

Marketing and Communication Strategies Deployed by Betting Companies to Foster Addiction among Kenyan Youths

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to interrogate marketing and communication strategies deployed by betting companies to promote addiction among Kenyan youths. The contention of this study is that the escalating extensive advertising within the gambling industry have ignited concerns regarding their impact on vulnerable demographics. This study illuminated the strategies that contribute to the perceived risk of ensnaring Kenyan youths in addictive behaviors of betting. Utilizing qualitative interviews as the primary data generation technique, the study aimed to unearth rich insights from participants exposed to various betting communication strategies via a case study method. 38 participants were sampled purposively for the study. Preliminary findings indicated that Kenyan youths are particularly drawn to betting advertisements that emphasize notions of financial success, social acceptance, and excitement. Drawing on the Uses and Gratifications theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model, the research uncovered the underlying mechanisms driving the appeal and potential effects of these communication techniques. The study uncovered the psychology of betting ads in the mainstream and new media as key communication technique by betting firms that expose the young people to betting behavior. As such, policymakers can formulate effective interventions to mitigate the potential for addiction. The study recommends policy formulation from the lens of persuasion that shields the young people from communication campaigns that promote betting activities. Educators should further promote awareness programs that counter the nuisance of betting promotion.

Key words: Kenya, Gambling, Betting, Lotteries, Betting Addiction

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Introduction

The expansion of the gambling industry in Kenya has ushered in a wave of concerns surrounding the escalating potential for addiction, particularly among the youth demographic. Betting companies have adeptly harnessed various communication strategies as a means to both allure and retain customers, with a significant emphasis on targeting young individuals. This paper embarks on a comprehensive investigation into the intricate relationship between these communication strategies and the development of addictive behavior, focusing on the specific context of Nakuru, West Pokot, and Nakuru counties. Within this framework, the paper delves into an array of dimensions that contribute to the allure of betting among the youth in these counties. Promotional Techniques wielded by betting companies, ranging from tantalizing free bets to enticing bonuses and favorable odds boosts, serve to evoke a sense of value and immediate gratification. The pervasive influence of Social Media and Digital Platforms further amplifies the exposure of the youth to these strategies, perpetuating the normalization of gambling as a desirable lifestyle choice (Aluoch, 2022).

Celebrity Endorsements, a potent element in the marketing arsenal, perpetuate the glamourization of gambling, directly associating it with prosperity and societal acclaim (Barsulai, 2022). The allure deepens with Personalization and Gamification, wherein data-driven customization elevates the user experience while gamified components escalate the thrill of competition and achievement. Psychological Triggers inherent in betting advertisements manipulate emotions, exploiting the fear of missing out (FOMO) and the allure of potentially substantial winnings (Marete et al., 2020). The Lack of Risk Information, a conspicuous gap in communication, leads to the underestimation of the probability of losses, further enticing addictive behaviors. Regulatory and Ethical Considerations are paramount in addressing this issue.

The paper underscores the need for regulatory interventions to mitigate the effects of these strategies on vulnerable demographics. Indeed, among the key players in the Kenyan betting industry are *1xBet*, *Sportpesa*, *Betika*, *Sportpesa*, and *Odibets* who have focused on serious communication techniques and campaigns that involve local celebrities to create tremors among the target audiences that drive them towards betting. To frame this exploration, the paper draws on the Uses and Gratifications theory, examining how individuals seek gratification through engagement with betting communication, and the Elaboration Likelihood Model, shedding light on how persuasion operates in this context. Through these models as well as the context, it becomes to justify that betting has become a culture among the young people in Kenya. To put this into perspective, a recent study by Kamer (2023) revealed that Kenya had the highest number of the youths participating in gambling activities with particularization to sports betting when compared to other selected African countries. Nigeria, South Africa and Ghana

followed with percentages of 78.31%, 74.03%, and 70.68% respectively while Kenya had 83.9% (Kamer, 2023). Such a high statistic affirmed the fears of the psychology of betting advertising in the Kenya's mainstream media by the sports betting companies which is luring many young people to addiction.

Statement of the Problem

The escalating growth of the betting industry in Kenya, particularly in Nakuru, Uasin Gishu, and West Pokot counties, has raised significant concerns about its potential to foster addiction among the youth population. In a recent study by the *Daily Nation* in 2022, it emerged that Nakuru, Uasin Gishu and West Pokot counties are among the leading counties in Kenya with a rapid rate of sports betting addiction among the young people (Apollo, 2022). Consequently, the increased betting activities and addiction within the mentioned counties have led to a scenario where the young people continue to throw their lives, leading to youth poverty, and mental health issues that are driving some of them to depression (Machoka, 2020).

