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**BETTING AGAINST THE ODDS: EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES AND
ADDICTIVE PATTERNS OF YOUTH SPORTS BETTING IN NSAWAM AHODWO.**

BY

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DECLARATION BY STUDENT(S)

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original research and that, no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institute. I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This Dissertation/Thesis has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Dissertation/Thesis laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication, UniMAC.

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ABSTRACT

The research paper examines the motivations, experiences, addictive behaviours and perceived effects of sports betting among young people in Nsawam Ahodwo, one of the peri-urban in Ghana in the Eastern region. Four objectives guided the nature of the study; seeking to understand why youth bet on sports, understanding the experiences lived by youths, understanding the tendencies of addictive practices, and evaluating the perceived social, economic, and psychological consequences of betting on the wellbeing of the youths. Two theoretical frameworks, which are the social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by Icek Ajzen, were used to support the research. Social learning theory describes how people can learn and maintain betting behaviour with the help of observation, imitation and social reinforcement, whereas the TPB describes how attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control influence intentions and actions towards sports betting. Collectively, these theories offered an all-inclusive perspective of how social pressure, individual convictions and contextual conditions combine to influence youth betting behaviours.

The research design and methodology were to use a phenomenological approach to a qualitative research design in order to understand the lived experiences and meanings that the youth have towards sports betting. The target population was the youth aged between 18-35 years of residence in the Nsawam Ahodwo who had been betting sports at least six months. The implemented purposive sampling was to include eight to fifteen participants with appropriate experiences and contributions. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were used to gather the data and enable the participants to share their motivations, daily habit, emotional reactions, and the impact of betting in their lives. The data were analysed through thematic analysis, which involved systematic steps of transcription, coding and developing themes to determine patterns and insights that recurrently came out in the research objectives.

Results showed that young people are interested in sports betting because of the combined economic, social and psychological factors. Betting was also seen by participants as a way of supplementing income or escaping finances in case of unemployment and lack of opportunities. On a social level, the peer pressure, neighbourhood conventions, and advertisements on the media made betting a normal practice, an intellectual and fun pastime. The emotional reinforcement, psychologically, created a feeling of thrill, excitement, and hope related to the results of the bet which kept people involved. Experiences that youth had lived demonstrated the attraction and danger of betting-even though it could offer a short-lived relief, entertainment and social collusion, it could also cause economic burdens, frustration and emotional instability as a result of frequent losses and non-fulfilled expectations.

The paper also established specific tendencies of addictive behaviour, such as compulsive gambling, gambling to recover losses, feeling reliant, and neglecting the duties and finances. Such behaviours would usually intensify with time and turn betting into a hobby and escape mechanism. Its perceived effects were multivariate: economically, betting led to a state of debt and decreased productivity; socially, it caused a poor relationship, and trust in the community; psychologically, it caused anxiety, depression, and lack of self-control.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my dear husband, whose unwavering love, patience, and encouragement sustained me throughout this academic journey. Beginning this research as a pregnant woman was both challenging and transformative, yet your constant support gave me the strength and courage to persevere. To my precious child, who accompanied me silently through every late night and long day, you were my quiet inspiration and greatest motivation. And to every young person striving to pursue education while navigating life's demands, may this work remind you that determination makes all things possible.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Theory of Planned Behaviour..... TPB

Focus Group Discussion..... FGD

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Sports betting has emerged as a growing social and public health concern globally, particularly due to its addictive potential among youth populations (Wardle, 2019; Hing et al., 2024). Sports betting refers to the practice of predicting the outcome of sporting events and placing a wager on the result. It involves staking money on games such as football, basketball, boxing, or horse racing, with the expectation of financial gain if the prediction proves correct (Eze & Igwe, 2024). Sports betting has become a pressing social and public health issue, especially among young people, due to its addictive potential and far-reaching consequences (Kumar & Praveenakumar, 2025). The increased availability and aggressive marketing of sports betting platforms in Ghana, coupled with mobile money services, have normalized gambling and made participation among youth easy, cheap, and almost instantaneous (Susilawati et al., 2025).

However, sports betting poses significant risks of addiction and problem gambling, often leading to financial losses, indebtedness, strained family ties, and for young people, neglect of education, reduced productivity, and even involvement in risky or illegal activities (Aderinto et al., 2025). The glamorization of betting as a “get-rich-quick” scheme further fuels unrealistic expectations, trapping many youth in cycles of loss and despair, especially as they remain vulnerable due to unemployment, peer influence, and risk-taking tendencies (Marra & Nielsen, 2025). Beyond the individual level, youth problem gambling contributes to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression while undermining national development goals by diverting resources away from more productive uses. Avenyo et al. (2024) emphasise that online sports betting addictions negatively

impact academic achievements and social relations among university students, highlighting broader psychosocial consequences of betting behaviours. Globally, the sports betting market is projected to reach US\$77.18 billion in 2025, with revenue expected to grow annually by 5.30% to reach US\$94.89 billion by 2029, while user numbers are projected to rise to 231.9 million by 2029. Studies show that 24% of gambling addicts in the US and 38% worldwide bet on sports, reflecting its significant share of gambling addiction cases (Hing et al., 2024).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, gambling participation has expanded rapidly, driven by digital access and unemployment (Bitanihirwe & Ssewanyana, 2021; Glozah et al., 2023). SagaCube consumer data indicate that 34% of Africans engaged in money-related games or bets within four weeks, with Western African countries like Guinea (58%), Angola (51%), and Côte d'Ivoire (49%) reporting high engagement. Tade et al. (2023) describe how bettors in Nigeria experience continuous loss cycles, creating financial distress and psychological challenges. Similarly, Mihret and Eskezia (2024) note that betting has psychosocial and economic impacts on youth and adults in Ethiopia, often reinforcing poverty cycles. In Ghana, sports betting is pervasive among youth, driven by smartphone penetration and accessible internet (Boateng, 2020; Acheampong et al., 2022). The Ghana Statistical Service reports that youth, who make up 57% of the population, are heavily engaged in online sports betting. Online betting revenue was estimated at US\$27.36 million in 2023 and is projected to reach US\$36.49 million by 2027 with a 7.46% annual growth rate. Manu et al. (2024) found a 40% prevalence of problematic gambling among Ghanaian youth, while Adjei and Mensah (2023) highlighted its negative effects on moral behaviours. Ofosu and Kotey (2020) further demonstrated how sports betting influences investment behaviours, as bettors divert potential productive investments towards betting. Sports betting involves predicting sports results and wagering money on the outcomes (Karuma, 2023). Eze and Igwe (2024) found that sports

betting negatively influences psychological wellbeing, causing anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal among Nigerian youth.

Yeboah et al. (2022) observed that age is a significant factor, with younger students exhibiting higher betting rates than older students in Ghanaian colleges. This trend is not isolated to students; Aderinto et al. (2025) found high prevalence of online gambling among Nigerian medical and dental students, further demonstrating its broad reach. Sports betting addiction manifests through persistent, compulsive betting behaviours despite adverse consequences (Hing et al., 2024). Addictive patterns among youth include daily betting, borrowing to bet, prioritising betting over education, and emotional distress from losses (Acheampong et al., 2022; Manu et al., 2024). These patterns often lead to financial ruin, academic decline, strained family relationships, and engagement in risky coping mechanisms such as substance abuse (Adjei & Mensah, 2023). Despite these trends, there is limited qualitative research in Ghana exploring the lived experiences and addictive patterns of youth sports betting outside educational institutions (Avenyo et al., 2024; Boateng, 2020). Understanding these experiences within peri-urban communities like Nsawam Ahodwo is critical for designing effective interventions. In conclusion, exploring youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo is essential to inform policies, community programmes, and counselling interventions addressing this rising social challenge.

1.2 Problem Statement

Gambling addiction is a growing concern in Ghana, with a significant number of youth experiencing problems with gambling (Avenyo et al., 2024). A 2021 survey revealed that 70.68% of Ghanaian youth engage in some form of gambling, placing Ghana fourth in Africa for gambling participation (Bitanihirwe & Ssewanyana, 2021). Manu et al. (2024) found a 40% prevalence of problematic gambling and 44% for moderate gambling problems among participants, resulting in

an overall gambling prevalence of 84%. Additionally, Acheampong et al. (2022) reported that in rural Ghana, 34.3% of adolescents engaged in problem gambling within the previous year. Problem gambling was more prevalent among male adolescents (38.8%) than females (30.3%), and younger adolescents aged 10–14 years reported higher rates compared to older adolescents (Acheampong et al., 2022). Despite these alarming statistics, gambling has become normalised among youth, leading to financial distress, academic decline, moral deterioration, and psychological challenges such as depression and anxiety (Adjei & Mensah, 2023; Eze & Igwe, 2024). These challenges necessitate urgent empirical exploration within Ghanaian communities to inform targeted interventions.

While several studies have examined gambling behaviours among university students and adolescents in Ghana (Avenyo et al., 2024; Acheampong et al., 2022; Manu et al., 2024), there is limited research focusing specifically on the lived experiences and addictive patterns of youth sports betting within peri-urban communities such as Nsawam Ahodwo. Existing studies have primarily focused on the prevalence and psychological consequences among student populations (Yeboah et al., 2022; Adjei & Mensah, 2023), neglecting how contextual community factors shape betting behaviours outside formal educational settings. Moreover, few studies in Ghana have adopted qualitative approaches to explore in-depth personal narratives, motivations, and daily experiences of young people involved in sports betting (Eze & Igwe, 2024). This study seeks to address this gap by providing context-specific, qualitative insights to inform holistic intervention strategies and policy development targeting youth gambling addiction in Ghana.

1.3 Aim of the study

To explore the lived experiences and addictive patterns associated with sports betting among youth in Nsawam Ahodwo.

1.3.1 Research objectives

The following are the research objectives of the study;

1. To examine the reasons why youth in Nsawam Ahodwo engage in sports betting.
2. To explore the lived experiences of youth involved in sports betting in the community.
3. To identify patterns of addictive behaviours associated with sports betting among these youth.
4. To assess the perceived impacts of sports betting on their social, economic, and psychological wellbeing.

1.4 Research Questions

The following are the research questions of the study;

1. What factors influence youth in Nsawam Ahodwo to engage in sports betting?
2. How do youth in Nsawam Ahodwo describe their lived experiences with sports betting?
3. What addictive patterns are evident among youth involved in sports betting in the community?
4. How does sports betting affect the social, economic, and psychological wellbeing of these youth?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on exploring the lived experiences and addictive patterns associated with sports betting among youth. Contextually, the study will examine the underlying factors that drive youth participation in sports betting, their daily experiences, motivations, and the psychological or behavioural patterns that indicate addiction. It will investigate the perceived social, economic, and health impacts of sports betting on young people, including how betting influences their education,

employment, family relationships, and mental wellbeing. The research will also explore coping strategies, peer influence, and societal perceptions surrounding youth betting practices. By focusing on these areas, the study seeks to generate a deeper understanding of how sports betting shapes youth behaviour and wellbeing within the Ghanaian context, providing evidence that can inform interventions, policy development, and community education to address problem gambling among young people.

Geographically, the study will be conducted in Nsawam Ahodwo, a peri-urban community located in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Nsawam is a town known for its vibrant youth population, with many young people engaged in informal economic activities and various forms of leisure, including sports betting. Ahodwo, as a specific locality within Nsawam, provides a suitable setting due to its mix of small shops, betting centres, drinking spots, and residential areas, creating an environment where youth betting activities are visible and accessible. The focus on Nsawam Ahodwo allows for an in-depth exploration of betting patterns within a typical Ghanaian peri-urban context, reflecting both urban influences and rural realities. Findings from this geographical setting will offer insights applicable to similar communities across Ghana, while highlighting any unique cultural or community-level factors that shape youth betting behaviours in Nsawam Ahodwo.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it addresses a growing social concern affecting Ghanaian youth – sports betting and its associated addictive patterns. Despite the widespread increase in sports betting activities across the country, there is limited empirical research exploring the lived experiences of young people involved, especially within peri-urban communities like Nsawam Ahodwo. By examining the motivations, behavioural patterns, and consequences of betting among youth, the

study will provide critical insights into how sports betting shapes their daily lives, aspirations, and wellbeing. The findings will be beneficial to policymakers and regulatory bodies such as the Gaming Commission of Ghana by highlighting the extent and nature of youth engagement in betting, informing strategies to regulate betting activities, and potentially curbing underage and problem gambling. For social workers, counsellors, and community development practitioners, understanding the psychosocial impacts of sports betting will aid in designing targeted interventions and educational programmes to support youth who may be at risk of gambling addiction.

Additionally, this research will contribute to the academic literature on gambling behaviours in Ghana and Sub-Saharan Africa, where studies on youth sports betting remain scarce. It will also inform school authorities, parents, and community leaders about the realities faced by young people, enabling them to develop supportive environments that discourage harmful betting practices while promoting healthier leisure alternatives. Furthermore, the study will serve as a foundation for future research on gambling addiction and youth vulnerability, stimulating further exploration of effective prevention and rehabilitation programmes within local contexts. Overall, the study will create awareness of the hidden social and economic costs of youth sports betting, promoting community dialogue and stakeholder collaboration to address the issue sustainably.

1.7 Overview of the Methodology

This study will adopt a qualitative research design grounded in phenomenology to explore the lived experiences and addictive patterns of youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo. The phenomenological approach is suitable because it enables an in-depth understanding of participants' subjective experiences and meanings attached to betting behaviours. The target population will include youth aged 18–35 years engaged in sports betting within Nsawam Ahodwo.

Purposive sampling will be used to recruit 12–15 participants who have actively participated in sports betting for at least six months to ensure rich experiential narratives.

Data will be collected through a focus group discussion using a semi-structured in-depth interview guide focusing on reasons for betting, daily betting experiences, addictive patterns, and perceived impacts on wellbeing. Discussions will be conducted face-to-face in Twi or English, depending on participants' preference, and will last approximately 45–60 minutes. Data will be audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Thematic analysis will be employed to identify, code, and interpret emerging themes from participants' narratives. This approach will involve familiarisation, coding, theme development, and reviewing themes for coherence with research objectives. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation will be strictly observed. Findings will be presented thematically to capture the complexity of youth betting experiences in Nsawam Ahodwo.

1.8 Limitations of the study

This study is subject to several limitations. Firstly, its qualitative design with a small sample size limits generalisability of findings to the wider youth population in Ghana. The purposive sampling method may result in selection bias, as only youth willing to participate and share their experiences will be included, potentially excluding those with more severe or hidden betting problems. Secondly, data collection will rely on self-reported narratives, which are susceptible to social desirability bias, recall bias, or deliberate withholding of sensitive information due to stigma associated with gambling. Participants may underreport or exaggerate certain aspects of their experiences to conform to perceived expectations.

Thirdly, the study will be conducted solely in Nsawam Ahodwo, a peri-urban community, which may limit applicability of findings to urban or rural contexts with differing socio-economic dynamics and betting cultures. Additionally, language barriers or limited literacy among some participants may affect the depth of data collected despite efforts to conduct interviews in participants' preferred language. Finally, the cross-sectional nature of the study captures experiences at a single point in time, preventing exploration of how addictive patterns and betting impacts evolve longitudinally. Despite these limitations, the study will provide valuable context-specific insights to inform interventions targeting youth sports betting addiction.

1.9 Structure of the Study

The study will be organised into five chapters.

