ready to complete the research instruments should collect the questionnaires.

Inclusion Criteria include:
- The participants must be a gambler.
- The participants must be within the age range of 18years to 40years.
- The participants must be literate.
- The participants must be willing to participate in the study.

Participants

The researcher distributed two hundred questionnaires (200) to participants, one hundred and ninety-seven (197) were collected back. The study considered a total of one hundred and ninety-seven (197) respondents into sport betting from the settings, selected through convenience sampling. The following constituted the participants of the study; greater proportion of the respondents One hundred and thirty-seven (137; 69.5%) were males, while the other sixty (60; 30.5%) were females. Average age of respondents was 26.67 (SD = 5.10), ranging from 18 and 40 years. Religion status frequency showed that a greater number of the respondents ninety-four (94; 48.5%) indicated they were Muslims, ninety-two (92; 47.4%) were Christians while eight (4.1%) indicated traditional religion. Marital status frequency revealed that more of the respondents ninety-three (93; 47.9%) were married, eighty-five (85; 43.8%) were single, ten (10; 5.2%) were divorced while the other six (6; 3.1%) were separated. Educational qualification frequency revealed that, thirteen (13; 6.6%) have only primary level of education, fifty-eight (58; 29.4%) have only secondary school level of education, sixty-one (61; 31%) have only ND/NCE level of education, fifty-six (56; 28.4%) have only HND/BSc level of education while the other nine (9; 4.6%) have MSc/MEd level of education.

Measures

Section A: Socio-demographic Data

The socio demographic data consisted of the respondents' age, sex, marital status, religion and educational qualifications.

Section B: Gamblers belief questionnaire (GBQ)

Steenbergh, Meyers, May, & Whelan (2002) developed the gamblers belief questionnaire which was reported by America psychological Association to have internal consistency of 0.92 and adequate test-retest (r=.77). This is a 21-item self-report instrument designed to assess gambling related cognitive distortions. Each item of the GBQ consists of a statement that represents a cognitive distortion commonly held by gamblers. Respondents rate their level of agreement with each statement on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). GBQ has two sub-scales: Luck/Perseverance (13items) and Illusion of Control (8 items). Higher scores are indicative of higher levels of cognitive distortion. The GBQ has demonstrated adequate internal consistency (from 0.87 to 0.97; Winfree et al.,2013). Cronbach alpha of 0.88 was obtained for this study which showed an internal consistency suitable for this research.

Section C: Personality trait (Big Five) inventory

This section consists of personality traits the respondent possesses using the big five model. They are extroversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, neuroticism and agreeableness. The Big five personality inventory which was developed by Furnham, McManus and Scout (2003) and measures five different personalities constructs (Neuroticism, Extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness). It has 25-items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1(strongly agree) to 5(strongly disagree) to indicate the degree to which the item describing them and it has been established that it is a standardized scale with adequate psychometric properties. A Cronbach alpha of 0.66 was obtained for the study which showed an internal consistency making the research instrument suitable to be used in this study.

RESULT

Hypothesis one

Participants who are high on extraversion will score significantly higher on gambling behavior compared to those who are low on extraversion. This was tested using t-test for independent samples and the result is presented on Table 1;

Table 1: t-test Summary Table Showing extraversion differences in gambling behavior

Dependent	Extraversion	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	T	df	P
	High	115	102.47	16.11			
Gambling behavior					6.948	195	<.01
	Low	82	85.04	18.98			

Table 1: Represents the influence of extraversion on Gambling behavior. It was shown that there exists significant extraversion difference in Gambling behavior [t (195) = 6.948; p<.01}. Respondents with high level of extraversion reported higher Gambling behavior ($\overline{X}$ = 102.47; SD = 16.11) than those with low level of extraversion ($\overline{X}$ = 85.04; SD = 18.98). This confirms the stated hypothesis.

Hypothesis two

Participants who are high on openness to experience will score significantly higher on gambling behavior compared to those who are low on openness to experience. This was tested using t-test for independent samples and the result is presented on Table 2;

Table 2: t-test Summary Table Showing openness to experience differences in gambling behavior

Dependent	Openness	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	T	df	P
	High	110	100.22	17.01			
Gambling behavior					4.320	193	<.01
	Low	85	88.61	20.49			

Table 2: Represents the influence of openness to experience on Gambling behavior. It was shown that there exists significant openness to experience difference in Gambling behavior [t (193) = 4.320; p<.01]. Respondents with high openness to experience reported higher Gambling behavior ($\overline{X}$ = 100.22; SD = 17.01) than those with low level of openness to experience ($\overline{X}$ = 88.61; SD = 20.49). This confirms the stated hypothesis.

