

# Review of: "Gambling Prevalence and Factors Associated with Gambling Participation among University Students in Uganda"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The study has some merit by initiating an understanding of gambling in Uganda, however the study has one serious problem. The dictomy is set up around a single question of "presently participating in gambling for financial gains". However they do not discuss what games are played. The biggest problem is that the variable that is used as the dependent variable and is interpreted as participating in gambling, but actually measures partipating in gambling for gain. But people can participate in gambling for entertainment only. In fact the healthiest gamblers participate in gambling for fun, not financial gain. they may hope to win, but realize that the odds are against them. But the authors confuse the two; gambling for gain is not the same as gambling at all. This has to be noted as a serious limitation on the validity of the study. They do mention this as a limitation, but not strongly enough. It is a serious flaws with the study design.

The dicotomy being tested in this study is as follows

0 = gambled for fun, or gambling for some other reason (emotional escape, addiction, psychic enhancement etc.), or NOT gambled at all

1 = gambled for financial gain.

That is the dependant variable for this study is based on a loaded question that mixes gambling for fun (not gain) and not gambling at all into the comparison group.

Do the authors have any information on games played that could be used to understand the data better.

Can they separate the participants into three groups

0= non-gamblers

1= gamble for fun, escape, addiction

2 = gamble for gain

Either way, many of the analysis needs to be reinterpreted as having messed up the definition of participation in gambling. In terms of problem or addicted gamblers, its no clear how they would answer this question on financial gain, but some do gamble for emotional escape, not gain; so its not clear how they would answer.

The authors need to consider that their dependant variable is typically an erroneous belief. That is gambling games are set up to take the players money away, and thus with the exception of private bets and a small number of skill games

(e.g., poker), the players have a negative expected return. And even in games with an element of skill, most players will lose and in commercial games, where one is up against the house edge (the rake) as well as the more skilled players.

There is an error regarding age. "The study also confirmed that out of the 281 students identified as participating in gambling, the age group 19-23 had the majority of students who gambled 185 (65.8%)."

It is not surprising that majority of the sample are in this age group, given that they are students. But 19-23 made up 68.5% those that gamble, but 73% of the non "participating" group suggesting the opposite of the conclusions. The odds ratios also support the fact that older students were MORE likely to gamble for gain vs. younger students (significantly higher than an OR of 1.0). So the youngest cohort are somewhat less likely to gamble (for gain) ruling out the self-exploration explanation that the authors offer.

The religious affiliation of the students is interesting, perhaps suggestion that religious affiliation is a poor proxy for religiosity. And again, comparisons with previous studies are difficult because this study confused participation in gambling with gambling for financial gain.

For Study program Evening is a poor choice as a referent because of the zero sample of evening for gain gamblers.

Similarly I think parents would make a better reference category for support.

The effect of being married is likely an artefact of age. That is married people tend to be older.

Not clear why "financial gain" is classed as an antisocial behaviour. While its is sometimes true for poker players that they look for weaker players to take advantage of this is not the case with most commercial games (where you play against the house or lottery corporation). Did the question specifically mention cheating or finding people who were weaker players.

Was this survey focus on private bets between individuals (where there is more anti-social predation on weaker players) or commercial gambling?

Also, was this question "financial gain" included in the score for anti-social behavior? if so, this analysis has to be removed because the effect is likely an artefact of being in the anti-social score. I'm assuming that it was not included, but the anti-social variable is listed as 5 items in one place, and 4 items in another. Please clarify.

"Future research should focus on these limitations and look at the different gambling problems accosted by students involved in gambling and the current transversal strategies to address gambling which is an increasing concern on university campuses." It should be noted that they haven't actually established any actual problem with gambling per se but perhaps need to deal with unrealistic expectations that people think they can gamble to gain money (which is most often not the case).

I wish the author luck rewriting their paper to deal with these issues.