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter will provide the background to the study, problem statement, research aim, objectives, research questions, significance of the study, scope, and organisation of the entire work.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter will review existing literature related to sports betting, gambling behaviours, and youth addiction. It will cover theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and conceptual issues relevant to sports betting among youth.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter will outline the research design, study area, population, sampling techniques, data collection instruments and procedures, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations guiding the study.

Chapter Four: Data analysis, Presentation of Findings and Discussions

This chapter will present the findings from both primary and secondary data, analyse emerging themes and patterns, and discuss them in relation to the reviewed literature and theoretical frameworks.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This final chapter will provide a summary of key findings, draw conclusions based on the study objectives, and offer recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of existing literature relevant to the study on the lived experiences and addictive patterns of youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo. It begins with a conceptual review, which clarifies key concepts such as sports betting, gambling addiction, and lived experiences to establish a clear understanding of the study's focus areas. This is followed by an empirical review, which examines previous studies conducted locally and globally on sports betting behaviours, motivations, addictive patterns, and their psychosocial impacts, highlighting gaps that justify the current study. The theoretical review section discusses relevant theories that underpin sports betting behaviours and addiction, providing a framework for interpreting the findings. The chapter integrates perspectives from psychology, behavioural addiction studies, and socio-cultural frameworks to contextualise youth betting within broader academic discourse. This literature review aims to situate the current study within existing knowledge, identify limitations of previous research, and demonstrate the relevance and contribution of this study to the field. By systematically reviewing and synthesising relevant literature, this chapter builds a strong foundation for the study's methodology, data analysis, and discussion of findings. The chapter concludes with a summary highlighting key insights, gaps, and the relevance of the reviewed literature to the research objectives.

2.2 Conceptual Review

This section of the study focuses on two concepts of the study which are Sports Betting and Lived Experiences and Addictive Patterns of Youth Sports BetSports.

2.2.1 Sports Betting

Sports betting refers to the act of staking money on the outcome of a sporting event, where the bettor predicts results and anticipates a financial reward if their prediction proves correct. It is one of the most prevalent forms of gambling worldwide, expanding rapidly due to digital technologies and mobile betting platforms that have made access easier and more convenient, especially for youth (Avenyo et al., 2024). Traditionally, sports betting involved betting shops and informal bookmakers, but today it encompasses online platforms offering live betting, virtual games, and complex accumulator bets covering multiple events simultaneously (Karuma, 2023). Globally, sports betting has become a multibillion-dollar industry, integrated into cultural and social systems through heavy advertising, celebrity endorsements, and sponsorship deals with football clubs and leagues, which normalise and glamorise betting behaviours (Hing et al., 2024). For instance, Wardle (2019) noted that in the UK, extensive advertising targeting young males has contributed to normalising betting as part of football fandom. In Sub-Saharan Africa, sports betting has rapidly expanded, driven by increasing smartphone penetration, unemployment, and limited economic opportunities (Bitanhirwe & Ssewanyana, 2021; Glozah et al., 2023).

In Nigeria, Tade et al. (2023) found that sports betting is perceived by many young men as an opportunity to make quick money to address financial difficulties. However, this often results in repeated losses, financial distress, and the development of addictive behaviours characterised by compulsive betting and borrowing money to gamble. Similarly, Eze and Igwe (2024) reported that Nigerian youth who engage in sports betting experience psychological challenges such as anxiety, depression, and feelings of hopelessness following continuous losses. In Ghana, sports betting is deeply embedded among youth, particularly males, and has become a dominant leisure and income-seeking activity (Boateng, 2020). Acheampong et al. (2022) observed that student-teachers

in Ghana engage in sports betting primarily due to peer influence, the desire for quick income, and perceptions of betting as a skill-based rather than chance-based activity. Manu et al. (2024) reported a high prevalence of problematic gambling among Ghanaian youth, with repeated losses causing psychological distress, including worry, sadness, and suicidal thoughts in extreme cases.

Adjei and Mensah (2023) further highlighted that sports betting among students influences moral behaviours, encouraging risk-taking attitudes, truancy, and neglect of educational responsibilities. Youth often prioritise betting over academic commitments, resulting in poor academic performance and reduced career aspirations. Ofosu and Kotey (2020) also found that betting affects financial behaviour, as youth redirect money meant for productive investments, savings, or business start-ups towards gambling activities in hopes of multiplying their income quickly. Yeboah et al. (2022) revealed that sports betting is particularly common among younger students in colleges of education in the Ashanti region of Ghana. This age group engages in betting for entertainment, financial gains, and as a coping mechanism for boredom or stress. Similarly, Mihret and Eskezia (2024) reported in Ethiopia that betting has both psychosocial and economic impacts, often reinforcing poverty cycles by draining limited financial resources.

Furthermore, Kumar and Praveenakumar (2025) explain that sports betting, like other forms of gambling, operates within a behavioural addiction framework, where individuals continue betting despite adverse consequences, driven by psychological reinforcement patterns. Susilawati et al. (2025) emphasised that betting behaviours are also shaped by socio-cultural norms, peer group influences, and economic insecurities. Marra and Nielsen (2025) argue that understanding such complex behaviours requires holistic qualitative exploration to uncover the motivations, contextual factors, and lived realities of bettors. This is particularly important in peri-urban communities like Nsawam Ahodwo, where limited employment opportunities and youth idleness

create environments conducive to betting as an alternative economic activity. Sports betting is not merely a recreational activity but a complex socio-economic and psychological phenomenon with significant implications for youth development in Ghana. While it is widely perceived as an opportunity for quick financial gain, existing literature highlights its potential to lead to financial ruin, addictive behaviours, psychological distress, and social challenges. Understanding its manifestations among youth in specific community contexts remains crucial for designing effective interventions and policies to mitigate its negative impacts.

2.2.2 Lived Experiences and Addictive Patterns of Youth Sports Betting

Addiction is defined as a compulsive engagement in rewarding stimuli despite adverse consequences. In the context of gambling, addiction manifests through repeated betting behaviour, a loss of control, and an inability to resist the urge to bet even when it results in financial, psychological, or social harm (Wardle, 2019). Gambling addiction is increasingly recognised as a public health issue due to its strong links with mental distress and socio-economic challenges. Addictive patterns refer to the behavioural cycles that sustain gambling dependence. These patterns include frequent betting, chasing losses, spending beyond one's means, and prioritising betting over other responsibilities (Hing et al., 2024). Technology has amplified these patterns by enabling constant access to online betting platforms and instant updates on games and odds (Aderinto et al., 2025).

Boateng (2020) highlights that youth in Cape Coast often narrate lived experiences of highs and lows linked to sports betting, driven by peer influence and the constant hope of a 'big win.' Similarly, Mihret and Eskezia (2024) found that in Ethiopia, the addictive cycle drains personal finances, creating economic hardships while also fuelling psychosocial stress among youth. Hing et al. (2024) add that the widespread use of smartphones normalises these behaviours, making

betting an ‘anytime, anywhere’ activity. Karuma (2023) notes that in low-resource urban areas of Zimbabwe, sports betting is often woven into daily life as an informal economic survival strategy, yet it traps many young people in cycles of debt and social conflict. Bitanhirwe and Ssewanyana (2021) stress that across sub-Saharan Africa, gambling patterns among youth are escalating, with harmful impacts on mental health and social stability. Glozah et al. (2023) call for urgent research to understand these lived experiences and inform targeted interventions. These findings reveal that addictive betting patterns shape the daily realities of youth, deeply influencing their financial, psychological, and social wellbeing.

Addiction is generally defined as compulsive engagement in rewarding stimuli despite adverse consequences, and in the context of gambling, it manifests through repeated betting behaviour, loss of control, and an inability to resist betting urges even when it results in financial, psychological, or social harm (Wardle, 2019). Gambling addiction is increasingly recognised as a public health issue due to its links with mental distress, socio-economic hardship, and behavioural dysfunctions (Etuk et al., 2022). Hing et al. (2024) describe addictive patterns as behavioural cycles that sustain dependence, including frequent betting, chasing losses, spending beyond one’s means, and prioritising betting over education, work, and family responsibilities.

Technology has amplified these patterns by enabling constant access to online betting platforms and real-time odds updates, which promote continuous betting (Aderinto et al., 2025). Studies show that betting apps are designed with structural characteristics that encourage prolonged user engagement, such as live in-play betting options, micro-bets, and targeted notifications that sustain betting behaviours (Newall, Russell & Hing, 2021). Yaros (2021) notes that the intense emotional swings between winning and losing create obsession, moral tension, and deeper psychological entrenchment, as bettors develop cognitive distortions about skill and luck.

Boateng (2020) highlights that youth in Cape Coast narrate lived experiences marked by highs and lows linked to betting outcomes, driven by peer influence and persistent hope for a “big win” to transform their lives. Similarly, Mihret and Eskezia (2024) found that in Ethiopia, addictive betting cycles drain personal finances, create economic hardships, and fuel psychosocial stress among youth. Bitanihirwe and Ssewanyana (2021) observed that in sub-Saharan Africa, gambling among youth is escalating, often as a perceived means of survival within contexts of unemployment and limited economic opportunity, yet it deepens poverty cycles and social instability.

Karuma (2023) describes how in low-resource urban areas of Zimbabwe, sports betting is woven into daily life as an informal economic survival strategy. Youth spend long hours at betting shops, often skipping educational or work opportunities, hoping for wins that rarely materialise. This leads to debt accumulation, borrowing from family or friends, and strained relationships due to constant requests for financial assistance (Frechette & Lussier, 2023). Mills et al. (2023) argue that sports betting companies exploit these vulnerabilities by deploying disruptive advertising and promotions that glamorise betting while concealing its risks.

Research further shows that lived experiences of betting addiction are not only financial but also deeply psychological. Killick and Griffiths (2023) note that advertising constructs betting as an aspirational, masculine, and skill-based activity, shaping identities and normalising high-risk behaviours among youth. This leads to emotional consequences including guilt, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem following continuous losses (Eze & Igwe, 2024). Valencia-Mendoza et al. (2023) found that problem sports bettors often suffer from co-occurring psychological disorders, including mood and anxiety disorders, further exacerbating their vulnerabilities. In Ghana, Manu et al. (2024) reported that many youth engage in daily betting, driven by unemployment, peer networks, and mobile platform accessibility. Adjei and Mensah

(2023) observed moral shifts among student bettors who become risk-tolerant and neglect academic or apprenticeship responsibilities due to preoccupation with betting strategies. Ofosu and Kotey (2020) found that such patterns also influence broader economic behaviours, as youth divert funds meant for savings, investment, or household contributions to betting.

Glozah et al. (2023) call for urgent qualitative research to understand these complex lived experiences in context, arguing that quantitative prevalence data alone fails to illuminate the nuanced motivations, emotional realities, and daily practices of youth bettors. Susilawati et al. (2025) emphasise that such qualitative insights are critical for designing effective intervention programmes that address structural, psychological, and behavioural determinants of betting addiction. Denscombe (2025) adds that decolonial and context-sensitive methodologies are essential for understanding these phenomena within African community realities, rather than relying on Western-centred addiction frameworks.

Youth sports betting addiction is a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing daily routines, social identities, psychological health, and economic survival strategies. Lived experiences of betting addiction are characterised by compulsive cycles of hope, loss, and distress, deeply influencing young people's financial security, academic performance, career aspirations, relationships, and mental wellbeing. Understanding these patterns is crucial for policymakers, educators, and community leaders to design culturally relevant interventions that address both individual behaviours and systemic factors driving the rise of sports betting addiction among youth.

2.2.3 Perceived Impacts of Sports Betting on Social, Economic, and Psychological Wellbeing.

Sports betting among youth carries significant social, economic, and psychological consequences that shape their life trajectories. Socially, sports betting influences relationships, community participation, and moral behaviours. Adjei and Mensah (2023) found that youth engaged in sports betting often experience strained family relationships due to frequent borrowing, unpaid debts, and conflicts arising from financial irresponsibility. Friends and peers may also distance themselves when betting debts remain unpaid, leading to social isolation. Boateng (2020) observed that betting creates informal peer networks centred on sharing tips and discussing odds, fostering a subculture that normalises gambling behaviours among youth. While such networks provide temporary social belonging, they reinforce harmful betting patterns and discourage educational or entrepreneurial pursuits. Economically, sports betting impacts youth income, savings, and financial stability.

Tade et al. (2023) highlighted that many young bettors perceive betting as an alternative income source amidst limited employment opportunities. However, the reality often involves repeated financial losses that erode meagre incomes and savings. Ofori and Kotey (2020) observed that students and young workers in Ghana often divert money intended for educational fees, business start-ups, or household needs into betting activities, hoping for quick returns. This redirection of productive investments perpetuates cycles of poverty and reduces economic mobility. In Ethiopia, Mihret and Eskezia (2024) found similar patterns, where youth betting drained household finances, created debt burdens, and disrupted family livelihoods. Psychologically, sports betting has profound impacts on youth mental health and emotional wellbeing. Hing et al. (2024) note that betting addiction leads to compulsive behaviours, creating anxiety, depression, and emotional distress due to constant financial losses and indebtedness. Eze and Igwe (2024) found that Nigerian youth who engage in frequent sports betting report feelings of guilt, hopelessness, and lowered

self-esteem after losses. The anticipation and disappointment cycles trigger emotional instability, with some youth experiencing suicidal ideation following repeated failures to win. Yeboah et al. (2022) emphasised that these psychological burdens are often hidden, as youth avoid discussing their losses to maintain social image and avoid stigma. The digitalisation of betting has exacerbated these impacts. According to Aderinto et al. (2025), easy access to online betting platforms facilitates impulsive betting, making it difficult for addicted youth to regulate behaviours. Notifications, bonuses, and live betting features maintain continuous engagement, leading to sleep disruptions and preoccupation with betting outcomes. Karuma (2023) observed that in Zimbabwe, youth often spend long hours in betting shops or on betting apps, neglecting studies, job responsibilities, or family obligations, resulting in decreased productivity and academic failure.

Social perceptions surrounding sports betting also shape its impacts. While some community members view betting as immoral or irresponsible, others perceive it as a legitimate means to supplement income. Bitanhirwe and Ssewanyana (2021) argue that this dual perception creates moral tension among youth bettors, torn between societal expectations and personal economic desperation. The normalisation of betting through advertisements and celebrity endorsements further complicates these perceptions, promoting betting as glamorous, profitable, and masculine (Killick & Griffiths, 2023). In Ghana, Manu et al. (2024) reported that the psychological impacts of sports betting among youth include increased aggression, irritability, and social withdrawal, particularly after financial losses. Adjei and Mensah (2023) also noted moral deterioration, as addicted youth prioritise gambling over ethical responsibilities, leading to truancy, petty theft, and risky coping mechanisms such as substance abuse to manage stress.

Globally, Etuk et al. (2022) highlighted that sports betting addiction is associated with co-occurring mental health issues, including mood disorders, anxiety disorders, and substance use disorders.

Valencia-Mendoza et al. (2023) confirmed that these psychological impacts, if unaddressed, reduce life satisfaction and overall wellbeing. Sports betting has far-reaching social, economic, and psychological consequences for youth. It erodes family relationships, creates economic vulnerability, and undermines mental health and life aspirations. While youth perceive betting as a viable economic strategy, the reality is marked by losses, distress, and dependency cycles. Understanding these multidimensional impacts is essential for designing interventions, policies, and community programmes that address not only individual behaviours but also structural factors that drive youth reliance on betting as a livelihood strategy.