Hypothesis three

Participants who are high on conscientiousness will score significantly higher on gambling behavior compared to those who are low on conscientiousness. This was tested using t-test for independent samples and the result is presented on Table 3;

Table 3: t-test Summary Table Showing conscientiousness differences in Gambling behavior

Dependent	Conscientiousness	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	T	df	P
	High	106	100.90	17.34			
Gambling behavior					4.570	194	<.01
	Low	90	88.71	19.61			

Table 3 Represents the influence of Conscientiousness on Gambling behavior. It was shown that there exists significant Conscientiousness difference in Gambling behavior [t (194) = 4.570; p<.01]. Respondents with high Conscientiousness reported higher Gambling behavior ($\overline{X}$ = 100.90; SD = 17.34) than those with low level of Conscientiousness ($\overline{X}$ = 88.71; SD = 19.61). This confirms the stated hypothesis.

Hypothesis four

Participants who are high on agreeableness will score significantly higher on gambling behavior compared to those who are low on agreeableness. This was tested using t-test for independent samples and the result is presented on Table 4;

Table 4: t-test Summary Table Showing agreeableness differences in Gambling behavior

Dependent	Agreeableness	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	T	df	P
	High	117	100.97	16.88			
Gambling behavior					5.408	195	<.01
	Low	80	86.79	19.71			

Table 4. Represents the influence of agreeableness on Gambling behavior. It was shown that there exists significant agreeableness difference in Gambling behavior [t (195) = 5.408; p<.01]. Respondents with high agreeableness reported higher Gambling behavior ($\overline{X}$ = 100.97; SD = 16.88) than those with low level of agreeableness ($\overline{X}$ = 86.79; SD = 19.71). This confirms the stated hypothesis.

Hypothesis five

Participants who are high on neuroticism will score significantly higher on gambling behavior compare to those who are low on neuroticism. This was tested using t-test for independent samples and the result is presented on Table 5;

Table 5: t-test Summary Table Showing neuroticism differences in Gambling behavior

Dependent	Neuroticism	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	T	Df	P
	High	106	90.50	18.93			
Gambling behavior					-3.803	194	<.01
	Low	90	100.72	18.54			

Table 5: Represents the influence of neuroticism on Gambling behavior. It was shown that there exists significant neuroticism difference in Gambling behavior [t (194) = -3.803; p<.01]. Respondents with high neuroticism reported lower Gambling behavior ($\overline{X}$ = 90.50; SD = 18.93)

than those with low level of neuroticism ($\overline{X}$ = 100.72; SD = 18.54). This negated the stated hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis stated that participants who are high on extraversion will score significantly higher on gambling behavior compared to those who are low on extraversion. This hypothesis was confirmed in the study. This was in tandem with majority of gamblers perception that it is a form of entertainment with rewarding experiences such as monetary gain, enjoyment, excitement, self-expression, boredom alleviation and a channel of socialization within wider society (Abbott,2002).

The second hypothesis stated that participants who are high on openness to experience will score significantly higher on gambling behavior compared to those who are low on openness to experience. This hypothesis was confirmed in this study. From empirical review, there has been an increase in research into the personality factors associated with problem gambling, yet, there is a lack of consistency in the findings. For instance, while some studies have highlighted the importance of sensation-seeking in problem gambling (Alessi & Petry, 2003; Gupta, Derevensky, & Ellenbogen, 2006; Powell, Hardoon, Derevensky, & Gupta, 1999), others have found no significant relationship between gambling behavior and sensation-seeking (Blaszczynski, Wilson, & McConaghy, 1986; Breen & Zuckerman, 1999; Cyders & Smith, 2008; Hammelstein, 2004). Further study has indicated that sensation-seeking appears to be related to gambling behavior generally, not to severity of gambling problems (Langewisch & Frisch, Personality Factors 3 1998); however, others note inconsistency in this finding (Cyders & Smith, 2008). Therefore, this study has corroborated other findings that sensation-seeking is a contributory factor to gambling behavior.

The third hypothesis stated that participants who are high on conscientiousness will score significantly higher on gambling behavior compared to those who are low on conscientiousness. It was shown by the result that there was significant conscientiousness difference in gambling behavior and the hypothesis was accepted.

