

Risk Factors and Prevalence of Gambling Among University Students During Academic Disruptions: A Case of Lecturer's Strike in Kenya 2025

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<https://doi.org/10.62049/jkncu.v6i2.604>

Abstract

This study investigated risk factors and prevalence of gambling among university students during academic disruptions brought about by such a case of lecturers' strikes, more so in public universities. A survey was used to collect data with a quantitative approach; a sample size of 620 students continuing with their academic work was randomly selected from 4 public universities in the Nairobi metropolitan area. The study established that several factors, such as socioeconomic factors like financial constraints, academic disruptions like lecturer strikes, environmental factors like exposure to betting platforms, and psychological factors like idleness and stress levels, contribute to gambling behaviours among students. The findings show that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds participate in risk gambling behaviour, which in the long run affects their academic progress and causes psychological distress. The most common form of gambling was sports betting, with the motivation of making quick money from betting. From the study, it was established that there's a significant relationship between socioeconomic factors and gambling risk behaviours among students. The regulatory framework directly contributes to the growth of gambling in Kenya. Hence, in control measures, betting companies can adopt some technology that will only allow users to bet with limitations to ensure there is no overspending, thus preventing addictions of any kind. Institutions ought to invest in centers of counseling with the establishment of academic programmes geared towards creating awareness to promote responsible gambling even during times of academic disruptions in Kenyan public universities.

Keywords: Risk Gambling Behaviour, Betting, Sport Peas, Strikes, University Student, Metropolitan

Background

Gambling, according to Merriam-Webster dictionary, is an activity and the practice of risking assets such as money in games or betting. According to Macia et al. (2023), it is a form of disorder characterized by persistent and recurrent problematic behavior that can lead to clinically significant damage like disorientation of important personal relationships, loss of a job, emotional disorder, sleep disorder, indebtedness, anhedonia, and loss of control. It can also be said to be an activity whereby the victim risks their valuables with the aim of winning money. In modern technology, it happens when you play any game of chance or skill by staking something of value that has potential for winning the prize. It can be seen through lotteries, sports betting, casino table games, online gambling, Lotto, and many others.¹

This activity is not new in the society of human beings; it is a ubiquitous practice of humans from their diverse cultures. Man's fascination with risks and rewards resonates through history in the form of games of chance. According to Simon (2024), the exact origin of gambling remains a mystery; historical evidence from archeological accounts indicates a diverse civilization evolving into distinct forms of gameplay. Simon insists that as man became more conscious of the self and the surroundings, he learned of the risks around and also the rewards he would attain.

Therefore, as man went out hunting big game such as buffalo with primitive tools, he risked becoming the hunted as there were more vicious predators than man who wanted a quick meal. It can be assumed that man's desire to overcome risks to attain the impossible rewards is more of a survival instinct wired into man's psyche (Simon, 2024).

The disorder associated with gambling is characterized by persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behaviour, which could lead to clinically significant damage such as deterioration of important personal relationships, loss of job for those working, emotional disorder, sleep disorder, indebtedness, anhedonia and loss of control (Macia et al., 2023). Many studies have focused on exploring the profile of male gamblers, yet different studies have yielded limited results, if not contradictory, with some suggesting that the pattern of gambling may differ based on gender (Abbott et al., 2018).

Jauregui et al. (2020) argue that gambling motives can be regarded as etiological factors since they can be used to determine the development of an individual's vulnerability to addictive behavior. A study by Zack and Stewart (2008) proposes three major reasons for gambling: social motives (SOC), coping motives (COP), and enhanced motives (ENH). Kuleta (2021) suggests that women are likely to participate in gambling as a coping mechanism in dealing with worries and negative emotions. According to Barrault et al. (2019), coping and enhanced motives are likely to be the strongest predictors of severe problem gambling behavior, whereas social motives seem to be related to non-pathological gambling.

¹ <https://thegamblingclinic.com/what-is-considered-gambling/>

Although there could be some differences in gambling motivations when it comes to sex, Grand-Gosende et al. (2019) in their study conclude that statistics on adolescents' gambling show different patterns. From their findings, young people with a gambling problem score higher in all gambling motives, including social motives, unlike those without a gambling problem. Some of the major reasons for gambling among adolescents include excitement, fun, and socialization Jauregui et al., (2020).