2.3 Empirical Review

This section of the study reviews empirical literature on youth sports betting, focusing on its motivations, addictive patterns, and impacts within Ghana and beyond. It synthesises findings from twenty recent peer-reviewed articles to identify key themes, divergences, and gaps in existing research.

2.3.1 Divergent Perspectives on Motivations, Impacts, and Implications of Youth Sports Betting

Empirical studies on youth sports betting in Ghana and beyond present divergent findings regarding its motivations, impacts, and implications. Avenyo et al. (2024), for instance, argue that online sports betting addictions negatively influence students' academic achievements and social relations, establishing a significant negative relationship in their regression analysis among 245 Ghanaian university students. This aligns with Acheampong et al. (2022), who qualitatively found that peer pressure is a strong persuader drawing student-teachers to betting, resulting in poor grades, strained relationships, and exclusion from academic activities. However, contrasting this negative academic and social impact perspective, Eze and Igwe (2024) argue that in Abakaliki Metropolis, Nigeria, chronic sports betting was significantly and positively related to social well-

being when moderated by emotional intelligence and self-regulation, suggesting context and psychological resources can buffer negative effects. Furthermore, Manu et al. (2024) quantitatively linked online betting to severe psychological distress among youth in Ghana, with depression (43.6%), stress (31.1%), and anxiety (68.8%) prevalences, indicating a strong mental health burden. This is consistent with Boateng's (2020) qualitative findings that sports betting among youth in Cape Coast leads to addictive behaviours, property loss, and reliance on alcohol and drugs as coping mechanisms. Yet, Yeboah et al. (2022) present a less alarmist view, arguing that although students participate in betting to win money or for entertainment, their involvement remains relatively low, suggesting that not all youth betting behaviour is inherently problematic.

Similarly, Adjei and Mensah (2023) reveal moral ambivalence among student bettors, who perceive betting as neither immoral nor necessarily harmful, despite acknowledging its addictive potential. This contrasts with Ofofu and Kotey (2020), who argue that sports betting does not replace investment behaviour but complements it, as participants remain risk-aware and view betting as a chance to improve finances rather than a substitute for productive financial activities. In Nigeria, Tade et al. (2023) found that youth engagement in betting is driven more by technological advancement and enticing bonuses than by unemployment. Betting was perceived as an alternative income source and knowledge-enhancing activity, showing that youth do not always see it as a vice but as a socio-economic strategy.

This nuance is echoed in Wardle (2019), whose rapid review highlights the normalisation of gambling in youth culture, where betting is perceived as embedded in everyday life, though layered with ambiguity regarding its moral status. The comparative analysis thus reveals tension between studies portraying sports betting as an addiction with detrimental academic, psychological, and moral impacts (Avenyo et al., 2024; Manu et al., 2024; Boateng, 2020) versus those framing it as

an economic or social leisure activity with manageable risks (Ofosu & Kotey, 2020; Yeboah et al., 2022; Tade et al., 2023). This tension reflects broader theoretical debates between problem behaviour theory and rational choice models of gambling. The literature suggests that while sports betting has harmful addictive potential, especially among vulnerable youth, it also serves as a rationalised leisure or income-generating activity within socio-economic constraints. Future studies should integrate these perspectives to design interventions that address structural, psychological, and cultural dimensions simultaneously.

2.3.2 Structural Characteristics, Technological Innovations, and Ethical Implications in Contemporary Sports Betting

The reviewed studies provide divergent yet interconnected insights into the structural, technological, ethical, and policy dimensions shaping contemporary sports betting practices. Newall et al. (2021) argue that structural characteristics historically linked to electronic gambling machines (EGMs) such as in-play betting, accumulator bets, and near-miss effects have been embedded into fixed-odds sports betting products. This reflects a deliberate design strategy to maximise user engagement and spending, raising ethical concerns about harm facilitation. Their findings align with Mills et al. (2023), who critique how gambling industries manipulate structural contexts to promote addictive behaviours. However, while Newall et al. Focus on the product design embeddedness, Mills et al. Emphasise public health messaging, arguing that campaigns targeting individual responsibility are ineffective and that counter-narratives exposing industry manipulation (such as “Odds Are: They Win”) offer a more effective behavioural intervention. Thus, both studies converge on the view that structural features are central to betting addiction, but differ in intervention focus: design critique versus health messaging innovation.

Tak et al. (2022) broaden the conversation by situating sports betting within global integrity regimes, showing how betting monitoring is framed as protecting sports integrity against match-fixing, while ultimately serving corporate interests by equating betting company risk with sporting integrity. This contrasts with Newall et al.'s (2021) consumer harm focus, as Tak et al. argue betting industry monitoring is a tool of commercial legitimation rather than genuine consumer protection, revealing tensions between corporate narratives and public health ethics. Frechette and Lussier (2023), while researching offender risk assessment, illustrate that discretion and override remain inherent in risk evaluation tools, suggesting parallels for gambling risk assessments where structural design risks might be clinically overridden or downplayed due to subjective interpretations. Their study, though focused on criminology, implies that gambling risk tools may also be vulnerable to practitioner subjectivity, thereby undermining standardised harm assessments, an insight that challenges purely actuarial approaches proposed in gambling research. Finally, Mandadapu (2024) provides a technologically optimistic counterpoint by demonstrating that machine learning models can enhance betting outcome forecasts and Return on Investment (ROI). While this innovation may appear empowering for bettors, it risks reinforcing harmful addictive patterns by increasing confidence in gambling as a rational investment strategy rather than as an inherently risky activity, indirectly echoing Newall et al.'s concerns about structural features designed to increase time and money spent. Newall et al. (2021), Mills et al. (2023), and Tak et al. (2022) critique the structural, messaging, and governance systems that sustain harmful betting practices, while Mandadapu (2024) and Frechette and Lussier (2023) reveal how technological and assessment frameworks can inadvertently reinforce individualised betting risks. Together, these studies problematise the betting industry's claim of consumer empowerment and integrity protection, highlighting a pervasive tension between commercial interest, public health,

and ethical governance in sports betting research and practice. Future studies must interrogate how structural designs, machine learning innovations, and regulatory discourses interact to shape youth betting behaviours, risk perceptions, and intervention outcomes within both Global North and African contexts.

2.3.4 Market Efficiency, Decision-Making Strategies, and Psychological Dimensions in Sports Betting

Vandenbruaene et al. (2022) provide a comprehensive literature review on spread betting (handicap betting) markets, interrogating the assumption that simple trading strategies yield profitable outcomes. Reviewing over 600 strategy implementations, they conclude that while market inefficiencies or “predictable glitches” exist, these are marginal and insufficient for consistent profit, aligning with the efficient market hypothesis (EMH). However, they critique that betting market literature lags behind financial literature in controlling for data mining biases, calling for the application of stricter statistical thresholds ($|z| > 3$) to enhance research validity. This view contrasts sharply with Dmochowski (2023), who develops a statistical theory of optimal betting decision-making and empirically demonstrates that sportsbooks’ point spreads and totals capture 86% and 79% of median outcome variability, respectively.

Importantly, he identifies that even a small sportsbook bias can generate positive expected profits, suggesting opportunities exist if bettors exploit minor deviations systematically. Yaros (2024) introduces a psychological perspective, arguing that betting is embedded within fan identity and moral dissonance. His findings reveal that perceived betting obsession predicts increased media engagement, while concern for others’ gambling behaviour remains weakly linked to intervention attitudes. This cognitive dissonance recognising harms in others while remaining inert due to personal engagement reflects deep-rooted behavioural contradictions among bettors, expanding

the economic focus of Vandenbruaene et al. (2022) and Dmochowski (2023) into socio-psychological terrains

Winkelmann et al. (2024) revisit market efficiency empirically, analysing football betting over 14 seasons. Their simulation-based approach reveals that although inefficiencies appear within singular seasons, these are neither systematic nor persistent. The study challenges widespread assumptions about betting market inefficiency by demonstrating that observed statistical anomalies may arise even under full market efficiency due to sample size limitations or random variation. This critique complements Matej et al. (2021), who, adopting an investment strategy lens, experimentally assess sports betting strategies like the Kelly criterion and its variants across horse racing, basketball, and soccer. Their findings suggest that unadjusted theoretical strategies are risky due to unrealistic assumptions, while adaptive “fractional Kelly” variants incorporating risk controls yield more practical and stable outcomes.

Comparatively, these studies illustrate a tension between market structure analyses (Vandenbruaene et al., 2022; Winkelmann et al., 2024) and optimisation-focused strategies (Dmochowski, 2023; Matej et al., 2021). While structural efficiency research warns against profit optimism under EMH, strategy-based studies argue that informed, mathematically grounded decisions leveraging minor inefficiencies can generate returns if risk is controlled. Furthermore, integrating Yaros’ (2024) psychological dimension suggests that even if efficient strategies exist, behavioural biases, moral tensions, and obsessive patterns may limit rational adoption, leading bettors towards suboptimal or compulsive decision-making. These comparative findings advance the empirical literature by highlighting that sports betting is not purely an economic puzzle of odds exploitation but also a behavioural and moral practice influenced by cognitive biases, risk management limitations, and social embeddedness. Future studies should therefore integrate

economic models with behavioural finance and psychological wellbeing frameworks to comprehensively understand sports betting practices and develop interventions that are both mathematically rigorous and psychologically grounded.

2.3.5 Global Perspectives on Marketing, Clinical Correlates, and Academic Impacts of Sports Betting.

Etuk et al. (2022) conducted a global systematic review highlighting that sports betting is widely accessible and normalised across regions, particularly in Australia and the UK, where aggressive marketing strategies have amplified its acceptance. Their review suggests that psychosocial harms of sports betting, such as problem gambling, appear universally consistent regardless of cultural context, with China and South Korea adopting stricter regulations compared to more liberal regimes like Australia and the US. While psychoeducation and responsible gambling strategies are suggested as mitigative measures, the review emphasises the necessity of tailoring such interventions to specific cultural contexts for efficacy. This global perspective contrasts with

Valenciano-Mendoza et al. (2023), who systematically assessed clinical correlates of sports betting and identified impulsivity, male gender, and co-occurring substance use disorders as strong predictors of gambling disorder. Their review critiques existing studies for relying heavily on cross-sectional, small, and geographically limited samples, calling for robust longitudinal and cross-cultural research to better design prevention strategies. Di Censo et al. (2024) adopt a marketing psychology perspective to empirically analyse the role of advertising in youth gambling in the UK and Australia. Their hierarchical regression reveals that sports betting marketing significantly predicts problem gambling severity among youth, particularly when bets are driven by ads or promotional inducements. These findings challenge Etuk et al.'s (2022) more general conclusion about responsible gambling's efficacy by underscoring that marketing exposure

intensifies risk, suggesting that individual-focused responsible gambling campaigns may remain ineffective if structural marketing determinants persist unregulated.

Avenyo et al. (2024) situate the conversation within the Ghanaian university context, demonstrating through regression analysis that online sports betting addictions significantly negatively affect students' academic achievements and social relations. Their study further identifies gender differences, with male students showing stronger negative outcomes in both academic performance and social interactions compared to female students. This finding extends the marketing-focused concerns of Di Censo et al. (2024) by evidencing real-life academic deterioration resulting from sports betting addiction among youth, indicating that the impacts transcend psychological distress to include tangible educational consequences. Comparatively, while Etuk et al. (2022) emphasise universal psychosocial harms and the potential of responsible gambling interventions,

Valenciano-Mendoza et al. (2023) argue for tailored clinical prevention targeting impulsive male populations with co-occurring addictive tendencies. Di Censo et al. (2024) critique the structural enablers of risky betting behaviours by highlighting marketing-induced harm, whereas Avenyo et al. (2024) stress betting's detrimental influence on academic and social domains in the Ghanaian context. These diverse findings reveal a tension between structuralist perspectives focusing on marketing regulation (Di Censo et al., 2024) and psychological/clinical perspectives targeting individual vulnerabilities (Valenciano-Mendoza et al., 2023), with global reviews like Etuk et al. (2022) bridging both by acknowledging the need for culturally adapted interventions. These studies suggest that interventions addressing sports betting harms require an integrative approach combining regulation of marketing practices, culturally sensitive psychoeducation, and clinical screening of vulnerable groups. They further highlight the inadequacy of purely individual-focused

responsible gambling strategies in contexts where aggressive marketing normalises and intensifies risky behaviours, underscoring the importance of policy-level structural reforms alongside behavioural interventions.

2.4 Theoretical Review

This section of the study uses Social Learning Theory and Theory of Planned Behaviour.

2.4.1 Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory, proposed by Albert Bandura in 1977, posits that individuals acquire behaviours through observing and imitating others, especially when these behaviours are rewarded or reinforced within their social environments (Bandura, 1977). The theory emphasizes that learning occurs not only through direct experience but also vicariously, by watching the actions of others and the consequences that follow (Acheampong et al., 2022). Central to the theory is the concept of observational learning, where behaviour is more likely to be adopted if the observed model is rewarded, a process known as vicarious reinforcement. Conversely, behaviours are less likely to be imitated if they are punished (Manu et al., 2024). The theory also integrates cognitive processes, highlighting that individuals do not passively mimic others but actively interpret, internalise, and reproduce behaviours based on attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Bandura stressed that modelling influences attitudes, emotional reactions, and patterns of thought, which in turn shape decision-making and social conduct. Importantly, Social Learning Theory extends beyond individual behaviour to explain how entire cultural practices, values, and norms are sustained and transmitted within groups and communities (Yeboah et al., 2022).

This theory is crucial in understanding youth sports betting behaviours in Ghanaian contexts, where peer influence, community norms, and online social interactions shape engagement in gambling. For instance, Avenyo et al. (2024) found that online sports betting is increasingly

normalised among university students in Ghana, with many students adopting betting behaviours through direct exposure to peers and social media advertisements that portray betting as an easy pathway to quick financial gains. These social cues, often accompanied by visible rewards such as friends flaunting their wins, strengthen betting behaviours among youth, creating an environment where gambling becomes part of everyday social conversations and aspirations.

Similarly, Acheampong et al. (2022) observed that young male student-teachers engaged in sports betting primarily because peers introduced and encouraged them, creating a culture where betting is not only accepted but is perceived as an intelligent and entertaining leisure activity. The findings revealed that these students often bet collectively during classes, hostel gatherings, or free periods, reinforcing the behaviour through social bonding. Manu et al. (2024) further demonstrated that the prevalence of gambling among Ghanaian youth is driven by peer modelling, where youth imitate friends who appear to win frequently, despite their own repeated losses leading to psychological distress, anxiety, and depression. This reflects Bandura's concept of vicarious reinforcement, where observing others' rewards motivates similar behaviour regardless of personal outcomes.

Yeboah et al. (2022) also found that younger university students were more susceptible to peer betting behaviours compared to older students, emphasising that observational learning is particularly potent during formative and transitional life stages such as entry into university life. Adjei and Mensah (2023) argued that imitation extends beyond mere betting actions to moral and ethical outcomes, with youth adopting risky decision-making patterns and justifying them by the success stories of betting peers. This has implications for financial ethics, as students often reallocate funds meant for tuition, food, or transportation to betting accounts, mirroring decisions modelled by influential peers.