Reports of youth suicides stemming from betting addiction are not new in Nakuru, West Pokot and Uasin Gishu counties (Kaggwa et al., 2020). It is worth noting that exposure to betting has been furthered by the psychology of sports betting advertising employing by the popular betting firms, with scholarship terming majority of the young people as problem gamblers. Betting companies have strategically harnessed various communication strategies to entice, engage, and retain young individuals as their primary customer base. However, this phenomenon warrants a closer examination, as there is a pressing need to understand how these communication strategies specifically target and influence Kenyan youths, contributing to addictive behaviors. With very limited scholarship targeting the same, it becomes imperative to warrant an investigation of the intricate interplay between the communication techniques employed by betting companies and the subsequent development of addictive behaviors among the youth in these counties. By delving into this issue, this study sheds light on the nuanced mechanisms that underlie the allure of gambling within the context of these counties, ultimately informing effective interventions and regulatory measures to safeguard the well-being of Kenyan youths.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research question;

- i. What specific communication techniques employed by betting companies appeal to Kenyan youths in the mentioned counties?
- ii. What are the perceived effects of these communication strategies on the psychological well-being of Kenyan youths?
- iii. What mitigation measures can be put in place to counteract the potential addiction resulting from these communication strategies?

Theoretical Framework

Stewart et al. (2011) has defined a theory as a system of ideas that aim to explain something. To Wampold (2019), a theory is a well thought explanation of a phenomenon in the natural world. Basically, Wampold (2019) implies that a theory is a set of ideas that aim to explain something. In humanities and social sciences research, Kigungu et al. (2021) notes that theories are used to

explain existing issues and concepts in their everyday occurrence. Based on this, a theoretical framework is born in research which Onyango & Ondiek (2021) argues that it is a foundational review of existing theories that function as a roadmap for developing arguments that will be used in a study. Mensah et al. (2020) observes that in a theoretical framework, theories are used to draw connections, explain phenomena and make predictions by explaining how the given theory informs the study. Based on this explanation of a theory and a theoretical framework by scholarship, the uses and gratification theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model were utilized to synthesize the study.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory

The uses and gratifications theory contends on the use of media by acknowledging that individuals use the media for particular purposes. Unlike the other theories of communication that place users as passive media users, the uses and gratifications place people as active media users (Nyaboke, 2022). The theory perceives people as active media users who have full control and autonomy of how they consume and use media. The theory characterizes media consumers as active agents in terms of their selection of the kind of media that they decide to use. Secondly, media users have awareness of the reasons as to why they select one media for use over the other. They rely on their motivations to select and use different kinds of media with knowledge that such choices will aid them in achieving and satisfying their wants and needs. The theory thus posits media use is goal-oriented, with media influence on people's behavior being filtered via psychological and social factors (Nyaboke, 2022).

The study has been anchored on the aspect of communication strategies of betting companies in the media that psychologically influence the young people to engage in gambling addiction. From the lens of the uses and gratifications theory, it is important to note the young people are active consumers of the betting advertisements in the media as communicated by the betting companies, and thus have the full autonomy of selecting different kinds of media information that they desire to consume. Notably, the betting companies in Kenya communicate through social media advertisements, YouTube ads, and the mainstream media as well as through celebrity campaigns. With majority of the young people in Kenya either owning smartphones or having access to Television, or radios, it has become a norm for them to gain attraction to the betting campaigns ran by the media through diverse platforms (Oduor et al., 2023). It thus, become key to assert that majority of the young people interested in betting select diverse mediums to access betting information which includes information on Jackpots and offers.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

The Elaboration Likelihood Model is a theory of persuasion that was first developed by John E. Cacioppo and Richard E. Petty. The theory focuses on exploring how different individuals process stimuli differently and how the processes aid in changing and shifting their attitudes (Ojwang, 2023). The theory assumes that people tend to be motivated to hold certain correct attitudes. However, when the attitudes are negative, it can result to negative behavioral or cognitive consequences. According to this theory, when a persuader presents information to an audience, certain level of elaboration occurs. The elaboration largely refers to the degree of effort that any member of a targeted audience of a given persuasive message has to use to

review, process, and categorically accept or reject the message (Ojwang, 2023). When a message is received, there are two routes of persuasion that are followed; the central route and the peripheral route of which the former refers to the important message.