Similar studies indicate that due to higher levels of affective impulsivity towards immediate rewards (tendency to act rashly under the influence of an intense affective state, whether positive or negative) (Navas et al., 2017). Lockwood et al. (2017) argue that the rashness towards quick or immediate gain without foreseeing the consequences of risky behaviour is associated with neurobiological susceptibility, a characteristic of certain brain areas still developing among the youth.

Despite many countries forbidding gambling to minors, a report by the Public Health Agency of Sweden (2022) indicates that, despite having an age limit for gambling (18 years), the activity is prevalent among minors, with about 3-5% of ages between 15 and 18 years which is considered to be at risk (problem gamblers). Such related gambling problems among youth include strained relationships, school difficulties, and impaired mental health (Dowling et al., 2017). The involved activities of risk gambling are betting for increasing amounts of money and borrowing money to keep gambling (CAN 2021).

Riley et al. (2021) opine that gambling problems are associated with the problems of elevated risk later in life. This may have short- and long-term economic, social, educational, and health-related consequences both for the individual and for people in the immediate social environment. Therefore, counteracting youth gambling is a public health issue; hence, identifying some conditions that can protect youth at risk of gambling is of great importance.

A study by Estvez et al. (2020) indicates some prevalence of comorbid mental health problems, showing mood and anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, frequency, and severity of gambling in comparison to the adolescents without such problems. Fonseca et al. (2021) observe that the female adolescents suffering from gambling addiction, compared to the general population, have significantly higher rates of gambling. This is exhibited in anxious depressive symptoms with eating disorder, and compulsive buying, drug, and alcohol use (Estvez et al., 2020). Although in women the tendencies of addictive behaviour are initiated later in life than in men, the progression of developing dependence is faster for them (Fonseca et al., 2021).

According to psychologists, a phenomenon known as 'telescoping' (memory distortion in which people misjudge the timing of past events) tends to occur both in substance use and non-substance-related addictions. It explains why women get to treatment with more severe behavioural, social, psychological, and family problems (Slutske et al., 2015). Fonseca et al. (2021) argue that different rates of addictive behaviour are more related to gender/cultural environment than biological factors, and thus, addictive behaviour becomes more feminized and normalized among females.

Amongst many risks and protective factors for addiction in young people is the relationship with family and peers, which is vital to human life (Estevez et al 2019). Addictive behaviour could be linked to a need for relational satisfaction; at the same time, scholars consider dependency behaviour as an attachment

disorder, thus finding negative relationships between secure attachment style and acting out behaviours (Estevez et al., 2017).

Vegni et al. (2019) alludes that the percentage of young people who gamble pathologically is alarming and even greater than that of adults in Italy. In the study from Italy, 2-9 percent of adults can be classified in the category of problem gamblers, and 10-18 percent are adolescents categorized as at-risk gamblers. According to Teng et al. (2020), the attachment to parents and peers is negatively associated with involvement in addictive problem behaviours. As a matter of fact, an insecure attachment style could be a predictor of internet gambling disorder and abuse. Yet, the involvement of maternal and paternal attachment in addictive behaviour and gender is unexplored (Schindler 2019).

A study carried out in Uganda on 'gambling prevalence and factors associated with gambling participation among university students in Uganda' indicates that the activity has been popularized as a potential platform for quick and effortless cash. From the study, it is observed that 57 percent of youth in Uganda aged between 17-35 years have participated in gambling, ranking Uganda second to Kenya and above South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, and Tanzania among African countries (Nsereko et al., 2023).

Studies indicate that gambling behaviour is prevalent among young people, more so among students. According to Akinloyan (2022), 65.5 percent of students at Crawford University, Ogun State, South Nigeria, have ever gambled. According to Koross's (2016) report, 78 percent of Kenyan students, 32.5-50 percent of these students have ever gambled. It is reported that at least 25 percent of college students gambled once a week. Scandroglio et al. (2023) note that 33 percent of male students and 15 percent of female students gambled at least once a week. Moreover, gambling occurs more among college students than most recognize. These notwithstanding the overall number of learners identified as having participated in gambling, it is the most prevalent behaviour among the young people receiving inappropriate attention from the public and learning institutions.

In Kenya, gambling activities take place in different forms, they include and not limited to sports betting, lotteries/ play lotto, casino gambling, board games, playing cards, slot machines, scratch cards, gaming, betting on animal racing, pool betting, online betting, and virtual soccer. Among many communities and individual homesteads, gambling has been abhorred and considered unacceptable since it is highly associated with far-reaching negative implications from societal, communal, family, and even individual levels (Ssewanyana and Bitanihirwe, 2018). Technological advancement, as adduced, propelled the activity to a higher notch. In this case, and at the center of technological advancement, connectivity, transformation, and convenience contributed to fast-growing economies at the global level in the 21st century (Mwenda, 2017).

