

# Prevalence of Sports Betting Addictive Disorder Among the Medical Students at the University of Zambia in Lusaka, Zambia

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Non substance related abuse disorder also known as behavioral addiction does not involve the ingestion of a substance but has similar effects as alcohol and drug addiction. Examples are gambling, sexual addiction, internet addiction, and compulsive shopping. There are different forms of gambling and among them sports betting is the fast growing type of commercial gambling. In Zambia, sports betting has become popular among the students. This study was conducted to evaluate the impact of sports betting on medical students at Ridgeway Campus of University of Zambia.

**Objective:** To determine the prevalence of sports betting among students at the University of Zambia, Ridgeway campus.

**Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among 100 undergraduate medical students studying at University of Zambia and staying at Ridgeway Campus. Data was collected using questionnaires which were administered on randomly selected participants. Data entry was done using Microsoft Excel Sheets and data was analyzed using SPSS.

**Results:** 71% of the participants agreed to have placed a bet (wager) before and 29% had never betted before. 56% of the participants preferred online betting, 2% preferred physical placing of a bet, and 13% used both online and physical betting while 29% of the participants never betted.

**Conclusion:** Sports betting is the fast growing gambling industry. The percentage of respondents who bet at Ridgeway campus was found to be 71% and those who don't bet 29% according to the study. Students continued to engage themselves in betting despite having the knowledge that sports betting is a form of gambling and it is an addictive disorder.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

Non substance related abuse disorder also known as behavioral addiction does not involve the

ingestion of a substance but has similar effects as alcohol and drug addiction<sup>1</sup>. Examples are gambling, sexual addiction, internet addiction, and compulsive shopping. Pathological gambling is the most common behavioral addiction that has occurred throughout the history of human society and culture, for example placing a bet on a cockfight has cultural and religious relevance since many centuries in India and other countries<sup>2</sup>. Gambling is known as an impulse control disorder<sup>1</sup>. Ludomania is a Latin word (ludos meaning game and mania passion or attraction).

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There are different forms of gambling and among them sports betting is the fast growing type of commercial gambling<sup>3</sup>. Gambling is a human activity with a long standing history, in the present day it takes a number of forms including land based table games and electronic games, internet games, lottery and casinos. Though it is considered to be a leisure and recreational activity amongst the people it has serious repercussions for individuals, families and society as a whole.

The launch of internet world wide has led to an increase in number of adolescent and college students that engage in gambling activities<sup>4</sup>. Most students that engage in gambling be it online or physical placement of a wager risk losing their allowances as well as their savings because of their addiction to gambling. 5% of students are categorized as compulsive gamblers<sup>5</sup>. Social analyst fear that addiction to gambling among students can cause abuse of other substances and further problems including fraud and illegal drug trafficking. Up to 23% of the college students gamble weekly or more and between 3% and 14% develop gambling problems. These problems include poor academic performance at school, substance abuse like heavy alcohol drinking, illicit drug abuse, heavy tobacco smoking and suicidal ideation<sup>4</sup>.

Sports betting involves placing a wager on the outcome of a sporting event or events that occur within a match or a given fixture. The wager can be placed physically or using online sports betting web sites via mobile phone or computer<sup>6</sup>. It is most popular amongst different age groups because of easy accessibility and availability of betting companies. Sports betting is seen as an easy way of making money among students in universities and colleges worldwide despite it having negative effects.

With legislation of betting, Sports betting is becoming more and more popular in United States of America (USA) among students. According to National Centre for Responsible Gaming (NCRG),

75% of students gambled to an extent last year<sup>7</sup>. In Kenya students have turned to sports betting to meet their day to day cost of living on campus. Sports betting is perceived as a smart way of earning money to survive on campus rather than depending on loans and parental support<sup>7</sup>. In Kenya over 78% of Universities participate in sports betting, hence the prevalence of gambling among the students is high.

In South Africa betting was fastest growing category in 2015 with 28.5% increase in GGR. In 2014 it was the second largest gambling behind casinos. This was boosted by the availability of online betting e.g bet, sun bet, sports betting and supabets<sup>8</sup>. In Zambia, with rapid introduction of gambling technologies such as casinos, online betting and availability of gambling machines in markets and some residential places, sports betting has become popular among the medical students at ridgeway campus. There has been an exponential rise in the number of students that are betting at ridgeway campus as compared to previous 5-7years ago with uncontrollable strong attraction to gambling<sup>9</sup>.

Sporting betting has become a common trend among medical students at ridgeway campus. Medical student is a student enrolled at a medical school, who is training to become a physician/doctor. There are many factors that influence betting among students at ridgeway campus. Ridgeway campus is near Kabwata township which has a lot of betting companies e.g bola bet ,gal bet, making it easier for students to place a physical wager. Internet and advancing technology has greatly contributed to the rise of sports betting among students, students find it easier to bet via their mobile phones using online sports betting accounts. Wager can be placed as low as K1 and stand a chance of winning thousands of money. Sports betting just like anywhere else it is perceived as a way of survival by students at ridgeway campus.