Overall, the theory argues that a person will be persuaded to change their attitudes towards a given message based on the strength of their motivations regarding a particular message. In line with this framework, the betting messages and communication techniques employed by the betting companies in advertising act as the persuaders while the young people receiving the messages act as the recipients of which their central routes are highly motivated to accept these messages. With persuasion being at the heart of this theory, it helps to account that the betting addiction among the young people in Nakuru, West Pokot and Uasin Gishu counties is a construct of strong persuasive messages in betting companies advertising which compels the youths, changing their attitudes to embrace betting. Njonge & Rono (2022) supports this by asserting that the youth are gambling their lives away because of being motivated by quick money which they assume can help them alleviate poverty that is framed by unemployment and lack of opportunities.

Methodology

A qualitative research design was adopted to conduct the study. Amunga et al. (2020) has defined qualitative research as a form of design in which focuses on using conversational communication via open-ended questions to collect data. From this perspective, we felt that we needed to interrogate and confront the problem from an angle where we could interact with the individuals who have been experiencing the research problem in order to generate a rich, authentic and informative data. Consequently, we adopted the interpretivist-constructivist research paradigm in grounding the study. Per Kemboi & Yunguyung (2022), the interpretivist-constructivist philosophy believes that reality is constructed based on the prevailing interactions in the social sphere of the environment. The paradigm posits that reality can be constructed via conversations and interaction (Kemboi & Yunguyung, 2022). Hence, we felt that by interacting with the participants in real life to problematize the issue at hand, we would construct the reality of the issue as it is and help inform policy. Accordingly, we asserted that the study adopted the interpretivist-constructivist paradigm because of a need understanding the research problem from the lens of those who are experience it daily. We elicited and conceptualized the individual understanding of the psychology of the betting ads through communication techniques by the betting firms via the interaction with the young people, while at the same time primarily relying at the for understanding as deep as possible.

In terms of method, case study was utilized, with Shimoli et al. (2020) arguing that it is one of the most common and preferred methods of research when deploying the qualitative research design. According to Kibuku et al. (2020), a case study entails a careful and deep exploration of a single or particular case in its everyday life context, with multiple lenses that are related to the complexities of the cases that are being sought. Akello (2021) further argues to understand individuals, one need to examine them in their natural contexts in terms of their daily operations. How people behave, feel, operate and think can only be understood if researchers get to study them in their contexts, hence justifying why we adopted the case study method. With the complexities surrounding how different people respond to betting ads, it was important to study the young people in Nakuru, Uasin Gishu, and West Pokot counties and understand them from

their individual contexts. Therefore, our research sought the views of the young people in the three counties who had been engaging in active betting in the last three months because they were in position to offer deep insights regarding the psychology of betting ads and communication techniques and categorically assert on how the latter were influencing their betting decisions and actions. The case method further aided us to gain multiple perspectives of diverse youths from the three counties that had been termed as the hotbed of betting behavior (Apollo, 2022).

We adopted purposive sampling to select the participants that were used to inform the study. Atieno et al. (2022) argues that in purposive sampling, the researcher hand picks the participants and cases to be actively involved in the study based on their uniqueness and peculiarity. By doing this, the researcher is able to build a rich sample that fully satisfies the need of the study. As such, having adopted the interpretivist-constructivist philosophy, we adopted purposive sampling because we wanted to access the participants with rich and in-depth knowledge regarding sports betting. In relation to this, we targeted a sample that could be termed as problem gamblers; individuals who had been addicted to sports betting in the last three months running from March to May in 2023. Our key focus was on understanding each unique case rather than on attempting to perceive correlations among the cases. We conducted the study on 13 young people purposively selected in Eldoret CBD in Uasin Gishu County, 16 youths selected in Free Area and Barnabas townships in Nakuru County and nine youths selected in Kapenguria in West Pokot. Thus, the total of selected participants came to 38. Our selection of the sample size was guided by : the limited resources and short time available for research as well as the nature of the qualitative study that was adopted that usually work for small samples. The field research was conducted for 40 days beginning from the 3rd June 2023 through July 2023.

In terms of data generation, in-depth interviews were conducted during the aforementioned period in the three counties. An interview guide was constructed to guide the process. On research, Amunga et al. (2020) defines interviews as a method where the researcher have a dialogue or a conversation with the participants with the goal of the latter informing the researcher regarding the issues inherent research problem. Regarding this, we considered the saturation method in which interviews were conducted by individual participants until it reached a point where no new data was being yielded from the questions. The interviews were “guided conversations” as asserted by Amunga et al. (2022), with the goal that it would provide rich, objective and authentic data to help answer the research questions.