In Kenya, the digital wave of M-Pesa stood at the forefront of innovation that revolutionized financial transactions. The innovation enabled the transfer of money, paying bills, and accessing essential services through mobile phones, leading to unprecedented financial independence (Mwenda 2017). The revolution opened a new market and frontiers fertile for either exploration or exploitation depending on one's understanding. The digital transfer of money (M-Pesa) wave was a precursor of digital revolutions in Kenya that enhanced mobile gambling, which is a financial transaction at a tap away, creating a platform for betting, attracting millions of Kenyans to engage in the use of mobile money transfer, leading to the rapid growth of betting platforms and generating significant revenue (Akoten and Robison 2019).

The Rate of Uncensored Gambling Among Young People in Kenya

The youth in Kenya form a substantial percentage of the population; thus, it's necessary to ensure they are adequately engaged and ready to fit into the economic turbulence of the society. From Odhiambo's (2018) observation, about 76 % of the youth are engaged in gambling activities, with the prevalence of the gambling industry, and without profound knowledge of the socio-economic effects on society. Studies have shown that gambling contributes significantly to reduced labour productivity among the working age of youth in many developing countries like Kenya.

The rapidly growing of mobile gambling underscores its popularity, which raises questions about potential challenges in the regulatory system, the economic effects, and social implications (Nyamongo and Obiero 2020). The vibrance of mobile sports gambling in Kenya pulsates with promises of sporting excellence and economic prosperity. However, underneath is the gleaming facade and whispers of potential pitfalls such as financial strain and addictions. Kenyan population of young people gambles more frequently, raising concerns about responsible gaming practices. Although the industry sparks the creation of jobs such as advertisement, marketing, programming, and customer care services, some consequences, such as addiction and match fixing, cannot be ignored (Njenga and Kimenchu, 2022).

Still, cultural and religious beliefs tend to disapprove of gambling; those endorsing it do so from the monetary consideration as well as an option for leisure activities, and also a source of livelihood or even escape from poverty (Ofosu and Kotey 2020). Additionally, a study by Kam et al. (2017) on reasons for gambling shows that entertainment was 37.5 %, killing time 25.1 %, peer influence 22.3 %, affordability due to acceptance of small stakes 17.6 % and perceiving gambling activity as a challenge 17.0 %.

Despite the challenges associated with gambling and in light of technological advancement, new modes of gambling have been introduced and are associated with job creation, increased national revenue base. At the same time, with its availability, advertising, and sanctioning of legalized gambling, the industry continues to see unprecedented expansion (Bitanihirwe et al., 2022). The alarming issue is the sheer number of young people who spend all their waking time with their meager resources on gambling.

This behaviour is a cause of concern in our society due to addiction, security, and public health. Regrettably, an observation is made from young people who get involved in gambling without enough knowledge about risks associated with it and ludomania, have limited judgement on the difference between luck, chance, and probability, hence, are vulnerable to problems of gambling (GRAPC and UNICEF Georgia, 2021).

Major Reasons for Gambling

There are increased cases of gambling in Kenyan markets; hence, the government is trying to review laws about the licensing, taxation of the proceeds, and control of entrants. However, the regulations and tax laws adopted hardly cover the vulnerable users. Still, no initiative is taken for new technology to monitor gambling platforms, thus presenting challenges in terms of law interpretation, opening an avenue for manipulation.

Since there is little knowledge on the interaction of online betting platforms and mobile money portals and the way they influence each other, this gap raises a concern of money laundering. The youth group is more susceptible to involvement in gambling and its problems, which makes them a vulnerable group. Studies

indicate that worldwide, 6-8 % of these young people have a serious gambling problem (George et al., 2016).

An observation from Zalaznick (2022) indicates that participation in gambling has established a complex connection between gambling and money. The primary motivation for gambling is money gain instead of being a recreational activity. Macharia (2018) notes that despite this, some students incur debts to fund their gambling habits, others are on loans, hence risk being listed on credit bureaus (CRB), still others end up gambling away tuition fees. Traditionally, gambling was considerably related to poor academic achievement, criminal involvement, delinquency, and truancy. However, recent research shows that delinquency associated with a gambling problem is merely financially motivated by gambling losses (Krysajtyts et al., 2018).