Sports betting has exponentially risen in the past few years and its becoming popular in Zambia. It is for this reason why a research was needed to evaluate the impact of betting on our future health care givers.

Majority of the population do not seek medical care due to lack of awareness and knowledge about gaming gambling addiction. Internet gamblers less likely to seek medical treatment than non-internet gamblers.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To determine the prevalence of sports betting among students at the University of Zambia, Ridgeway campus.
2. To determine factors influencing the rise of sports betting among students at ridgeway campus.
3. To assess the impact of betting on students' academic performance.

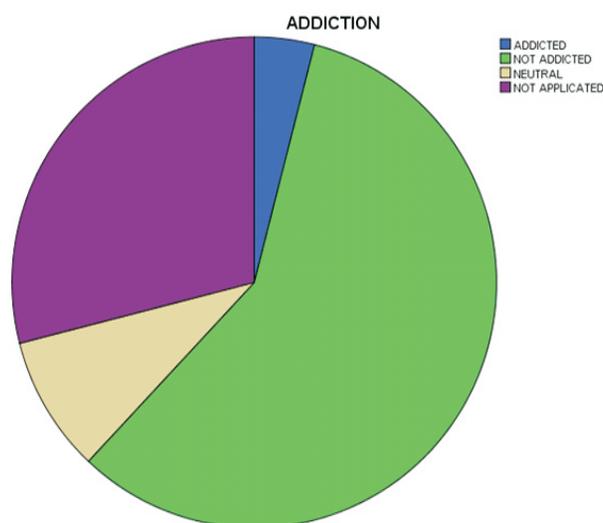
## METHODS

A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among 100 undergraduate medical students studying at University of Zambia and staying at Ridgeway Campus. The ages of the participants were between 20 and 35 years. Participants were predominantly of Zambian African ethnicity and minority were of Indian ethnicity. They were of mixed gender. Data was collected using questionnaires which were administered on randomly selected participants. Data entry was done using Microsoft Excel Sheets and data was analyzed using SPSS. The ethical approval to conduct the study was sought from UNZABREC. Participation in the study was voluntary and all participants were recruited only after informed written consent.

## RESULTS

A total of 100 medical students participated in the study. 94% of the participants were male and 6% were females. The participants were in the age group 20-35 years. 37% of the participants were in the age group 20-24 years, 61% were in the age group 25-29 years and 2% were in the age group 30-35 years. 71% of the participants agreed to have placed a bet (wager) before and 29% had never betted before. 56% of the participants preferred online betting, 2% preferred physical placing of a bet, and 13% used

both online and physical betting while 29% of the participants never betted. 47% of the participants used Airtel Money as mode of payment to place a bet, 11% used MTN Money, 10% used both Airtel and MTN Money, 3% used PayPal while 29% of the participants never betted. The source of income of 69 % of the participants was meal allowance, 13% was upkeep, part time jobs 4% and both meal allowance and upkeep was 14%. Among the participants, 58% had not reached at the level of addiction, 4% had reached the addiction level, 9% were neutral and 29% were not betting. (Figure 1)



**Figure1: Social Impairment in terms of Level of Addiction to Betting**

58% of the students have not reached the level of addiction, 4% were addicted, 9% neutral and 29% not applicable (do not bet).

## DISCUSSION

In this study 100 respondents were selected using random sampling method, 71 admitted to have betted before and 29 have never placed a wager before. The prevalence of betting was found to be at 71% of the population. 94% of males participated in the study and 6% females, males were the majority that participated in the study. Males are more prone to participate in betting than females. However

females develop addiction faster than males and would suffer from psychiatry conditions such as depression, anxiety, personality disorders and impaired memory processing. There are many factors that lead to the high percentage of students engagement in gambling, internet and mobile banking played a major role and low socio economic status and exposure.

This study found that majority of the respondents used online betting (internet 56%), a few use physical way of betting (2%), some used both online and physical methods (13%). The data collected in this study has shown that online betting was more popular and influential among students, and betpawa was found to be the leading online betting company. Because of advancement in technology and easy accessibility, the provision of betting especially on a mobile platform enhanced participation, demand and use of sports betting services. Majority of the students opted to use online betting. The findings of the study were similar to a study done by Gainsbury in 2015 who said the advancement in technology has played a major role in the rapid growth of online gambling in the world<sup>10</sup>. Technology had played a major role in gaming and gambling industry that is sports betting<sup>7</sup>. The advancement in technology has made it difficult to monitor online gambling among users.