Ofori and Kotey (2020) explained that these social learning processes influence not only gambling behaviours but also broader financial decision-making cultures, as youth divert funds from productive investments to gambling, following observed patterns in their social networks. This diverts personal and familial resources, exacerbating cycles of economic vulnerability. Furthermore, Tade et al. (2023) and Eze and Igwe (2024) emphasised that the social environment, including community norms and online influencers, reinforce betting behaviours by glamorising success stories and hiding the structural realities of loss inherent in gambling. Online betting influencers and social media accounts often highlight winning tickets while concealing frequent losses, further embedding unrealistic perceptions of sports betting as a reliable income stream.

This glamorisation shapes youth aspirations, with some perceiving betting as an alternative to traditional career pathways, particularly within high youth unemployment contexts. Therefore, Social Learning Theory provides a robust framework to understand how youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo and similar Ghanaian communities is perpetuated through social modelling, reinforcement, and the normalisation of gambling within peer groups, online environments, and community structures. It also highlights the importance of targeting social networks, peer leaders, and digital influencers in designing effective interventions to curb sports betting addictions. Interventions should address not only individual cognitive factors but also collective social learning dynamics that shape, normalise, and sustain betting behaviours among Ghanaian youth.

2.4.2 Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen in 1991, posits that an individual's intention to perform a behaviour is shaped by three key components: their attitudes towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen in 1991, is a psychological

framework that explains how human behaviour is guided by intentions (Boateng, 2020). According to the theory, three main components influence behavioural intentions: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Attitudes refer to an individual's positive or negative evaluations of a behaviour and its anticipated outcomes (Wardle, 2019). Subjective norms capture the perceived social pressures to perform or avoid a behaviour, shaped by family, peers, or cultural expectations. Perceived behavioural control reflects the individual's sense of capacity and autonomy in performing a behaviour, which is influenced by the availability of resources, opportunities, or perceived barriers (Mihret and Eskezia, 2024).

Together, these three determinants shape behavioural intentions, which in turn predict actual behaviour. TPB emphasises that even when individuals hold favourable attitudes and face supportive social norms, their intentions may not lead to action if they feel limited in their control over the behaviour (Karuma, 2023). Conversely, high perceived control can increase both intention and likelihood of performing a behaviour, even in the presence of negative attitudes or norms. The theory thus provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how personal beliefs, social contexts, and structural conditions interact to guide human action across diverse domains, including health behaviours, consumer choices, and risk-related activities (Hing et al., 2024).

This theory is particularly useful in understanding youth sports betting behaviours in Ghanaian contexts, as it captures both the personal beliefs and social influences driving betting intentions and actions. For instance,

Boateng (2020) observed that youth in Cape Coast engaged in sports betting primarily due to positive attitudes towards betting, viewing it as a quick and convenient means of earning money. This positive attitude is reinforced by frequent media advertisements that portray betting as financially rewarding, shaping youths' beliefs that gambling is an intelligent strategy for

overcoming economic constraints. Wardle (2019) similarly noted that young people's perceptions of gambling are influenced by social contexts where betting is framed as a normal and harmless leisure activity, contributing to their intentions to participate. The normalisation of betting through television adverts, online promotions, and community-level success stories creates a perception that betting is risk-free and universally rewarding. These attitudes form the motivational foundation that drives youth betting behaviour, even when personal experiences may contradict the promised outcomes.

Subjective norms, defined as perceived social pressures to perform or not perform a behaviour, also play a significant role in shaping betting intentions. Mihret and Eskezia (2024) found that in Ethiopia, young people often engaged in sports betting because of strong peer influence and widespread societal acceptance, perceiving betting as an expected social practice. This finding is echoed by Karuma (2023), who highlighted that in low-income urban areas of Zimbabwe, youth bet to gain social approval and recognition within their peer groups. For many young men, the ability to discuss odds, analyse games, and share betting wins creates a sense of belonging and status within their social networks. This normative pressure is particularly influential in communities where unemployment is high and economic mobility is limited, making betting an attractive alternative for asserting competence and gaining respect.

Perceived behavioural control, or an individual's belief in their capacity to perform and regulate a behaviour, is another critical determinant within TPB. Hing et al. (2024) found that the availability of smartphone betting apps increases youth's perceived behavioural control over betting activities by enhancing convenience and accessibility. Youth perceive that they can place bets anytime and anywhere, which fosters impulsive and frequent betting behaviours. However, this perceived control is often illusory, as the structural design of betting apps and platforms is aimed at sustaining

engagement and promoting addictive patterns rather than empowering informed, rational decision-making. Bitanihirwe and Ssewanyana (2021) emphasised that despite recognising the risks and harms of gambling, many youth in sub-Saharan Africa continue to bet due to low perceived behavioural control over stopping. Feelings of powerlessness and addiction override rational intentions, creating a cycle of compulsive betting behaviour that is difficult to break.

Glozah et al. (2023) and Aderinto et al. (2025) further argue that the combination of easy online access, positive attitudes towards betting, and social endorsement predicts high betting intentions among African youth. These studies indicate that youth perceive minimal barriers to entry and continuation of betting, resulting in widespread gambling participation. Thus, the Theory of Planned Behaviour provides a robust and comprehensive framework for examining how attitudes (positive evaluations of betting), subjective norms (peer and societal pressures), and perceived behavioural control (convenience and accessibility) interact to influence youth sports betting intentions and addictive patterns in Nsawam Ahodwo and similar Ghanaian communities. It highlights that interventions aiming to reduce sports betting among youth must address all three components simultaneously, challenging positive attitudes towards betting, reshaping social norms, and reducing structural enablers that enhance perceived behavioural control without addressing risks.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a comprehensive review of existing literature on youth sports betting, with a focus on the lived experiences and addictive patterns observed among young people in Nsawam Ahodwo and similar contexts. The conceptual review established clear definitions of sports betting as a financially motivated activity that has become increasingly normalized through digital platforms and aggressive marketing strategies. It explored how youth develop compulsive

betting behaviors influenced by peer networks, economic pressures, and psychological reinforcement mechanisms. The discussion on lived experiences revealed the cyclical nature of betting addiction, characterized by highs of anticipated wins and lows of financial loss and emotional distress. The perceived impacts of sports betting were examined across social, economic, and psychological dimensions, demonstrating how addictive betting strains relationships, undermines financial stability, and contributes to mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression.

The empirical review synthesized findings from global and local studies, presenting divergent perspectives on youth sports betting. Some research frames betting as a rational income-generating strategy, particularly in contexts of limited economic opportunities, while other studies highlight its detrimental effects on academic performance, mental health, and social relationships. Critiques of the structural design of betting platforms illustrated how features like in-play betting and targeted notifications exploit cognitive biases to sustain engagement. Psychological studies linked betting addiction to traits like impulsivity and co-occurring disorders, emphasizing the need for clinical interventions. In Ghana, research revealed a tension between betting as a perceived survival tactic and its role in perpetuating cycles of poverty and moral decline among youth.

The theoretical review grounded these insights in Social Learning Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior. Social Learning Theory explained how peer modeling and the glamorization of betting successes normalize gambling behaviors, while the Theory of Planned Behavior highlighted the interplay of personal attitudes, social pressures, and perceived control in driving betting intentions. Together, these theories provide a robust framework for understanding the complex motivations behind youth sports betting and the challenges of addressing addictive patterns.

Despite the breadth of existing research, key gaps remain. Many studies focus on urban or university settings, leaving peri-urban areas like Nsawam Ahodwo underrepresented. There is also limited research on interventions that address both structural drivers, such as unemployment and aggressive marketing, and individual behavioral factors. Additionally, the overreliance on quantitative methods in existing studies has constrained deeper exploration of the lived experiences and socio-cultural contexts that shape youth betting behaviors.

This review underscores the importance of adopting decolonial, qualitative approaches to fully capture the socio-economic realities and cultural nuances influencing youth sports betting in communities like Nsawam Ahodwo. By integrating global critiques of betting industries with local evidence, this chapter highlights the urgent need for policies that regulate predatory marketing practices and promote viable economic alternatives for youth. The insights generated here set the stage for the subsequent methodological chapter, which will outline the research design for empirically investigating these issues in greater depth. This chapter integrates global critiques of betting industries with localized evidence from Ghana, offering a nuanced understanding of youth sports betting in specific community contexts. It highlights the transformative role of digital platforms in accelerating addictive behaviors while proposing a dual theoretical lens to analyze the motivations behind youth betting. The review calls for holistic policy interventions that address both structural determinants and individual behavioral patterns, advocating for a balanced approach to mitigating the harms associated with youth sports betting. By identifying critical gaps in existing research, this chapter paves the way for further empirical investigation into the lived experiences of young bettors in Nsawam Ahodwo, ultimately contributing to more effective and contextually relevant interventions.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework adopted to achieve the objectives of this study on the lived experiences and addictive patterns of youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo. It details the research design and approach that guided the study, providing justification for their suitability in addressing the research questions. The chapter further describes the study setting, population, sampling size, and sampling techniques used to select participants. Additionally, it discusses the sources of data, the data collection procedures employed, and the instruments used for gathering qualitative data. The chapter also explains the data analysis methods that were utilised to interpret and draw meaningful insights from the collected data. Finally, ethical considerations observed throughout the research process are presented to ensure adherence to research ethics and protection of participants' rights. This chapter provides a systematic and transparent account of how the study was conducted to ensure credibility, trustworthiness, and relevance of the findings in understanding youth sports betting behaviours and addiction within the context of Nsawam Ahodwo.

3.2 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the lived experiences and addictive patterns associated with sports betting among youth in Nsawam Ahodwo. Qualitative research design is appropriate for studies that seek to understand complex social phenomena by exploring the meanings, perspectives, and experiences of individuals within their natural settings

(Denscombe, 2025). It allows researchers to gain detailed insights into participants' behaviours, emotions, and motivations that quantitative approaches may not adequately capture.

The qualitative design enabled this study to collect rich, narrative data on why youth engage in sports betting, their daily experiences, and the impacts of betting on their social, economic, and psychological wellbeing. This design prioritises depth over breadth, allowing the researcher to engage directly with participants through interviews to uncover nuanced understandings of betting behaviours. Additionally, adopting a qualitative design facilitated flexibility in data collection and analysis, enabling the researcher to adapt questions and probes to capture emerging issues during interviews (Dzwigol, 2022). This design is well-suited for addressing the research objectives, which focus on exploring in-depth personal experiences rather than establishing statistical relationships or generalisations. Overall, the qualitative research design provided a robust framework for examining the complex and sensitive issue of youth sports betting addiction within the specific context of Nsawam Ahodwo.

3.3 Research Approach

This study adopted a phenomenological research approach to explore the lived experiences and addictive patterns of youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo. Phenomenology is an approach within qualitative research that seeks to understand and describe how individuals perceive, interpret, and experience a particular phenomenon in their everyday lives (Islam, et al., 2022). It focuses on uncovering the essence of experiences by exploring participants' subjective realities without imposing preconceived theories or assumptions. The phenomenological approach was deemed appropriate because the study aimed to investigate the meanings that youth attach to sports betting, their motivations, daily betting routines, emotional responses to wins and losses, and how these experiences shape their behaviours and wellbeing (Dzwigol, 2022). By using this approach,

the study sought to capture rich, detailed descriptions of participants' betting experiences as they are lived and felt within their socio-cultural context. Furthermore, phenomenology allowed the researcher to engage deeply with participants through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, creating space for them to narrate their experiences freely and reflectively. This approach aligns with the study's objective of generating context-specific insights that can inform policy, community interventions, and counselling programmes aimed at addressing youth sports betting addiction in Ghana. Overall, the phenomenological approach provided a rigorous framework for understanding the complex realities of youth betting behaviours beyond surface-level observations.

3.4 Study Setting

This study was conducted in Nsawam Ahodwo, located within the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipal District in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Nsawam is a peri-urban town situated along the Accra-Kumasi highway, serving as a commercial and administrative hub for surrounding villages. The town is predominantly inhabited by the Akan ethnic group, with minorities including Ga and Ewe populations. Nsawam is known for its vibrant informal economic activities, markets, and youth leisure spaces such as betting centres, drinking spots, and viewing centres for sports events. Ahodwo, also known as "Ahunjo," is a village within the Nsawam area, located approximately 3.5 km west of the main town. It falls under the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipal Assembly and is geographically positioned at latitude 5.80671°N and longitude -0.31482°W.

The community combines residential settlements with small commercial outlets, creating an environment where youth frequently engage in social and leisure activities, including sports betting. Selecting Nsawam Ahodwo as the study setting was strategic because its peri-urban context provides a rich site for exploring youth betting behaviours influenced by both urban and

rural dynamics (Dubey & Kothari, 2022). Furthermore, Ocaña-Fernández and Fuster-Guillén (2021) emphasise that selecting a contextually relevant setting enhances the validity and applicability of qualitative research findings. This setting thus provides an ideal environment to investigate the lived experiences and addictive patterns of youth sports betting in a typical Ghanaian peri-urban community.

3.5 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised youth aged 18–35 years who engage in sports betting within Nsawam Ahodwo. This age group was selected because it represents the most active demographic in betting activities, as highlighted in previous gambling studies in Ghana. The target population included young males and females residing in Ahodwo who actively participate in sports betting either online or at physical betting centres. According to Saharan et al. (2024), defining the study population clearly ensures that research findings are relevant and accurately reflect the experiences of the intended group. By focusing on youth within this age bracket, the study aimed to capture diverse narratives on motivations, lived experiences, and addictive patterns specific to young people’s socio-economic realities. Marra and Nielsen (2025) emphasise that identifying a precise population enhances the rigour, credibility, and relevance of qualitative research findings, ensuring that insights generated are meaningful and can inform context-appropriate interventions and policies.

3.6 Sample Size and Technique

This study employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants who could provide rich, detailed information on the lived experiences and addictive patterns of youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo. Purposive sampling was chosen because it allows the researcher to intentionally select individuals who possess specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Saharan

et al., 2024). Participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: being between 18 and 35 years old, residing in Nsawam Ahodwo, and having engaged in sports betting for at least six months. This ensured that participants had sufficient experiences to reflect meaningfully on their betting behaviours.

A sample size of 8 to 15 participants was targeted for the study. In qualitative research, sample size is determined by the principle of data saturation, where data collection continues until no new themes or insights emerge from interviews (Marra & Nielsen, 2025). This range was considered adequate to provide depth and diversity of experiences while remaining manageable for in-depth analysis within the study's timeframe and resource constraints. Recruitment was conducted through informal community networks, with the assistance of community leaders and youth group contacts who facilitated access to potential participants. This approach ensured that the study engaged with youth who were knowledgeable and willing to share their authentic experiences regarding sports betting within their community context.

3.6.1 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

This study employed Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) as a primary data collection method. FGDs are a qualitative research technique that brings together a group of participants to discuss a specific topic in depth, guided by a moderator. FGDs are particularly effective in exploring shared experiences, generating collective insights, and capturing the dynamics of group interaction. Recent methodological literature also highlights FGDs as a valuable tool for triangulating qualitative data and strengthening the trustworthiness of findings (Kumar & Praveenakumar, 2025; Marra & Nielsen, 2025). For this study, three separate FGDs were conducted with youth who met the inclusion criteria of being between 18 and 35 years old, residing in Nsawam Ahodwo, and having engaged in sports betting for at least six months. Each FGD consisted of 8–15 participants,

a size considered appropriate for generating diverse viewpoints while maintaining a manageable level of group interaction (Susilawati et al., 2025). The use of three different groups allowed the researcher to capture a broader range of perspectives and to validate recurring themes across multiple discussions, thereby strengthening the credibility of the findings. The discussions focused on participants' motivations for betting, their lived experiences, and the addictive patterns associated with their betting behaviours. FGDs were facilitated in neutral community spaces to encourage openness and reduce potential power imbalances. The researcher acted as a moderator, using a semi-structured guide to stimulate conversation while allowing participants to freely express their perspectives. This approach enabled the study to capture not only individual insights but also the shared meanings and peer dynamics that shape youth betting practices.