On the other hand, Allami et al. (2018) opine that, relating to poor academic achievement, it has been noticed that the problem of adolescent gambling affects students' performance by reducing the time spent on studying. From these studies, therefore, the problem of gambling among young people can generally be attributed to problems of conduct rather than specific criminal behaviour, as the phenomenon is already present in and among preadolescents; hence, it needs to be analyzed.

In fact, the lowering of the age of onset of problematic behaviours related to pathological gambling raises many questions about the presence of gambling among preadolescents who are more exposed to the use of smartphones, tablets, and the internet as tools encouraging the conduct. The authority must identify the challenges associated with gambling, such as risk factors in decision-making and the socioeconomic consequences for those involved in gambling. There is a need to regulate the maximum participation to control participation, hence reducing cases of huge loss, including death.

Problem Statement

The global prevalence of gambling among university students is increasingly growing, leading to social and behavioral concerns and creating significant psychological, financial, and academic consequences. In Kenya, for instance, the increasing accessibility of online betting platforms continues to fuel this trend, especially among young adults in higher learning institutions.

During the periods of academic disruption, such as lecturer strikes, students mostly experience prolonged idleness, reduced academic engagement, unplanned expenditure, and heightened stress and uncertainty about their academic future. This situation increases the students' vulnerability to risky behaviors such as gambling.

Despite experiencing growing public awareness through reach-out campaigns, advocacy groups, and debates on policy formulation on the effects of gambling among the youth, there remains limited empirical evidence focusing on how academic disruptions influence gambling behaviors among university students in Kenya.

Therefore, understanding the prevalence and risk factors associated with gambling during the period of academic disruption is crucial for developing targeted interventions, promoting responsible behavior, and safeguarding students' mental and social well-being. Consequently, the study seeks to examine the

increasing prevalence and underlying risk factors of gambling among university students during academic disruption periods, such as lecturer strikes in Kenya.

Research Objectives

The general objective is to examine the prevalence and risk factors associated with gambling among university students during academic disruptions in Kenya.

Specific Objectives

- To determine the prevalence of gambling behavior among university students during academic disruptions in Kenya.
- To identify socio-economic, psychological, and environmental factors influencing gambling among university students during lecturer strikes.
- To assess the impact of academic disruption on students' gambling patterns and frequency.
- To suggest policy and institutional interventions aimed at mitigating gambling risks among university students during periods of academic disruption.

Significance of Study

The study is significant as it seeks to provide valuable insights into the rising cases of gambling among university students during times of academic disruption, such as lecturers' strikes in Kenya. It contributes to the expansion of knowledge about the behaviour of university students with a focus on how academic programme disruption influences risky gambling behaviour. Most studies have explored general gambling with limited contexts on the relationship between academic disruption and gambling behaviour risks among university students.

Out of the study, religious leaders, community leaders, institutions, guardians, and parents could gain insight and be able to identify the socioeconomic and psychological factors that influence the risk of gambling behaviour at times of academic disruption. These will inform the appropriate support mechanism for this vulnerable group during this moment of academic disruption.

Policy makers in the government institutions could draw from the findings the information that will help design a targeted intervention that will address the risk behaviours of students during times of academic disruption. At the same time, the government could learn the importance of resolving the issues affecting its workers beforehand, thus reducing its impact on the consumers.

This study also forms the basis of future research on the risk behaviour associated with academic disruptions in Kenya, mostly in public universities. Related issues such as mental health, financial dependency, and substance abuse could be explored among university students.

The university's department of counseling and mental wellness could draw a case in support of students' psycho-social and economic stressors, which predispose students to gambling. The knowledge will help develop a supportive way of protecting and also being able to rehabilitate those most affected. The outcome will also contribute to the enhancement of a safe, stable, and friendly learning environment in the universities. Understanding and mitigation of gambling risks will help sustain the integrity of academics while protecting students' welfare during disruptions to academics at universities.

Conceptual Framework

The study's conceptual framework is based on the understanding of the fact that academic disruptions caused by such factors as lecturers' strikes could easily influence students' behaviour and thus coping mechanisms, including gambling. This framework links independent variables, which are risk factors associated with gambling, with the dependent variable, that are prevalence and patterns of gambling behavior among students, while recognizing the control variables, such as the role of institutional and policy interventions.