The percentage of payment mode in the study was found to be; Airtel money 47%, MTN money 11%, both Airtel and MTN money 10%, giving a total of 68%, altogether mobile banking payment. 3% betted using PayPal. Mobile banking was more popular among the medical students because of easy accessibility to mobile money. Majority of the students found it more convenient to bet using their mobile accounts connected to their online betting accounts in the comfort of their rooms rather than walking longer distances to place a physical wager. It is cheaper, low cost and readily available every time unlike banks and cheque. The study also agreed with Gainsbury, 2015 who said that mobile phone gambling is fast growing among the people<sup>10</sup>. The

advancement in technology has made it difficult to monitor online gambling among users. The high percentage of mobile banking in this study is in correlation with a study done by Laukkanen and Lauronen in 2005, who said that the introduction, growth and acceptance of mobile and electronic cash and payment systems had greatly enhanced the adoption and use of gambling around the world<sup>11</sup>. The easy accessibility and availability of mobile banking has influenced more students at Ridgeway to embrace sports betting.

The age range of the people who participated in the study was; 20-24 years with a percentage of 37%, 25-29 years with 61% and lastly 30-34 years 2%. Majority of the students engaged in sports betting in this study were males aged 25-29 years and 20-24 years. This implies demographic characteristics of the population had an influence on the levels of use of technology and sports betting. The findings of this study are similar to a study by Mwadime in 2017, in which he quoted Moore saying one of the major reasons driving the growth of sports betting in EU was an increasing mobile young population<sup>10</sup>.

Source of income of majority of the respondents in the study was meal allowance from the government about 69% of the students, 13% depended on upkeep from home, 14% both meal allowance and upkeep, and 4% had part time jobs. Most of the students engaged in betting to meet their daily needs because they receive little money from their guardians or parents. With the motivation that comes with winning a wager, majority have continued betting despite knowing the risks associated with betting. The study agreed with a study by Koross in 2016, in which it was said that students turned to sports betting to meet their daily needs on campus<sup>7</sup>. Not only because of low social economic status of students on campus has influenced betting, the recreational and leisure aspect of it has made majority of the students engage in betting. It was also found that a small percentage of students 4% had some social impairment, it affected their relationship with friends and family, 58% of the

students had no signs of social impairment despite been engaged in betting. Students continued betting despite having adequate knowledge on the psycho-social impacts of betting such as dysfunctional impulsivity, anxiety, depression, impaired reward processing, impaired social function, abuse of other substances like drugs, alcohol, addiction and pathological gambling. Personality disorders and risks of losing their beloved ones, poor academic performance and chronic mental health problems. Majority of the responds agreed that sports betting would lead to pathological gambling and impairment in their daily activities including academics if they reach the addiction level. A few students had made an attempt to stop betting but failed, and the majority of students have not made an efforts to try stop betting.

## CONCLUSION

Sports betting is the fast growing gambling industry. The percentage of respondents who bet at Ridgeway campus was found to be 71% and those who don't bet 29% according to the study. Majority of the students who bet according to the study were males with 94%. Mobile banking and internet (online) had greater influence on betting among students, because of easy accessibility, cost effectiveness, privacy of mobile wallets and cheap cost. Students continued to engage themselves in betting despite having the knowledge that sports betting is a form of gambling and it is an addictive disorder. Sports betting can cause problems than it is perceived. It can lead to psycho social impairment, memory reward impairment, depression, anxiety disorders, personality disorders, addiction, impaired social responsibility, and poor academic performance. The sports betting can also cause reduced performance at work and pathological gambling disorders or problematic gambling.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Adequate information on sports betting and its effect must be made available to the public. Mass sensitization on gambling, addictive disorders and

abuse of substance by the government, private companies or betting companies.

There is urgent need to put a policy framework that will regulate betting among students, members of the public. Regulation of advertisement and promotion of betting activities in the country with the aim to reduce on exposure not only to students but also young under age children.

Students must engage in part time jobs in order to meet the daily needs.

## ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

UNZA – University of Zambia

UNZABREC- University of Zambia Biomedical Research Ethics Committee

UNZASOM –University of Zambia School of Medicine

HIV-Human immune deficiency virus

GGR- Gross gaming revenue

AIDS-Acquired immune deficiency syndrome

PEP-Post exposure prophylaxis

FAS-Foetal alcoholic syndrome

MMSE-Mini mental state exam

DSM 5 –Diagnostic statistical manual of mental disorders 5<sup>th</sup> Edition

BCLB-Betting control and licensing board

ICT-Information and communication technology

TAM-Technology and adoption model

WHO-World Health Organisation

## DECLARATIONS

### Ethical Approval

The research proposal was fully approved by University of Zambia Biomedical Research Ethics Committee

### Consent

Written informed consent was obtained from all the participants before commencing the study.

### Competing Interest

Authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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### Authors Contributions

All authors contributed to the development, revision and approval of the final manuscript.

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