Since this research took place within the context of sport betting, it clearly shown that participants believe in certain degree of skill and strategy to influence the outcome of the result. Forms such as track betting and card games that involve an element of skill are attractive to a number of “serious gamblers” (Walker, 1992) and linked to problem gambling (Hunter, 1990; Abbott, 1999; Abbott & Volberg, 2000). Hunter (1990) argues that the most addictive forms of gambling involve enough skill to allow a minor influence on outcome, but not enough for it to be in the gambler’s favour. This skill-luck dimension is complicated by the finding that, in addition to the actual level of skill that may be exercised, many gamblers have inflated beliefs about the extent to which they can influence outcomes by being conscientious (Toneatto et al., 1997; Walker,1992). Significant numbers of gamblers believe that they can influence activities that are driven by chance, for example, lotteries and video gaming machine outcomes. Furthermore, particular design features, aspects of gambling settings/venues and advertising are directed toward fostering participants’ illusions of skill. Perceived skill may be as important, in influencing the outcome of the result and this confirmed the contributory role of conscientiousness in gambling behavior.

The fourth hypothesis stated that participants who are high on agreeableness will score significantly higher on gambling behavior compared to those who are low on agreeableness. The outcome of the analysis shown clearly that there is significant agreeableness difference on gambling behavior. This hypothesis was accepted in the study. This is in line with the perception that those people who get along with others, who are warm and display high sense of understanding with others engaged in gambling behavior compared with those that are paranoid about and hostile towards other people.

The fifth hypothesis stated that participants who are high on neuroticism will score significantly higher on gambling behavior compare to those who are low on neuroticism. This was rejected in this study. However, neuroticism that has been investigated in relation to problem gambling is impulsivity, with numerous studies illustrating a positive correlation (Breen & Zuckerman, 1999; Nower, Derevensky, & Gupta, 2004; Slutske, Caspi, Moffitt, & Poulton, 2005; Steel & Blaszczynski, 1998; Vitaro, Arseneault, & Tremblay, 1997), but not universally (Allcock & Grace, 1988; Gerdner & Svensson, 2003). Others have also found a relationship bet ween pathological gambling and psychological distress, neuroticism, and negative affect (Blaszczynski, Wilson, & McConaghy, 1986; Slutske, et al. 2005; Steel & Blaszczynski, 1998). Conversely, Cyders and Smith,2008 found a relationship between gambling and positive emotions, with increases in gambling occurring in positive mood states. Due to the excruciating nature of our economy, it might be possible that participants for this study were in their negative state of emotions at the time of conducting this research. Cyders and Smith finding was corroborated in this study, despite the fact that the stated hypothesis was rejected.

Limitations

A common concern of self-report data is social desirability (i.e., the bias in self-report data accounted for by respondents' desire to look good, which is because of the respondents' need for self-protection and social approval). Since the data for the study were collected using self-report questionnaires, the participants' responses may have been influenced by social desirability. Also, it was very difficult to get enough female participants who were into gambling activity to participate in this research.

Conclusion

From the analysis of the data collected and interpretation of results, the study concluded that participants who are high on four of the personality traits such as Extraversion, Openness to experience, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness score significantly higher on gambling behavior than those who are low on these traits, while those who are high on Neuroticism score significantly lower on gambling behavior than those who are low on Neuroticism score .

The negative impact of gambling behavior in terms of loss of social ties among families, loss of productive work hour, unemployment, threatened economic power should call for serious concern among researchers and policy makers. Therefore, the findings shall be useful in this regard:

It will motivate other researchers to carry further studies in order to investigate other variables of gambling behavior, that will make generalizability to be universally applicable, thereby expanding the frontiers of knowledge in this direction of interest.

Recommendations

Government and other policy makers can make stringent regulatory policies to discourage easy accessibility to gambling activities.

Mass awareness on the socio-economic effects of gambling should be embarked upon to enlighten people about the inherent dangers of gambling problem.

Regulation of advertisements and promotions of gambling by regulating the types of adverts and disclosing during adverts the risks inherent in gambling, and incorporating into the civic education curriculum of primary and secondary schools the dangers of gambling, are also desirable.

Current regulations that ban under-age gambling have to be strictly enforced by the appropriate authority. Just like the Brewery industry advert that emphasized “responsible drinking”, so also the National Orientation Agency can champion the campaign of responsible gambling among adults. Government can set up clinics and training of medical personnel who will provide pharmacological and psychotherapeutic interventions to problem gamblers.

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