Independent Variables (Risk Factors)

Dependent Variable

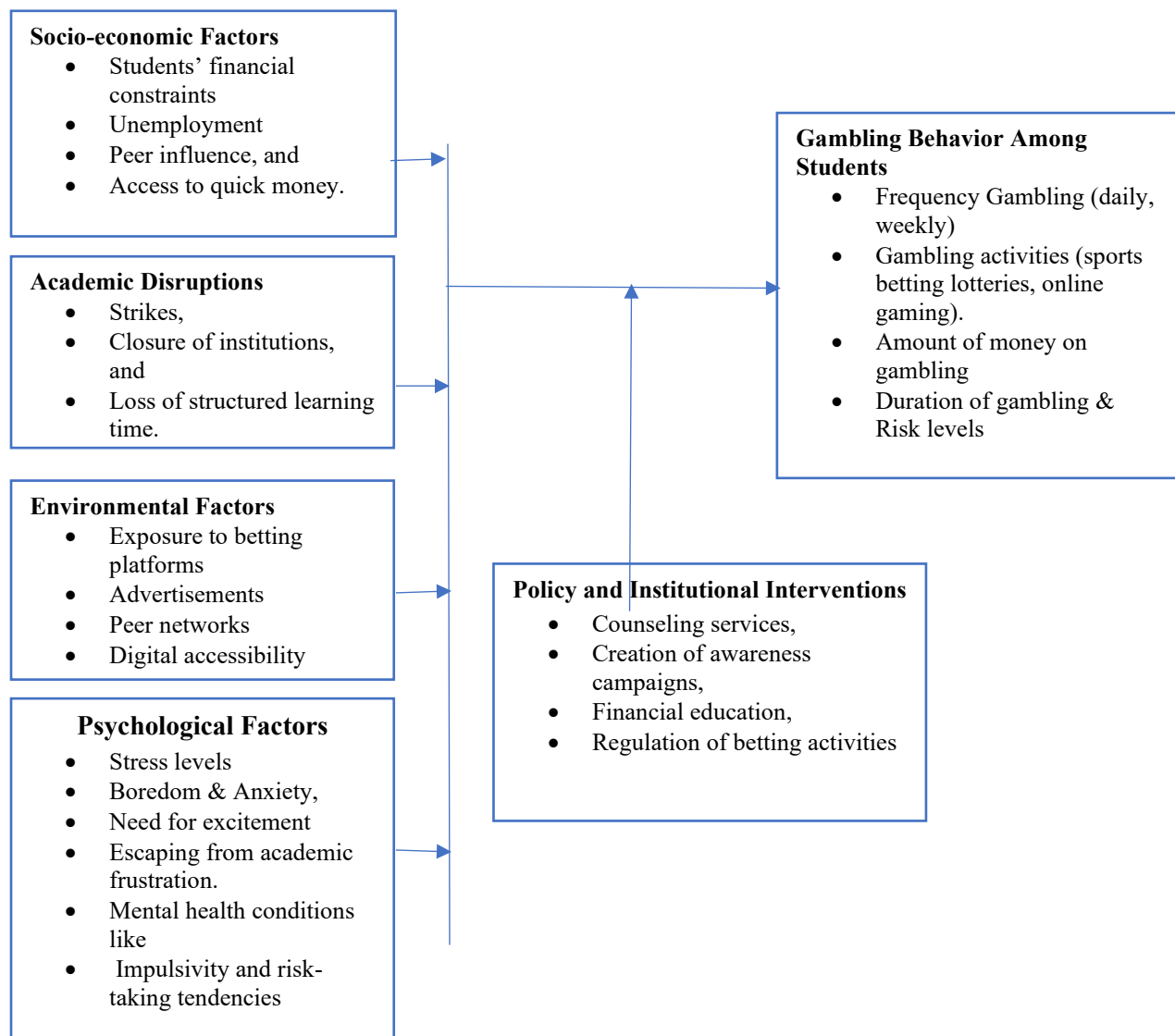


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework: Researchers' Compilation

Methodology

The study was carried out using a descriptive quantitative design, based on 4 objectives, which are: determining the prevalence of gambling behaviour during academic disruption, identifying socioeconomic, psychological, and environmental factors leading to gambling, the impact of academic disruption on students' gambling, and suggesting policy intervention to mitigate the risks. The focus was on 4 public universities in the Nairobi metropolitan area. It was conducted on (n= 620) students studying in the 2025-2026 academic year at four public universities in the Nairobi metropolitan area. Respondents were selected randomly from their campuses. From 620 students, about 353 (57%) stated that they had gambled through playing games, while 150 (24%) had participated in both in-game betting and gambling, and 117 (19%) stated that they were both gaming and gambling.