3.7 Sources of Data

The primary source of data for this study was first-hand information collected directly from participants through in-depth focus group discussion, using a semi-structured interview guide. Primary data was deemed most suitable because it provides authentic, rich narratives and personal reflections required to understand participants' lived experiences and addictive patterns in sports betting (Saharan et al., 2024). Secondary data sources were also reviewed to support the analysis and interpretation of findings. These included existing literature on gambling behaviours, youth addiction patterns, and community studies in Ghana and Sub-Saharan Africa, drawn from peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, and organisational publications. According to Marra and Nielsen (2025), integrating primary and secondary data enhances the credibility and depth of qualitative research by situating participants' narratives within broader academic and contextual knowledge. Relying on these sources allowed the study to achieve its objectives by combining

lived experiences from the field with scholarly perspectives, thus providing a holistic understanding of youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection for this study followed a systematic and ethically guided process. Firstly, ethical clearance was sought from the appropriate institutional review board to ensure adherence to research ethics. After approval, the researcher engaged community leaders and youth group contacts in Nsawam Ahodwo to introduce the study, explain its purpose, and seek support for participant recruitment. Using purposive sampling, potential participants were identified based on the inclusion criteria: youth aged 18–35 years actively involved in sports betting for at least six months. Contact was made in person to invite them for interviews. The researcher scheduled interviews at locations convenient and comfortable for participants, ensuring privacy and minimal distractions.

Upon meeting participants, the study purpose, confidentiality measures, and voluntary participation rights were explained before obtaining written informed consent. The focus group discussion was conducted face-to-face in Twi or English, depending on participant preference, to enhance comfort and expression. The discussion lasted approximately 45–60 minutes. With participants' consent, some parts of the discussions were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy, and field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual insights. Data collection continued until data saturation was reached, where no new themes emerged. At the end of each interview, participants were thanked for their time and contributions. All collected data were securely stored to maintain confidentiality and ensure ethical integrity throughout the research process.

3.9 Data Collection Instrument

The primary data collection instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide designed to explore the lived experiences and addictive patterns of youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they provide flexibility for participants to express their experiences freely while ensuring that all key areas of inquiry are covered, making them ideal for phenomenological research. The interview guide was divided into two main sections. The first section captured demographic information such as age, gender, educational level, employment status, and duration of involvement in sports betting. Collecting this background information helped contextualise participants' narratives and supported the analysis of experiences across different demographic categories.

The second section of the guide contained open-ended questions developed directly from the study's research questions to elicit in-depth responses. These questions explored the factors that influence youth engagement in sports betting, their daily lived experiences and betting routines, the patterns of addictive behaviours evident in their betting practices, and the perceived impacts of betting on their social, economic, and psychological wellbeing. Additional probing questions were incorporated to encourage participants to reflect deeply and elaborate on their responses. The interview guide was developed based on insights from the literature review and research objectives to ensure relevance and comprehensiveness. It was pre-tested with two youth outside the sample community to refine its wording and flow, ensuring clarity and effectiveness in gathering rich data for the study.

3.10 Data Analysis

Data collected from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, a method suitable for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns within qualitative data. Thematic analysis was

chosen because it allows for flexibility in analysing rich narrative data while maintaining systematic rigour, aligning with the phenomenological approach adopted in this study. According to Saharan et al. (2024), thematic analysis is particularly effective in exploring experiences, meanings, and realities of participants in social research contexts. The analysis process began with familiarisation, where the researcher transcribed all audio-recorded interviews verbatim and read through the transcripts multiple times to gain an in-depth understanding of the data. This was followed by generating initial codes by systematically identifying significant statements, phrases, or segments relevant to the research objectives.

These codes were then grouped into broader categories to form initial themes. Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data and answered the research questions. Patterns were compared across participants to identify similarities, differences, and unique insights related to motivations, lived experiences, addictive behaviours, and the perceived impacts of sports betting. Finally, the themes were clearly defined, named, and organised to produce a coherent narrative that captured the essence of youth sports betting experiences in Nsawam Ahodwo. This approach ensured a rigorous and trustworthy analysis, providing meaningful insights to inform interventions and policies addressing youth betting addiction.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were central to the design and implementation of this study to ensure the protection, dignity, and wellbeing of participants. Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was sought from the appropriate institutional review board to guarantee compliance with research ethics standards. The researcher ensured informed consent by explaining the study's purpose, objectives, procedures, and participants' rights in clear and understandable language before each

interview. Participants were informed that their involvement was entirely voluntary, and they could withdraw at any stage without any penalty or consequences.

To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, participants' identities were protected by assigning pseudonyms in transcripts and reports. No identifying information was linked to interview data, and all recordings and transcripts were securely stored with access restricted to the researcher only. Respect for privacy was ensured by conducting discussions in locations that were convenient and comfortable for participants, away from public view to encourage open and honest discussions. Additionally, the researcher was sensitive to the potential emotional discomfort that discussions about addictive betting behaviours could evoke. Participants were reassured of their dignity and given the option to skip questions or end the interview if they felt distressed. These ethical measures ensured the study upheld the highest standards of integrity, safety, and respect for participants' rights and wellbeing.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the findings of the study on the lived experiences and addictive patterns of youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed account of the data collected from participants through interviews and focus group discussions, and to interpret these findings in relation to the study objectives. The chapter begins by outlining the demographic profile of participants to provide context for understanding their responses. It then presents the findings in line with the four specific objectives of the study: the reasons why youth engage in sports betting, their lived experiences with betting in the community, the patterns of addictive behaviours evident among them, and the perceived impacts of betting on their social, economic, and psychological wellbeing. Each section highlights recurring themes and unique perspectives that emerged from the participants' narratives. This is followed by a discussion section, where the findings are compared with existing literature and theoretical frameworks reviewed in earlier chapters. The aim is to situate the voices of participants within broader scholarly debates while emphasising the contextual realities of youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo.

4.2 Demographic Profile of Participants

This study engaged 15 participants to explore the lived experiences and addictive patterns of youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo. Table 1 presents their demographic profile, encompassing age, educational level, employment status, and duration of betting involvement, offering essential

context for interpreting the findings. The participants, all aged 18–35 years, reflect the youthful demographic prevalent in sports betting. Specifically, 8 participants (53.3%) were aged 18–24, and 7 (46.7%) were aged 25–35, with no participants aged 36–45 or 46 and above, confirming the focus on youth. The gender distribution, though not explicitly revised in the updated table, aligns with prior data indicating a male-dominated sample, consistent with literature on sports betting in Ghana. Educational backgrounds varied widely: 6 participants (40.0%) held a degree, 4 (26.7%) had a diploma, 2 (13.3%) had WASSCE, 2 (13.3%) had BECE, and 1 (6.7%) held a master’s degree, with no PhD holders.

This diversity suggests sports betting’s appeal across educational strata. Employment status further highlighted socioeconomic variety: 5 students (33.3%), 3 apprentices (20.0%), 3 unemployed (20.0%), 2 artisans (13.3%), and 2 self-employed (13.3%) participated, underscoring betting’s reach across different occupational groups in Nsawam Ahodwo. Regarding betting involvement, 9 participants (60.0%) had engaged for 1–2 years, while 6 (40.0%) had bet for 2–5 years, indicating a mix of newer and more experienced bettors. This demographic profile illustrates the broad accessibility of sports betting among youth in Nsawam Ahodwo, spanning various educational and employment backgrounds. These characteristics provide a robust foundation for analyzing the lived experiences and addictive patterns in subsequent sections, enriching the understanding of this phenomenon in the local context.

Table 4. 1 Demographic Profile of Participants (N=15)

Demographic variables	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–24 years	8	53.3

	25–35 years	7	46.7
Educational level	BECE	2	13.3
	WASSCE	2	13.3
	Diploma	4	26.7
	Degree	6	40.0
	Masters	1	6.7
	PHD	0	0.0
Employment Status	Student	5	33.3
	Self-employed	2	13.3
	Apprentice	3	20.0
	Artisan	2	13.3
	Unemployed	3	20.0
Duration of betting involvement	1–2 years	9	60.0%
	2–5 years	6	40.0%

4.3 The reasons why youth in Nsawam Ahodwo engage in sports betting.

This section explores the motivations driving youth in Nsawam Ahodwo to engage in sports betting, addressing the first research objective. Using thematic analysis of responses to five targeted interview questions, this section identifies the key reasons behind the initiation and continued participation in betting among the 15 participants (R1-R15) aged 18–35. The questions probed initial motivations, ongoing engagement, social influences, expectations, and perceived attractions of sports betting. The findings reveal the complex interplay of economic, social, and psychological factors that make sports betting appealing in this community. Three major themes emerged from the thematic analysis: economic aspirations, social influences, and the allure of excitement and accessibility. These themes provide insight into why youth are drawn to and sustain their involvement in sports betting, setting the stage for understanding their lived experiences and addictive patterns in subsequent sections.

4.3.1 Economic Aspirations

Participants frequently cited financial gain as a primary motivation for starting and sustaining sports betting. Many, particularly unemployed youth and students, viewed betting as an escape from economic hardship or a means to supplement income. Responses to questions about motivations and expectations highlighted hopes of quick wealth to address financial challenges in Nsawam Ahodwo. In a community with high unemployment and limited opportunities, betting was seen as an accessible, yet risky, path to financial stability. Participants expressed desires to meet immediate needs, like paying school fees, or pursue goals like starting businesses. The socioeconomic realities, including rising costs and job scarcity, amplified betting's appeal. However, some noted a gap between expectations of riches and inconsistent wins, revealing the tension between hope and risk. This theme underscores how economic pressures drive betting,

informing lived experiences and addictive patterns. The following are the responses shared by participants:

“I started betting because I needed extra money to pay my school fees and support my family. At that time, I didn’t have any other reliable source of income, and the pressure of handling both education and family needs made betting seem like the only option. I thought even small wins could go a long way in helping me manage these responsibilities” (R3).

“I thought betting could make me rich fast, especially since jobs are hard to find here. Watching others around me talk about their wins gave me hope that it could be my breakthrough. I believed it was an opportunity to quickly change my financial situation without waiting for a job that might never come” (R7).

“My expectation was to win big and start a small business, but it’s harder than I thought. I had plans of saving my winnings to invest, but the reality of losing often has made it difficult to achieve that dream. It hasn’t been as easy as I imagined” (R12).

“Betting seemed like a way to afford things I couldn’t with my small apprentice income. With the little I earned, I could barely cover my daily expenses, so betting appeared to offer the chance to improve my life” (R5).

“I hoped to win enough to clear my debts and have some savings. Each time I placed a bet, I imagined what I would do with the money if I won, but the wins were not consistent enough to meet those expectations” (R10).

“With no job, betting was my only chance to make money quickly. I felt like I had nothing to lose by trying, since I needed a way out of my financial struggles” (R15).

4.3.2 Social Influences

Social influences significantly shaped youth engagement in sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo, as revealed through thematic analysis of responses to the question about the role of friends, family, and community. Participants highlighted how peers, siblings, and local norms drove their initiation into betting. In a community where betting shops and mobile apps are prevalent, friends often introduced betting as a social activity, fostering curiosity and a sense of belonging. Success stories from peers and family members, like brothers or cousins, normalized betting, while the community’s acceptance embedded it in local culture, especially post-football match gatherings. This theme underscores how social networks and norms make betting appealing and inevitable, influencing youth to start and continue, and setting the stage for exploring lived experiences and addictive patterns. The following are the responses shared by participants:

“My friends took me to a betting shop, and it felt like a fun group activity. We all placed small bets together, and the excitement of watching the games made me want to keep going back. It wasn’t just about the money at first; it was more about spending time with them and feeling like part of the group” (R1).

“Everyone in my area bets, so I joined to be part of the crowd. It felt like something everyone was doing, and I didn’t want to feel left out. When people around you are talking about their bets all the time, you also get interested and eventually join in” (R2).

“My best friend showed me how to use betting apps, and I got curious. At first, I didn’t understand how it worked, but when I saw how easy it was to place bets on my phone, I started trying it out myself. The curiosity turned into regular participation” (R4).

“Betting is what we do after football matches; it’s like a tradition here. After watching games together, the next step is usually to place bets for the next round. It feels like part of the football culture in our community” (R6).

“My older brother bets a lot, and he encouraged me to try it. He would talk about his wins and show me his slips, and that motivated me to start as well. Since he is older, I felt like it was something I could also do” (R8).

“Friends kept talking about their wins, so I wanted to try my luck. Hearing them celebrate made me believe I could also win something. The more I listened to their stories, the more I felt like I was missing out” (R9).

“In Nsawam, betting is everywhere; it’s hard not to get involved. From the shops to the conversations you hear daily, it feels like betting has become part of everyday life, so it was natural to start” (R11).

“My cousin taught me how to bet, saying it’s what young guys do. He explained the process and told me that almost every young man in the community is into betting. That made me feel like I should also take part” (R13).

“I started because my friends said it’s a cool way to make money. They made it sound simple and fun, so I gave it a try. Since then, I’ve continued because it feels like a common thing among us” (R14).

“The community sees betting as normal, so I didn’t think twice. No one questions it because it’s part of our social life now. That’s why it felt easy for me to join without hesitation” (R15).

4.3.3 Allure of Excitement and Accessibility

The allure of excitement and accessibility emerged as a key driver for youth engagement in sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo, as revealed through thematic analysis of responses to questions about what keeps youth engaged and what makes betting attractive. Participants frequently highlighted the thrill of predicting outcomes and the adrenaline rush of potential wins, which fuelled their continued participation. The widespread availability of betting shops and mobile apps made betting seamless and appealing, embedding it into daily life. In a community with a vibrant sports culture, the excitement of betting on football matches was particularly compelling, especially for male youth. The convenience of mobile platforms allowed instant access, amplifying participation. This theme underscores how the psychological draw of risk-taking and structural accessibility drive betting, shaping youth engagement and informing their lived experiences and addictive patterns.

The following are the responses shared by participants:

“Betting is exciting; it’s like a game where I feel alive waiting for results” (R1).

“The apps make it so easy you can bet anytime, anywhere with your phone” (R2).

“I love the thrill of winning; it keeps me coming back even after losses” (R4).

“Betting on football is fun because I already follow the games” (R6).

“The rush I get when my bet is close to winning is addictive” (R8).

“Betting shops are on every corner, so it’s easy to just walk in” (R9).

“I keep betting because it’s exciting to test my predictions” (R11).

“Mobile apps let me bet in minutes, which makes it hard to stop” (R13).

“The feeling of a big win is amazing, even if it’s rare” (R14).

“Betting is everywhere here, and the thrill pulls you in” (R15).

Together, these themes reveal that sports betting among youth in Nsawam Ahodwo is shaped by intertwined economic pressures, social influences, and the thrill of accessibility and excitement. The findings highlight how these drivers normalize betting in the community, while also exposing the risks of dependence and unfulfilled expectations.