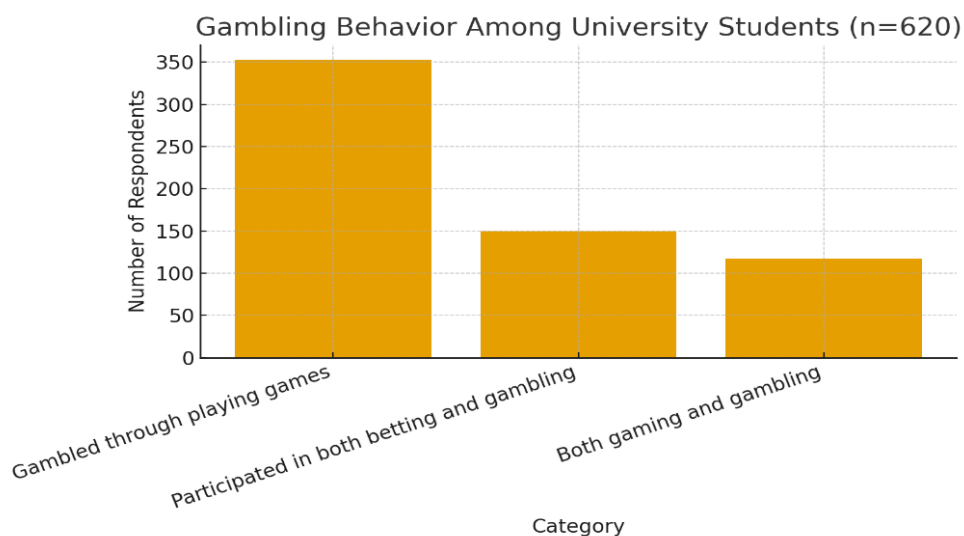


Figure 2: Graph showing gambling behaviour among university students

Data Collection

The collection of data was done through a survey as a student information Google document, which was created by the researcher and two assistants. The survey had 32 questions on a Likert scale inquiring about students' socioeconomic, psychological, academic and environmental factors. Data was collected from students in 4 public universities during the period of September-November 2025 Lecturers strike that lasted for 49 days. Before data collection, participants were informed early that participation was to be voluntary and based on informed consent. The purpose of the study was declared, and assurance of confidentiality, a self-administered questionnaire was shared to respondents.

Discussion

Prevalence of Risk Gambling Behavior During Academic Disruptions

The increased number of cases and the impact of gambling in Kenya are of great concern, especially among university students. Although the rate of gambling has continued to be high, it increases rapidly, particularly when there is an academic disruption such as a lecturer's strike. The academic disruption creates a prolonged

idle time, which heightens stress and uncertainties among the students. The findings indicate that at least 61.2 % (percent) of students in selected universities in the Nairobi metropolitan area admitted to having participated in gambling. Of these, 68.7 % of them were identified to be addictive to betting, hence, problem gamblers.²

Still, 71% of the respondents admitted to having engaged in gambling for a long time and are experiencing problems quitting the activity. It came out clearly that the precursor to this problem gambling could be linked to such risk factors as exposure to media, peer influence (67 %), and low socio-economic status of the participants.³. Therefore, out of these findings, it can be suggested that if structured academic programs are disrupted, there will be a lot of idle time for most students who will then find themselves engaging in gambling to fill time and pursuing financial gain.

The continued disruption of academic programs through lecturers' strikes amplify some risk factors for gambling. When lecturers are on strike, there is less structured course work; thus, students find themselves less engaged academically, leading to increased boredom and vulnerable to such risks like gambling. In this error of high tech, the activity is easily exacerbated by easy access to online betting, more so in Kenya. In some components of gambling, such as sport pesa betting, findings have shown that about 70 % of the participant students find themselves with a gambling disorder, with over 69 % gambling more than once a week.⁴.

The high prevalence rates of these risk activities are a serious enough signal for concern for public health and a threat to education. It can easily lead to disruption of academics for the individuals, psychological distress, and financial hardship. Despite this prevalence, studies on the specific contexts of academic disruptions, such as lecturers' strikes, remain limited. In relation to this, academic institutions need to put in place targeted interventions that will address such unique circumstances when it arises. Interventions such as the embedment of gambling awareness in the curricula, which will be related to counselling services. Gambling behavior is an issue that needs to be addressed, especially during academic disruption, to safeguard the welfare of students, promote sustained educational outcomes, and maintain academic performance in Kenya.

Socio-Economic, Psychological and Environmental Factors Influencing Gambling Risks

Academic disruptions, especially in public universities in Kenya through lecturers' strikes, have left students vulnerable to gambling activities. Studies indicate that factors such as media exposure contributed to 39 %, familial influence 51 %, and peer influence 70 % have contributed to engagement in gambling.⁵. Socio-economic factors contribute heavily to determining the level of engagement of the participants in gambling behavior.

Findings have shown that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to be more likely to engage in gambling. A study by Mbiriri (2023) indicates that 78 % of students from low-income backgrounds were involved in problem gambling as compared to those from higher-income levels. Mbiriri

² https://repository.daystar.ac.ke/items/bf0dc04c-8684-45d3-b7ed-ee7667621f2f?utm_source=chatgpt.com

³ https://repository.daystar.ac.ke/items/ad46072e-6d8b-4a3d-82dc-45ba65ac7a45?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁴ https://ir-library.ku.ac.ke/items/7c542ee1-2b5c-4454-bf69-383ad2c116c3?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁵ https://repository.daystar.ac.ke/items/ad46072e-6d8b-4a3d-82dc-45ba65ac7a45?utm_source=chatgpt.com

observes that disrupted schedules of academics, high rates of unemployment, and limited financial resources among students proliferate idle time and financial stress, leading students to participate in gambling as a source of quick income.

Academic disruption could also heighten some psychological factors such as boredom, stress, and anxiety among students. The study tested the relationship between academic stress during lecturers' strikes and gambling frequency; Chi-square ($\chi^2 = 11.084$, $p < 0.05$). The finding indicates that there was a significant connection between academic stress as a variable and gambling behavior among students. Studies have shown that the usage of the internet could be linked to increased online gambling among learners.⁶ As most of them possess smartphones, which enable them to gamble impulsively.

Environmental factors could also reinforce the gambling behavior, such as easy access to a betting platform at any time, making it close to them. It can also be argued that the environmental accessibility of online betting platforms and venues of gambling strongly correlates with problem gambling among students. Still, the cultural perception of betting in Kenyan society is seen as a normal leisure, and the aggressiveness in the marketing of gambling through mainstream media creates an enabling environment.

In conclusion, the socioeconomic deprivation among students, the psychological vulnerability that is tied to academic disruption, and the enabling environment with a permissive cultural perception of accessible gambling combine to heighten its risks among university students. A free and liberal market accessibility with limited policies enhances easy access to gambling by vulnerable students during lecturer strikes in Kenya. Therefore, knowledge about these interlinked factors can be essential in developing well-targeted prevention and intervention strategies within our society.

Impact of Academic Disruption on Students' Gambling Patterns and Frequency

The reduced engagement in scheduled teaching due to disrupted academic programs in Kenya leads to prolonged periods of unstructured time, increasing the level of uncertainty about their academic future and stress. In this context, a fertile ground is created to escalate the behavior of gambling; the findings indicate that 60 % of the respondents reported having gambled, citing time away from academics and idleness brought about by disrupted schedules.⁷ The disruption creates two underlying issues whereby less engagement in academic work leads to gambling, which escalates to the frequency of betting and time spent on gambling when the academic calendar is paused.⁸

It can be concluded that the interruption of the academic calendar rhythmically correlates with more intense and frequent behaviors of gambling, as envisioned in the high rates of 70% among student gamblers.⁹ Frequent gambling may lead to dangerous gambling, which in the end leads to addiction. In the long run, these have tangible consequences such as absenteeism, neglecting coursework assignments, and deteriorating academic performance. This was evident among 53 % of respondents who registered having

⁶ https://editoncpublishing.org/ecpj/index.php/ECJPGC/article/view/138?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁷ https://repository.daystar.ac.ke/items/bf0dc04c-8684-45d3-b7ed-ee7667621f2f?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁸ https://editoncpublishing.org/ecpj/index.php/ECJPGC/article/view/138?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁹

<https://econpapers.repec.org/scripts/redir.pf?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rsisinternational.org%2Fjournals%2Fijriss%2FDigital-Library%2Fvolume-8-issue-11%2F774-781.pdf;h=repec:bcp:journl:v:8:y:2024:i:11:p:774-781>

dangerous gambling behaviors, leading to cases of missing classes and losing money allocated for school fees.¹⁰.