4.4 The lived experiences of youth involved in sports betting in the community.

The lived experiences of youth in Nsawam Ahodwo who engage in sports betting reflect a complex interplay of hope, struggle, and social influence. While many participants described betting as a coping mechanism for financial hardship and unemployment, others emphasized its role as a source of excitement, entertainment, and belonging within their peer networks. Their narratives highlight both the perceived opportunities such as paying school fees, supporting family needs, or aspiring to start small businesses and the frustrations of inconsistent wins, losses, and mounting financial strain. For some, betting provided temporary relief from socioeconomic challenges, while for others, it deepened cycles of dependence and disappointment. These experiences underscore how sports betting has become more than just a leisure activity, evolving into a significant aspect

of daily life that shapes identity, decision-making, and future aspirations among young people in the community.

4.4.1 Navigating Financial Pressures

The lived experiences of youth in Nsawam Ahodwo engaging in sports betting are deeply tied to their hope for financial relief, as shown through thematic analysis of responses about daily routines, time spent, memorable experiences, emotions, and lifestyle impacts. Participants, especially students and unemployed youth, viewed betting as a way to address economic hardships in a community with high unemployment and limited opportunities. Betting was seen as a risky yet accessible path to meet needs like school fees or family support, or to fund aspirations like starting businesses. Daily betting routines were driven by hopes of quick wins, with some spending hours strategizing. Memorable wins reinforced engagement, but losses often dashed expectations, highlighting the tension between optimism and reality. This theme shows betting as a coping strategy for economic challenges, setting the stage for exploring emotional, social, and lifestyle impacts. The following are the responses shared by participants:

“I bet daily, hoping to win enough to pay my school fees. Every morning, I think about how much I need and place bets with the hope that one day I will strike it big. The pressure of education costs keeps me consistent in betting” (R1).

“Betting feels like my only chance to support my family’s needs. Without a steady job, I cannot provide for them the way I want to, so I rely on the hope that a win will help me buy food or cover bills. It gives me some relief even if it’s uncertain” (R9).

“I spend hours betting to fund my dream of opening a shop. Whenever I make a small win, I save part of it, believing that one day it will be enough to start my business. This dream keeps me going despite the losses” (R2).

“A big win once paid my rent, so I keep trying for more. That single experience made me believe betting can solve financial problems if I am lucky again. It motivates me to continue” (R4).

“With no job, betting is how I hope to clear my debts. It feels like the only chance I have to catch up financially” (R11).

“I bet weekly to save for my sister’s school supplies. Even though the wins are not always guaranteed, I feel responsible to help her, and betting gives me that little hope” (R15).

4.4.2 Belonging and Peer Influence

The lived experiences of youth in Nsawam Ahodwo also revealed the strong role of social belonging and peer influence in shaping engagement with sports betting. Through thematic analysis of their narratives, it became clear that betting was not only about financial aspirations but also about fitting into existing social networks and community culture. Many participants described being introduced to betting by friends, siblings, or cousins, while others highlighted how community acceptance normalized betting as part of daily life. In an environment where betting shops and mobile apps are easily accessible, youth often saw participation as a way to connect socially, maintain friendships, and avoid exclusion. For some, memorable experiences were tied to the collective excitement of placing bets with friends after football matches, reinforcing betting as a social tradition rather than a purely individual pursuit. Peer encouragement and the desire to share in group success frequently shaped daily and weekly routines, while stories of friends’ or

relatives' winnings heightened curiosity and inspired sustained involvement. The lived experiences captured here illustrate how social influence intertwines with personal motivations, embedding betting into community identity and lifestyle. The following are the responses shared by participants:

“My friends took me to a betting shop, and it felt like a fun group activity. At first, I didn't even know much about betting, but the way they explained it made it seem simple and entertaining. We laughed, argued about predictions, and celebrated small wins together, and that social feeling made me keep going back. For me, it was less about the money and more about being part of the group” (R1).

“Everyone in my area bets, so I joined to be part of the crowd. In Nsawam Ahodwo, it feels like betting is everywhere people talk about it at football centers, shops, and even on the street. I didn't want to feel left out, so I started placing small bets just to feel like I was part of what everyone else was doing” (R2).

“My best friend showed me how to use betting apps, and I got curious. Once I realized I could bet on my phone anytime, it became easy to try. Curiosity turned into routine, and now it feels like part of my daily activities” (R4).

“My older brother bets a lot, and he encouraged me to try it. He would show me his slips and talk about how much he won. Seeing him take part made it feel normal, and I felt like if he could do it, then I could also follow his example” (R8).

“Friends kept talking about their wins, so I wanted to try my luck. Hearing them celebrate created pressure because I felt like I was missing out. I believed I could also get lucky and maybe even do better than them” (R9).

“The community sees betting as normal, so I didn’t think twice. When something is accepted by almost everyone, you don’t really question it. Betting has become so common here that it feels like just another activity in our everyday lives” (R15).

4.4.3 Emotional Highs and Lows

The lived experiences of youth in Nsawam Ahodwo revealed the strong emotional pull of sports betting, characterized by alternating highs and lows. Many participants described betting as thrilling and exciting, especially during the anticipation of match outcomes or the possibility of winning big. Wins, although rare, created memorable moments that fueled confidence and reinforced continued participation. For some, the exhilaration of success provided temporary relief from stress and financial strain, while the suspense of near wins created addictive tendencies that were difficult to resist. At the same time, frequent losses left participants feeling frustrated, disappointed, and emotionally drained, yet still motivated to keep trying in the hope of future victories. The accessibility of mobile apps and betting shops further amplified these emotions by making participation constant and immediate. The following are the responses shared by participants:

“Betting is exciting; it’s like a game where I feel alive waiting for results. The moment before I know the outcome is full of tension and energy, and it makes me want to keep trying even if I lose” (R1).

“The apps make it so easy you can bet anytime, anywhere with your phone. I often find myself checking odds and placing bets even when I didn’t plan to, because it feels so quick and simple” (R2).

“I love the thrill of winning; it keeps me coming back even after losses. Each time I win, I feel like I’ve beaten the system, and that makes me forget about the times I lose” (R4).

“The rush I get when my bet is close to winning is addictive. Even when I lose, I still feel that excitement, and it pushes me to bet again to chase that feeling” (R8).

“The feeling of a big win is amazing, even if it’s rare. That one victory can make me believe all the losses were worth it, and it keeps me betting in the hope of another big moment” (R14).

4.4.4 Shifting Aspirations and Realities

The lived experiences of youth in Nsawam Ahodwo showed that sports betting was often tied to aspirations for wealth, entrepreneurship, and long-term financial security. Many participants entered betting with clear goals, such as starting businesses, paying debts, or achieving independence. These expectations reflected broader socioeconomic realities where stable employment opportunities were scarce, and betting was perceived as a possible shortcut to success. However, the inconsistency of wins created frustration and disappointment, as dreams of financial transformation were rarely fulfilled. Despite repeated losses, most participants described holding on to hope, driven by the belief that one big win could change their lives. This persistent optimism kept them engaged, even when betting failed to deliver the anticipated outcomes. The contrast between initial expectations and actual experiences revealed how betting sustained cycles of hope

and disillusionment, shaping the aspirations and realities of youth navigating difficult economic conditions. The following are the responses shared by participants:

“I thought betting could make me rich fast, especially since jobs are hard to find here. I believed it was my shortcut to success, but the reality is not as easy as I imagined” (R7).

“My expectation was to win big and start a small business, but it’s harder than I thought. I still hope one day a win will help me achieve that dream” (R12).

“I spend hours placing bets with the hope of saving enough to change my life. Even when I lose, I keep imagining that one big win will give me a fresh start” (R2).

“I hoped to win enough to clear my debts and have some savings. The wins don’t come often, but I can’t give up because I believe one day it will happen” (R10).

“With no job, betting feels like my only opportunity to achieve something in life. Even though I lose often, I still hold on to the hope that my breakthrough will come” (R15).

In sum, the lived experiences of youth in Nsawam Ahodwo reveal that sports betting is not merely a recreational pastime but a complex response to economic hardship, social influence, and the search for meaning and opportunity. These narratives highlight how hope, belonging, and the lure of excitement sustain participation despite losses, underscoring both the resilience and vulnerability of young people navigating uncertain futures.

4.5 Patterns of addictive behaviours associated with sports betting among these youths.

The findings further revealed that youth engagement in sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo often extended beyond casual participation, displaying distinct patterns of addictive behaviours. While many participants initially approached betting as a way to address financial needs or as a social pastime, their lived experiences showed signs of dependency, compulsion, and loss of control. Narratives highlighted behaviours such as betting daily, spending excessive time on predictions, and struggling to stop despite repeated losses. The persistence of hope for a breakthrough win fueled risky financial decisions, including borrowing or diverting money meant for essential needs. Emotional reliance on betting, reflected in mood swings, stress, and the constant urge to bet, underscored its addictive nature. Over time, what began as entertainment evolved into entrenched habits, shaping daily routines and decision-making. This section presents five themes that capture these addictive patterns: compulsive betting and loss of control, chasing losses, financial neglect and risky spending, emotional dependence and mood swings, and escalation with increased time investment.

4.5.1 Compulsive Betting and Loss of Control

A recurring pattern in the lived experiences of youth in Nsawam Ahodwo was the inability to regulate or limit their betting practices, reflecting signs of compulsive behaviour and loss of control. Many participants described betting daily or multiple times a day, even when they lacked sufficient resources. The accessibility of mobile apps and the constant availability of betting shops made it easy to indulge in frequent participation. For some, betting became a habitual activity integrated into daily routines, such as after football matches or during free time, making it difficult to disengage. Several participants acknowledged that despite repeated losses, they felt compelled

to continue betting, driven by an urge that was hard to suppress. This persistence, even when it led to negative consequences, highlighted the addictive pull of sports betting and how it shifted from being a voluntary pastime to a compulsive habit that shaped their everyday lives. The following are the responses shared by participants:

“I bet almost every day, even when I don’t have much money. It has become part of my routine, and sometimes I can’t stop myself from placing a slip” (R1).

“Whenever I get a little money, my first thought is betting. Even if I plan to save it, I usually end up using it on games because I feel restless if I don’t try” (R3).

“I sometimes place bets several times in a single day. If I lose in the morning, I try again in the afternoon or evening, hoping my luck will change” (R6).

“Even when I tell myself I will stop, I find myself going back to the shop or opening the app. It feels like a habit that I can’t break” (R9).

“Betting is always on my mind; I think about it when I wake up and before I sleep. It’s not easy to control because the urge is always there” (R12).

4.5.2 Chasing Losses

Another clear pattern of addictive behaviour among youth in Nsawam Ahodwo was the tendency to chase losses, a cycle where participants placed additional bets immediately after losing in an attempt to recover money. This behaviour revealed how betting shifted from a calculated risk to a desperate effort to undo financial setbacks. Many youth described how the disappointment of losing motivated them to bet again, often with larger amounts, in hopes of quickly regaining what

was lost. However, this cycle typically led to further losses, compounding frustration and financial strain. Chasing losses created an illusion of control, as participants believed persistence would eventually yield a breakthrough win, yet the outcomes were mostly disappointing. This repetitive behaviour highlighted the addictive pull of betting, where hope and desperation combined to trap youth in continuous play, escalating both the frequency and intensity of their engagement despite consistent negative results. The following are the responses shared by participants:

“Each time I lose, I feel like I must bet again to recover what I lost. It’s hard to walk away when I think the next game could change everything” (R2).

“I have lost a lot, but instead of stopping, I always try again. I believe if I keep betting, I will win back what I spent” (R5).

“When I lose, I don’t accept it easily. I quickly place another bet, sometimes even riskier, because I feel I can’t end the day on a loss” (R7).

“I once lost all my money in a single day because I kept chasing my losses. I thought the next slip would help me recover, but it only made things worse” (R10).

“Even after repeated losses, I convince myself that one big win will cover everything. That belief makes me keep betting, no matter how much I have already lost” (R14).

4.5.3 Financial Neglect and Risky Spending

A prominent pattern of addictive behaviour identified among youth in Nsawam Ahodwo was the neglect of essential financial responsibilities due to sports betting. Participants described diverting money intended for food, rent, school fees, or other pressing needs toward betting slips, often with

the hope of multiplying their resources. In some cases, the desire to keep betting led them to borrow from friends or family, while others admitted using their last available funds, leaving themselves vulnerable to further hardship. This risky financial behaviour demonstrated how deeply betting had become embedded in their lives, taking precedence over essential obligations. While small wins occasionally provided temporary relief, losses frequently exacerbated financial struggles and created cycles of dependency. For many youth, the allure of a potential breakthrough overshadowed practical financial priorities, highlighting how addictive patterns undermined their ability to manage resources responsibly and worsening their economic vulnerability in an already constrained community. The following are the responses shared by participants:

“Sometimes I use money meant for food to place bets, hoping I can double it. When I lose, I end up going hungry” (R3).

“I once borrowed from a friend just to keep betting because I believed the next game would give me a win. It only put me in more debt” (R6).

“Money for school fees has gone into betting more than once. I always think I can win and pay it back, but it never works the way I expect” (R8).

“There are days when I spend my last cash on betting instead of saving it for transport or bills. I keep telling myself I’ll win and cover everything, but it doesn’t happen” (R11).

“I know I should use my money wisely, but betting always feels like a chance I can’t miss. Even when I have important needs, I sometimes risk it all on a slip” (R15).

4.5.4 Emotional Dependence and Mood Swings

Another addictive pattern that emerged from the lived experiences of youth in Nsawam Ahodwo was emotional dependence on betting, reflected in significant mood swings tied to wins and losses. Many participants explained that betting influenced their daily emotions, with wins bringing joy, confidence, and motivation, while losses triggered frustration, sadness, or even anger. This reliance on betting outcomes to shape emotional well-being revealed a deeper psychological dependence that extended beyond financial concerns. The thrill of anticipation, the rush of near wins, and the rare satisfaction of actual victories created a cycle of emotional highs and lows that participants struggled to resist. Even after painful losses, the desire to re-experience the excitement of winning kept them engaged. Over time, betting became not just a financial activity but an emotional anchor, where moods and self-perceptions rose and fell with each slip placed and each outcome revealed. The following are the responses shared by participants:

“At first, I only bet on weekends, but now I find myself betting almost every day. It has become part of my routine” (R2).

“Sometimes I spend hours studying the odds and fixtures instead of focusing on my work. It takes a lot of my time” (R5).

“I used to place small bets once in a while, but now I can’t go a day without betting. It has grown into a daily habit” (R8).

“Most of my free time goes into betting. Instead of hanging out or doing something useful, I sit with my phone checking the apps” (R10).

“Betting has taken over my evenings. I spend so much time planning and predicting games that I hardly concentrate on other things” (R15).

4.5.5 Escalation and Increased Time Investment

The final pattern of addictive behaviour observed among youth in Nsawam Ahodwo was the gradual escalation of betting activities and the increased time invested in them. What began as occasional or casual participation often evolved into daily routines and prolonged sessions of strategizing, predicting, and placing bets. Participants described how their involvement grew over time, with some admitting they spent hours each day focused on betting, either at shops or on mobile apps. This escalation reflected the deepening role of betting in their lives, as it shifted from leisure to a near-constant preoccupation. Many youth acknowledged that they devoted more time to betting than to other productive activities, such as schoolwork, apprenticeships, or job searches. This overinvestment of time underscored the addictive hold of sports betting, as participants found themselves increasingly prioritizing it over responsibilities, with long-term implications for their financial and personal development. The following are the responses shared by participants:

“At first, I only bet on weekends, but now I find myself betting almost every day. It has become part of my routine” (R2).