Therefore, academic disruptions brought about, to a larger extent by lecturers' strikes, more so in public, have a significant influence on the increased frequency, intensity, and prevalence of gambling among university students. Mitigation of these requires institutions of higher learning to incorporate proactive strategies that will enhance student engagement programs, which will target limiting unsupervised idle time, which will prevent intensifying gambling behaviors.

Policy and Institutional Interventions to Mitigate Gambling Risks

The disruption of public university academic calendars caused by lecturer strikes has often led to an increased number of vulnerable students engaging in gambling. Addressing this growing menace, collaboration both at the policy level and at the institutional level interventions are necessary for the protection of the welfare of students, to promote responsible behaviors through guidance and academic integrity through the following ways;

The university's department of research should come up with a survey on student behaviors monitoring systems. This can help track the prevalence of gambling during prolonged academic disruptions. Out of the findings, policies can be developed to address the gaps identified while also ensuring evidence-based interventions, as partnering with other departments of the government could enhance responsible behavior while not leaving out the role of religious institutions and the media that can engage young people and help develop alternative productive activities.

Policy and Legal Frameworks should be strengthened; The regulatory authority from the government department, in conjunction with the Betting Control and Licensing Board, ought to strengthen the existing rules regarding access to gambling platforms by young people. This can be achieved through limiting the advertising targeted to young people, enforcing the verification of the age of participants on online betting, betting companies from aggressively targeting students for marketing. The regulatory boards, such as the Communication Authority of Kenya and the Kenya Film and Classification Board (KFCB), should work hand in hand in monitoring content related to gambling and try to restrict its visibility during the time of lecturers' strikes or other academic disruptions. Awareness of mental health and the welfare of students should be part of the education programs.

Students' council, through their leaders, should be enabled to organize such constructive activities as innovation challenges, volunteer programs, and online seminars during the period of strikes. These will keep them engaged socially and intellectually and minimize idleness, which is a precursor to gambling. Some community services geared towards providing some literacy in finance and digital responsibility through planned workshops will reduce the boredom and idleness.

Gambling lessons and awareness should be integrated into curricula; learning institutions should embed some awareness under life skill lessons to educate students on the academic risks of gambling, the financial

¹⁰ <https://repository.daystar.ac.ke/handle/123456789/4050>

and psychosocial challenges of gambling. These will help promote critical thinking while enhancing some coping strategies during stressful moments of academic disruption.

Student support through counseling services should be given a priority; establishing and strengthening this body should be among the first centers to be created to support the mental health of those with facing dangerous gambling behavior. Under these centers, regular awareness campaigns and mentorship programs will assist students in coping with such stressful moments during strikes, boredom, and anxiety.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to determine the prevalence of gambling behavior among university students during academic disruptions, mostly brought about by lecturers' strikes. Identify the socioeconomic, psychological, and environmental factors that influence the gambling behavior of university students. To assess the impact of academic disruption on students' gambling patterns and frequency. Lastly, to suggest policy and institutional interventions that will be aimed at mitigating gambling risks among university students during times of academic disruption. The study was carried out in 4 public universities in the Nairobi metropolitan; it used a sample size of 620 randomly selected respondents from the students' fraternity.

The result revealed that students' participation in gambling risk behaviour is brought about by several factors, including: First, socioeconomic factors like financial constraints, unemployment, peer influence, and the desire to access quick money. Secondly, academic disruption by lecturers' strikes, closure of institutions, and loss of structured learning. Thirdly, environmental factors like exposure to betting platforms, advertisements, peer networks, and digital accessibility. Lastly, the psychological factors such as stress levels, boredom & anxiety, need for excitement, escape from academic frustration, mental health conditions, impulsivity, and risk-taking tendencies.

All these factors could lead to risky gambling behaviour among students that can be determined by its frequencies, the activities such as sports betting, lotteries, and online gaming, the amount of money used in gambling, and the duration of gambling with its risk levels. However, these factors associated with risk gambling behaviour could be moderated through policy and institutional interventions only if they could focus on counseling services, creation of awareness campaigns, through financial education, and regulation of betting activities by the government regulatory authorities.

Therefore, addressing the socioeconomic, psychological, and environmental factors among university students in Kenya, policymakers ought to create a resilient and safe academic environment to protect students from dangerous gambling behaviour even during times of academic disruption. This requires an efficient, integrated approach from policy reforms, academics, constructive engagement, counseling, and awareness to improve behaviour among the students.

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