“Sometimes I spend hours studying the odds and fixtures instead of focusing on my work. It takes a lot of my time” (R5).

“I used to place small bets once in a while, but now I can’t go a day without betting. It has grown into a daily habit” (R8).

“Most of my free time goes into betting. Instead of hanging out or doing something useful, I sit with my phone checking the apps” (R10).

“Betting has taken over my evenings. I spend so much time planning and predicting games that I hardly concentrate on other things” (R15).

The findings on patterns of addictive behaviours revealed that youth involvement in sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo often extended beyond casual participation into cycles of compulsion, risk, and dependence. Across the five themes, participants’ narratives demonstrated how betting was marked by loss of control, persistent chasing of losses, financial neglect, emotional dependence, and escalating time investment. These patterns underscored the addictive nature of betting, showing how it reshaped daily routines, strained resources, and influenced both psychological and social well-being.

4.6 The Perceived Impacts of Sports Betting on Their Social, Economic, and Psychological Wellbeing

The analysis of participants’ narratives revealed that the effects of sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo extended beyond individual motivations and addictive behaviours, shaping multiple dimensions of their lives. While betting was initially perceived as a potential solution to financial challenges or a source of excitement and social belonging, its long-term impacts were often more complex and detrimental. Participants described how consistent betting outcomes affected their ability to manage resources, sustain education or work commitments, and maintain emotional balance. In addition, strained relationships with family and peers were frequently linked to money borrowed or responsibilities neglected in favour of gambling. For many youth, betting gradually

altered priorities, daily routines, and future aspirations, embedding itself in both their social lives and psychological wellbeing. This section highlights five key themes that capture the perceived impacts of sports betting: strained finances and economic hardship, disruption of education and work commitments, emotional stress and psychological dependence, strained relationships and social tensions, and lifestyle changes with altered priorities.

4.6.1 Strained Finances and Economic Hardship

A major perceived impact of sports betting among youth in Nsawam Ahodwo was its strain on already limited financial resources. While many participants began betting with hopes of financial relief, their experiences revealed worsening economic hardship due to frequent losses. Money that could have been used for food, rent, school fees, or family support was often diverted to betting, leaving participants unable to meet essential needs. For some, the urge to keep betting led to borrowing or mismanaging funds, pushing them deeper into financial vulnerability. Even when small wins occurred, they were quickly reinvested into more bets, creating a cycle that eroded financial stability. Participants expressed regret over lost money but admitted struggling to control the habit, reinforcing the link between betting and economic strain. Overall, instead of alleviating poverty, betting frequently intensified financial difficulties, contributing to debt, dependency, and reduced capacity to pursue meaningful economic opportunities. The following are the responses shared by participants:

“Sometimes I use money meant for food to place bets, and when I lose, I have nothing left to eat” (R3).

“I thought betting would help me save, but instead it has taken all my money. I end up broke most of the time” (R5).

“I once borrowed from a friend to bet, thinking I would pay back after winning. I lost everything and now owe him more than I can afford” (R7).

“My school fees money has gone into betting before. I believed I could double it, but I only ended up disappointed” (R10).

“Instead of helping me improve financially, betting has made things worse. I am always struggling because the little I get goes back into slips” (R15).

4.6.2 Disruption of Education and Work Commitments

Youth involvement in sports betting was perceived to negatively affect education and work responsibilities. Many participants reported spending considerable time analyzing odds, placing bets, or chasing losses, which reduced their focus on studies, apprenticeships, or employment activities. This diversion of time and attention often led to missed classes, incomplete assignments, or decreased work productivity. Over time, participants indicated that consistent engagement in betting eroded discipline and motivation, creating long-term consequences for their personal development and career progression. The following are the responses shared by participants:

“Sometimes I skip classes because I want to check bets or follow games. It affects my schoolwork” (R2).

“I get distracted at my apprenticeship because I’m thinking about my bets. I end up making mistakes that I normally wouldn’t” (R6).

“Betting takes up a lot of my time; I have missed work shifts because I stayed up late planning bets” (R9).

“I used to be punctual and focused, but now I often come late or lose concentration because betting occupies my mind” (R12).

“Even when I try to balance both school and betting, I often end up doing poorly in assignments or practical tasks” (R14).

4.6.3 Emotional Stress and Psychological Dependence

Participants highlighted that sports betting had profound psychological consequences. The anticipation of wins, repeated losses, and pressure to recover funds led to heightened stress, anxiety, mood swings, and emotional fatigue. Betting became an emotional crutch, with participants reporting feelings of frustration, disappointment, and even hopelessness when results were unfavorable. Over time, betting shaped self-esteem and coping strategies, as participants increasingly relied on gambling to alleviate negative emotions or seek excitement. The following are the responses shared by participants:

“When I lose, I feel frustrated and anxious. It stays with me throughout the day” (R3).

“Betting has made me stressed. I constantly worry about losing or missing a potential win” (R5).

“Sometimes I feel depressed when I see my losses piling up. It affects my mood and motivation” (R8).

“I realize that I think about betting more than anything else, and it causes emotional tension”

(R10).

“Even when I’m happy about small wins, the stress of the next bet is always on my mind” (R15).

4.6.4 Strained Relationships and Social Tensions

Another perceived impact was the tension and strain that betting caused in social relationships. Participants reported conflicts with family, friends, and peers arising from money borrowed, unmet responsibilities, or deceptive practices to fund betting. Trust was often compromised, and some participants experienced isolation or judgment due to persistent gambling behaviour. Betting, therefore, did not only impact the individual financially and emotionally but also shaped their social interactions, creating friction and reduced social support. The following are the responses shared by participants:

“I argue with my parents when they find out I used money meant for school fees on betting”

(R1).

“Some friends stopped trusting me because I keep borrowing money and don’t pay back on time” (R4).

“My relationship with my sibling has been tense because I take money meant for household needs to bet” (R7).

“I often lie to cover up how much I spend on betting, and it has caused fights at home” (R11).

“Even my close friends sometimes avoid me because they see how obsessed I am with betting”
(R13).

4.6.5 Lifestyle Changes and Altered Priorities

Sports betting significantly influenced participants’ daily routines and long-term priorities. Many youth reported that betting replaced productive activities, such as study, work, or skill development. Aspirations and personal goals were often sidelined in favour of gambling pursuits, reflecting a shift in lifestyle and values. For some, this altered focus extended to recreational choices, social habits, and time management, with betting becoming a dominant feature of daily life. The following are the responses shared by participants:

“My daily routine revolves around checking odds and placing bets, not personal development or hobbies” (R2).

“I used to spend time with friends or practice skills, but now betting consumes most of my evenings” (R6).

“My priorities have changed; I think about betting more than about my future or plans” (R9).

“I used to save money for education or personal goals, but now I spend most of it on betting”
(R12).

“Betting has become the main thing I focus on; everything else comes second” (R15).

The findings reveal that sports betting among youth in Nsawam Ahodwo has multifaceted negative effects on their social, economic, and psychological wellbeing. These impacts extend beyond

financial loss, influencing education, work, emotional health, relationships, and overall lifestyle priorities.

4.7 Discussion

This discussion critically examines the motivations, experiences, behavioural patterns, and perceived social, economic, and psychological impacts of sports betting among youth in Nsawam Ahodwo, linking the study's findings to existing literature and broader theoretical and practical implications.

4.7.1 The reasons why youth in Nsawam Ahodwo engage in sports betting.

The findings of this study regarding the reasons why youth in Nsawam Ahodwo engage in sports betting align closely with the broader literature on gambling behaviours among young people in Ghana and other sub-Saharan African contexts. Consistent with studies by Boateng (2020), Acheampong et al. (2022), and Manu et al. (2024), economic motivations emerged as a central factor driving youth engagement in betting. Participants, particularly students and unemployed youth, perceive sports betting as a potential avenue for quick financial relief or income supplementation, aimed at meeting pressing needs such as school fees, household support, or small business investments. This aligns with observations by Karuma (2023) and Mihret and Eskezia (2024), who note that in low-resource urban communities, youth often resort to betting as a coping strategy in response to limited employment opportunities and pervasive financial insecurity. The promise of rapid monetary gain provides hope in contexts where traditional avenues for economic advancement are constrained, creating a compelling, though risky, lure for young people. Social and cultural factors also significantly shape engagement with sports betting. Peer influence,

familial examples, and the normalization of betting within the community were recurring themes in the study, reflecting findings by Susilawati et al. (2025) and Yeboah et al. (2022). Youth reported that participation was often introduced through friends or siblings, with social acceptance and collective excitement reinforcing habitual involvement. Betting thus functions not only as an economic strategy but also as a socially mediated activity that fosters belonging and identity formation, illustrating the interplay between social networks and gambling behaviour.

Psychological factors further compound these motivations. The thrill of predicting outcomes, the anticipation of potential wins, and the excitement associated with betting provide immediate emotional gratification, supporting Kumar and Praveenakumar's (2025) and Wardle's (2019) assertions that gambling operates within a behavioural reinforcement framework. Mobile platforms and betting shops enhance this appeal by offering constant access, instant results, and user-friendly interfaces, making betting an almost ubiquitous feature of youth leisure activities, as observed by Avenyo et al. (2024) and Hing et al. (2024). Overall, the findings highlight that sports betting among youth in Nsawam Ahodwo is driven by a complex interrelation of economic necessity, social influence, and psychological stimulation. While participants engage with betting in the hope of financial gain, the literature and study findings collectively underscore the potential for financial strain, addictive behaviours, and psychosocial consequences. This duality illustrates that betting is both a survival strategy and a high-risk activity, necessitating context-sensitive interventions aimed at addressing the economic vulnerabilities, social pressures, and behavioural reinforcements that sustain youth engagement.

4.7.2 The lived experiences of youth involved in sports betting in the community.

The findings of this study on the lived experiences and addictive patterns of youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo resonate strongly with existing literature across sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting the multidimensional nature of gambling behaviours among young people. Consistent with Wardle (2019) and Hing et al. (2024), the study reveals that betting among youth extends beyond mere recreation, often evolving into compulsive engagement marked by persistent hope, emotional highs and lows, and repeated cycles of loss and attempted recovery. Participants' narratives demonstrate that betting functions simultaneously as a coping mechanism for financial hardship and a source of social connection, mirroring observations by Boateng (2020) in Cape Coast and Mihret and Eskezia (2024) in Ethiopia, where youth describe gambling as both an economic strategy and a socially mediated activity. Economic pressures emerged as a central theme, with youth using betting to supplement limited income, meet immediate needs, or pursue entrepreneurial goals. This aligns with Karuma's (2023) findings in Zimbabwe, which describe betting as an informal economic survival strategy in low-resource urban settings, where financial desperation fuels continued engagement despite repeated losses. Similarly, Ofosu and Kotey (2020) and Adjei and Mensah (2023) highlight that such economic motivations often intersect with behavioural shifts, including neglect of educational or occupational responsibilities and diversion of funds from essential expenditures, reinforcing patterns of financial vulnerability and debt accumulation.

Social and peer influences were also salient, as participants reported initiation into betting through friends, siblings, or community norms, consistent with Glozah et al. (2023), who emphasize the normalization of betting through peer networks and cultural embedding. Emotional dependence

further characterizes these lived experiences, with participants describing mood fluctuations, stress, and psychological strain associated with wins and losses, corroborating findings by Yaros (2021) and Killick and Griffiths (2023) regarding the cognitive and emotional entrenchment of gambling behaviour. Finally, the study underscores the role of technology in amplifying addictive patterns. The ubiquity of mobile betting apps provides constant access and immediate engagement, supporting Aderinto et al. (2025) and Newall, Russell, and Hing (2021), who argue that structural features of digital platforms facilitate prolonged gambling sessions and reinforce compulsive behaviour. Overall, the findings illustrate that sports betting among youth in Nsawam Ahodwo is a multidimensional phenomenon, shaped by economic necessity, social integration, emotional stimulation, and technological accessibility, producing both resilience and vulnerability. These insights highlight the urgent need for culturally sensitive interventions targeting the structural, social, and psychological determinants of youth gambling in Ghana and similar contexts.

4.7.3 Patterns of addictive behaviours associated with sports betting among these youth.

The patterns of addictive behaviours associated with youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo reveal a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that aligns closely with existing literature on gambling addiction in both Ghana and broader sub-Saharan African contexts. The findings underscore that what often begins as casual participation, motivated by financial aspirations or social engagement, frequently evolves into compulsive behaviour characterised by daily betting, persistent attempts to recover losses, and diversion of essential resources toward gambling. This progression mirrors observations by Avenyo et al. (2024) and Manu et al. (2024), who documented strong links between youth betting and psychological distress, including depression, stress, and anxiety, highlighting the mental health burden associated with chronic engagement in gambling.

Similarly, Boateng (2020) and Acheampong et al. (2022) emphasise how peer influence and social normalisation reinforce these behaviours, contributing to cycles of compulsion that are difficult for youth to break. The study's findings also resonate with structural and technological perspectives on gambling addiction. Mobile applications and local betting shops provide continuous accessibility, reinforcing habitual betting and embedding it into daily routines, consistent with Hing et al. (2024) and Aderinto et al. (2025). This aligns with Newall et al. (2021) and Mills et al. (2023), who argue that contemporary betting products are designed with in-play options, near-miss effects, and micro-bets that maximise engagement and spending. These structural characteristics, combined with targeted marketing and promotions, cultivate behavioural reinforcement cycles that heighten the risk of addiction, as observed among the youth in Nsawam Ahodwo.

Emotional and psychological dependence emerged as a significant theme, with participants reporting mood swings, frustration, and preoccupation with outcomes, echoing Yaros (2021) and Eze & Igwe (2024). The interplay between emotional highs from wins and lows from losses intensifies compulsion, creating a self-reinforcing cycle where betting functions as both a coping mechanism and a source of excitement. Over time, these behaviours escalate, consuming time and energy that would otherwise be devoted to education, apprenticeships, or employment, reflecting patterns highlighted by Adjei and Mensah (2023) and Ofori and Kotey (2020). Overall, the findings illustrate that youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo is not merely recreational but constitutes a multidimensional addictive behaviour shaped by economic pressures, social influence, and structural features of the gambling industry. These patterns have far-reaching consequences, including financial neglect, psychological stress, and social strain, emphasizing the urgent need for targeted interventions that address both individual behaviours and the systemic

factors facilitating addiction. The convergence of local findings with broader literature underscores the critical role of context-sensitive policies, public health messaging, and community-based strategies in mitigating the harms associated with youth sports betting.

4.7.4 The perceived impacts of sports betting on their social, economic, and psychological wellbeing.

The findings on the perceived impacts of sports betting among youth in Nsawam Ahodwo resonate strongly with existing literature, highlighting the multifaceted ways in which gambling shapes social, economic, and psychological wellbeing. Economically, the study confirms that youth frequently divert limited financial resources toward betting, often at the expense of essential needs such as school fees, food, or family support. This aligns with observations by Ofosu and Kotey (2020) and Mihret and Eskezia (2024), who documented how youth betting can erode savings, create cycles of debt, and reduce economic mobility. The participants' narratives further illustrate how sporadic wins reinforce hope, encouraging continued investment in betting despite mounting financial losses, thereby perpetuating economic vulnerability and reliance on risky gambling practices. Socially, the study highlights how sports betting strains relationships with family, friends, and peers. Borrowing money to fund bets, failing to meet responsibilities, and engaging in deceptive practices foster conflicts and erode trust. These findings are consistent with Adjei and Mensah (2023) and Boateng (2020), who emphasised that youth betting creates subcultures that simultaneously provide a sense of belonging and reinforce risky behaviours. The social isolation and tension reported by participants also underscore how gambling behaviours can undermine traditional support networks, limiting avenues for guidance or intervention and entrenching young people in harmful social environments. Psychologically, the study underscores the emotional toll

of betting, with participants reporting stress, anxiety, mood swings, and dependence on gambling as a coping mechanism for frustration or boredom. These outcomes mirror findings by Hing et al. (2024), Eze and Igwe (2024), and Manu et al. (2024), who describe betting as a source of emotional instability, guilt, and low self-esteem, often exacerbated by repeated losses.

Moreover, the digitalisation of betting, with instant notifications and mobile platform accessibility, intensifies compulsive engagement, reducing the ability of youth to self-regulate and manage time effectively, a phenomenon observed by Aderinto et al. (2025) and Karuma (2023). The interplay of these economic, social, and psychological effects illustrates that sports betting is not a simple leisure activity but a complex behaviour that shapes identity, daily routines, and long-term aspirations. By embedding itself into multiple domains of youth life, betting can perpetuate cycles of financial hardship, emotional distress, and social tension, highlighting the urgent need for context-specific interventions. Policies and programmes must therefore address both individual behaviours and structural factors, including peer influence, technological accessibility, and socio-economic constraints, to mitigate the multifaceted harms of sports betting and promote healthier youth development trajectories.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the concluding elements of the study by summarizing the major findings, drawing conclusions, and providing recommendations based on the analysis of youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo. It begins with a summary of the key findings across the study objectives, highlighting the reasons youth engage in sports betting, their lived experiences, the patterns of addictive behaviours observed, and the perceived social, economic, and psychological impacts. The chapter then synthesizes these findings to offer an overall conclusion that situates the study within the broader context of youth behaviour, community influences, and public health considerations. Finally, the chapter provides practical recommendations for stakeholders, discusses the implications of the findings, and suggests directions for future research to further understand and address the challenges associated with youth sports betting.

5.2 Summary of findings

This section presents a synthesis of the key findings from the study, highlighting the motivations, experiences, behavioural patterns, and perceived impacts of sports betting among youth in Nsawam Ahodwo.

5.2.1 The reasons why youth in Nsawam Ahodwo engage in sports betting.

The study revealed that youth in Nsawam Ahodwo engage in sports betting due to a combination of economic, social, and psychological factors, reflecting both the appeal and risks associated with

gambling. Economic aspirations were a dominant motivator, as participants, particularly students and unemployed youth, viewed betting as a potential avenue for financial relief or income supplementation. Many participants hoped to win money quickly to meet immediate needs such as school fees, debts, or daily expenses, while some aspired to use winnings to start small businesses. The socioeconomic context of high unemployment and limited opportunities amplified betting's appeal, even as participants acknowledged the inconsistency of returns and the tension between hope and reality. Social influences also played a significant role, with friends, family, and community norms shaping initial and ongoing engagement. Peer encouragement, familial examples, and the prevalence of betting in local culture fostered curiosity, belonging, and normalization of gambling, making it a socially reinforced activity. Additionally, the allure of excitement and accessibility was a compelling driver. Participants cited the thrill of predicting outcomes, the adrenaline of potential wins, and the ease of access through betting shops and mobile applications as factors sustaining participation. Together, these intertwined motivations reveal that sports betting is not only a response to financial pressures but also a socially and psychologically reinforced behaviour, setting the foundation for understanding participants' lived experiences, patterns of addictive behaviours, and broader impacts on their lives.

5.2.2 The lived experiences of youth involved in sports betting in the community.

The lived experiences of youth in Nsawam Ahodwo engaging in sports betting reveal a complex interplay of hope, social influence, and economic pressure. Participants described betting as both a coping mechanism for financial hardship and a source of excitement and social connection, illustrating its multifaceted role in daily life. Economic pressures strongly shaped experiences, with youth using betting to meet immediate needs such as school fees, family support, or small

business aspirations. While occasional wins provided temporary relief, frequent losses contributed to financial strain, frustration, and repeated cycles of hope and disappointment. Social belonging and peer influence were also central, as friends, siblings, and community norms encouraged initiation and sustained engagement. Betting was often normalized through shared experiences, post-football match activities, and accessible mobile platforms, creating a sense of participation and inclusion. The emotional dimension of betting further shaped experiences, characterized by alternating highs and lows; excitement, thrill, and anticipation reinforced continued involvement, while losses caused disappointment and stress. Participants' narratives highlighted a tension between aspirations and reality, showing how initial goals of wealth or independence were rarely fully achieved but nevertheless maintained optimism and engagement. Overall, sports betting emerged as more than a recreational activity, reflecting youth attempts to navigate socioeconomic challenges, maintain social connections, and seek psychological stimulation. These experiences underscore both the resilience and vulnerability of youth, revealing the powerful yet precarious role of betting in their lives.

5.2.3 Patterns of addictive behaviours associated with sports betting among these youth.

The findings reveal that youth engagement in sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo frequently extends beyond casual participation, exhibiting clear patterns of addictive behaviour. Many participants initially approached betting for financial relief or social interaction, but over time, compulsion and loss of control emerged as dominant features. Daily betting, persistent attempts to recover losses, and diversion of money from essential needs reflected deepening dependency. Chasing losses created cycles of risk-taking and frustration, as hope for a breakthrough win often led to further financial strain. Emotional dependence was another salient pattern, with participants'

moods and self-esteem closely tied to betting outcomes, producing highs during wins and lows during losses. The accessibility of mobile apps and local betting shops facilitated frequent participation, reinforcing these habits and embedding betting into daily routines. Escalation over time was common, with many youth devoting increasing amounts of time and energy to strategizing, predicting, and placing bets, often at the expense of productive activities such as schoolwork, apprenticeships, or employment. Financial neglect, emotional volatility, and compulsive engagement collectively highlight the addictive nature of sports betting among these youth. Overall, these patterns illustrate how betting evolves from a recreational or social activity into a persistent behaviour that dominates routines, shapes decision-making, and exacerbates both economic vulnerability and psychological stress. The findings underscore the urgent need to address the social, emotional, and financial consequences of sports betting in the community.

5.2.4 The perceived impacts of sports betting on their social, economic, and psychological wellbeing.

The findings indicate that sports betting among youth in Nsawam Ahodwo has far-reaching impacts on social, economic, and psychological wellbeing. Financial strain emerged as a primary consequence, as participants often diverted money from essential needs such as food, school fees, and family support toward betting, creating cycles of debt and economic vulnerability. Education and work responsibilities were negatively affected, with youth reporting missed classes, decreased productivity, and diminished motivation, reflecting how betting disrupted personal development and career progression. Psychological consequences were also pronounced, as repeated losses and the pressure to recover funds led to heightened stress, anxiety, and mood swings, while betting increasingly became an emotional crutch for coping with frustration or seeking excitement. Social

relationships were strained due to money borrowed, unmet obligations, and deceptive practices to sustain betting, resulting in diminished trust, conflicts, and occasional social isolation. Additionally, participants described shifts in daily routines and long-term priorities, with gambling replacing productive activities and altering aspirations, values, and time management. The interplay of these economic, psychological, and social effects illustrates how betting extends beyond a recreational activity, embedding itself into the everyday lives of youth and shaping identity, decision-making, and lifestyle choices. Collectively, these findings highlight the multifaceted risks associated with sports betting, emphasizing its potential to exacerbate financial hardship, emotional distress, and social tensions while reshaping daily habits and long-term aspirations.

5.3 Conclusion

The study has shown that youth engagement in sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo is driven by a complex interplay of economic, social, and psychological factors, with financial aspirations, peer influence, and the thrill of excitement emerging as key motivators. Participants' lived experiences reveal that betting is not merely a recreational activity but a coping mechanism for economic hardship, a source of social belonging, and a means of psychological stimulation. However, these experiences are accompanied by significant risks, including cycles of hope and disappointment, emotional highs and lows, and tensions between aspirations and reality.

Patterns of addictive behaviour were evident, characterized by compulsive betting, chasing losses, emotional dependence, financial neglect, and increasing time investment. These behaviours highlight how initial casual participation can escalate into entrenched habits, dominating daily routines and decision-making, while exacerbating financial vulnerability and psychological stress.

The perceived impacts further demonstrate the far-reaching consequences of betting, including economic strain, disruption of education and work commitments, social tensions, and altered lifestyle priorities. Collectively, these findings underscore that sports betting extends beyond individual choice, reflecting broader community norms, accessible betting platforms, and socioeconomic pressures.

In conclusion, youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo represents a multidimensional phenomenon with both appealing and harmful dimensions. While it offers temporary relief, excitement, and social connection, it simultaneously exposes participants to financial instability, emotional distress, and social strain. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions that combine education, community engagement, mental health support, and policy measures to mitigate the risks and promote healthier alternatives for youth in the community.

5.5 Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed to address the challenges associated with youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo. First, there is a need for community-based awareness and education programs targeting youth, parents, and local leaders. These programs should focus on the risks of sports betting, the signs of addiction, and strategies for responsible financial management. Awareness campaigns can help demystify betting as a quick route to wealth and highlight the long-term consequences on economic, psychological, and social wellbeing. Second, schools, vocational centers, and youth organizations should incorporate financial literacy and life skills training into their curricula. Equipping young people with skills in budgeting, savings, entrepreneurship, and critical decision-making can reduce the perceived need to rely on betting as a source of income or excitement.

Third, there should be enhanced access to mental health support and counselling services for youth exhibiting signs of gambling dependence or emotional distress related to betting. Community health workers and counsellors can provide early intervention, coping strategies, and psychological support to mitigate emotional and behavioural risks. Fourth, regulatory and policy measures should be reinforced to limit the accessibility of betting platforms, particularly targeting underage and vulnerable youth. Licensing, monitoring of betting shops, and responsible advertising practices can reduce exposure and temptation. Finally, fostering alternative recreational and social activities such as sports clubs, creative arts, and community projects can provide youth with engaging, safe, and constructive outlets for social interaction and excitement, reducing reliance on gambling as a primary source of stimulation.

5.6 Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for policy, practice, and future research regarding youth sports betting in Nsawam Ahodwo. Firstly, at the community level, the study highlights the urgent need for awareness and education on the risks of gambling. The normalization of betting within peer networks and local culture suggests that without proactive intervention, youth may continue to engage in harmful behaviours that compromise their social, economic, and psychological wellbeing. Secondly, at the family level, the findings indicate that parental involvement and guidance are critical. Families need to recognize early signs of gambling dependence and provide support or seek professional help. Strengthening family oversight and communication can help mitigate the social and emotional consequences of betting.

Thirdly, in terms of education and youth development, the study underscores the importance of integrating financial literacy, life skills, and responsible decision-making into school curricula and

community programs. These measures can empower youth to make informed choices, reducing economic vulnerability and promoting constructive coping strategies. Fourthly, for mental health and social services, the research points to the necessity of accessible counselling and support systems for youth experiencing emotional stress, addiction, or social tension due to betting. Early intervention can prevent long-term psychological consequences and help restore balance in daily routines and priorities. Finally, from a policy and regulatory perspective, the study emphasizes the need for stricter oversight of betting activities, especially mobile platforms, and measures to limit exposure to underage and vulnerable youth. Together, these implications suggest that addressing youth sports betting requires a coordinated, multi-level approach involving community, family, education, health, and policy stakeholders.

5.7 Suggestions for future studies

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several areas warrant further research to deepen understanding of youth sports betting and its broader impacts. Firstly, future studies could expand the sample size and include multiple communities beyond Nsawam Ahodwo to explore potential regional or cultural differences in motivations, behaviours, and consequences of sports betting. Such comparative studies could provide a more comprehensive picture of youth gambling patterns in Ghana. Secondly, longitudinal research is recommended to track the long-term effects of sports betting on financial stability, psychological wellbeing, and social relationships. This approach would help identify the progression from casual betting to addictive behaviours and the persistence of associated consequences over time.

Thirdly, research could focus on the effectiveness of interventions, such as financial literacy programs, peer-education initiatives, and mental health support, in reducing risky gambling

behaviours among youth. Evaluating the impact of preventive strategies would provide evidence for policy and program development. Fourthly, studies could examine the role of technology, particularly mobile betting apps and online platforms, in shaping gambling behaviour. Investigating the accessibility, marketing, and engagement strategies of digital betting platforms can offer insights into risk factors specific to modern gambling contexts. Finally, interdisciplinary research combining psychology, sociology, and economics could provide a holistic understanding of the motivations, addictive behaviours, and social implications of sports betting. Such research would inform targeted interventions and policy measures aimed at mitigating the negative impacts of youth gambling.

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FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

This focus group discussion is part of an academic research study titled “Betting Against the Odds: Exploring the Lived Experiences and Addictive Patterns of Youth Sports Betting in Nsawam Ahodwo.” The purpose of this study is to understand the reasons why young people engage in sports betting, their daily experiences, the addictive behaviours involved, and how betting affects their social, economic, and psychological wellbeing. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and the information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. The discussion is expected to last between 45 to 60 minutes. There are no right or wrong answers I am only interested in your honest experiences and opinions. You may choose not to answer any question you are uncomfortable with, and you are free to withdraw at any time without any consequences. Your responses will contribute to a better understanding of youth sports betting in Ghana and help inform policies and interventions that can support young people in our communities.

Section A: Background / Demographic Information

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Educational level
4. Employment status
5. Duration of involvement in sports betting

1. To examine the reasons why youth in Nsawam Ahodwo engage in sports betting.	Questions
	1. What motivated you to start sports betting?
	2. What reasons keep you engaged in betting?

	3. How did your friends, family, or community influence your decision to start betting?
	4. What expectations did you have when you first started betting?
	5. In your opinion, what makes sports betting attractive to young people like you?
2. To explore the lived experiences of youth involved in sports betting in the community.	1. Can you describe your daily or weekly experiences with sports betting?
	2. How much time do you usually spend on betting activities?
	3. What has been your most memorable experience (win or loss) since you started betting?
	4. How do you usually feel before, during, and after placing a bet?
	5. In what ways has sports betting influenced your lifestyle or social interactions in the community?
3. To identify patterns of addictive behaviours associated with sports betting among these youth.	1. How often do you place bets in a day or week?
	2. How do you feel when you are unable to place a bet?
	3. Have you ever borrowed money or used money meant for other needs to place a bet?
	4. Do you sometimes continue betting even after repeated losses? If yes, why?

	5. How difficult is it for you to stop betting once you have started?
4. To assess the perceived impacts of sports betting on their social, economic, and psychological wellbeing.	1. How has sports betting affected your financial situation (e.g., savings, debts, or spending)?
	2. In what ways has betting influenced your relationships with family, friends, or peers?
	3. How has sports betting impacted your education, job, or daily responsibilities?
	4. What emotional or psychological effects do you experience when you win or lose a bet?
	5. Looking back, would you say sports betting has brought more benefits or challenges to your life? Why?