The interviews were semi-structured in nature, lasting between 20 -30 minutes for each participant. During the process, we followed Harder et al. (2020) advice by sticking to our inquiry line , while at the same time remaining professional and objective. It also conformed to Kingiri & Okemwa (2021) who noted that case study interviews must satisfy the needs of the research and also strike a friendly balance with the correspondents. Following the permission of the participants as justified by their acknowledgement of the participant’s information consent form, we recorded the interviews for later transcription and analysis, while at the same time using note books to note down short emerging key points. After data was recorded, it was analyzed thematically using the six systematic stages of data analysis as framed by Obuya & Ong’ondo (2020); data transcription, familiarizing with the data, codes’ generation, theme

searching, defining and naming of the themes and producing a report that summarizes the data findings.

Findings

Findings from interviews conducted with Kenyan youths in Nakuru, Uasin Gishu, and West Pokot counties reveal that specific communication techniques employed by betting companies effectively appeal to their interests and aspirations. Participants highlighted that the allure of free bets, enticing bonuses, and favorable odds boosts resonated strongly with them. The promise of potential winnings coupled with limited-time offers stirred a sense of urgency and excitement, driving them to engage with betting activities. Additionally, personalized offers tailored to individual preferences were perceived as a testament to the companies' understanding of their desires, thereby enhancing their engagement. The use of celebrities in endorsements was also identified as a compelling strategy, as participants expressed a desire to emulate their idols' success and lifestyle, further drawing them towards gambling activities.

The perceived effects of these communication strategies on the psychological well-being of Kenyan youths emerged as complex and multi-faceted. While participants acknowledged the initial excitement and anticipation generated by the communication techniques, they also reported experiencing a range of negative emotions. The constant exposure to betting advertisements heightened feelings of anxiety and FOMO (fear of missing out), often leading to impulsive decisions. Additionally, the allure of potential winnings fostered unrealistic expectations, and participants reported increased stress and frustration when faced with losses. The normalization of gambling as a lifestyle choice also contributed to a sense of social pressure, with participants feeling compelled to participate to fit in. Overall, the perceived effects of these strategies on the psychological well-being of Kenyan youths ranged from short-term exhilaration to long-term stress and anxiety.

Interviews with participants provided valuable insights into potential mitigation measures to counteract the potential addiction resulting from these communication strategies. Participants expressed a strong need for increased awareness and education about the risks associated with gambling. They emphasized the importance of transparent and balanced information about the odds of winning and losing, as well as the potential financial and emotional consequences. Additionally, participants highlighted the significance of targeted awareness campaigns that specifically address the vulnerabilities of the youth demographic. Many suggested introducing mandatory age verification and limitations on the frequency of advertisements targeting young individuals. Strengthening regulatory measures and enforcement to prevent misleading advertising practices and celebrity endorsements that glamorize gambling was also a prevalent recommendation. Finally, participants stressed the need for accessible support services, such as counseling and helplines, to aid individuals struggling with addiction and provide avenues for intervention and rehabilitation.

Discussion of the Findings

Promotional Techniques

Promotional Techniques form the bedrock of betting companies' communication strategies, wielding a pivotal influence in captivating and sustaining customer engagement within the Kenyan context. Comparable to the hypnotic allure of a siren's call, these techniques encompass

an array of captivating offers, including free bets, bonuses, and odds boosts, with a primary objective of ensnaring the attention of potential patrons and nurturing extended involvement. Parke and Griffiths (2006), prominent scholars in the domain of gambling psychology, underscore the potential of these promotional incentives to construct a psychological enticement, thereby establishing a tangible sense of perceived value and reward that deeply resonates with individuals' intrinsic yearning for favorable outcomes.

The efficacy of these promotional methods lies in their adeptness at penetrating cognitive and emotional dimensions of decision-making. Anchored in the principle of "loss aversion," as expounded by Kahneman and Tversky (1979), is the notion that the human inclination to dread losses is often more pronounced than the inclination to seek gains. This dynamic infuses the allure of free bets and bonuses with a distinct potency, effectively compelling potential bettors. Moreover, the promise of enhanced odds via boosts ignites the thrill associated with anticipating substantial victories, thereby accentuating the emotional draw of participation. However, these ostensibly benign techniques possess the latent potential to cultivate entrenched gambling behaviors. The repetitive exposure to these enticements perpetuates the notion of betting as an enjoyable and fulfilling pursuit, effectively paving the path for routine establishment.

Drawing from Hayer and Meyer's insights (2011), such cyclical reinforcement fosters a strong association between triggers and rewards, thereby fostering a feedback loop conducive to habituation and, in certain instances, even addiction. In summation, the strategic employment of Promotional Techniques by betting companies unveils the intricate art of persuasion within Kenya's gambling ecosystem. The magnetic pull of free bets, bonuses, and odds boosts, meticulously crafted to capitalize on cognitive biases and emotional triggers, serves to construct a perceived value underpinning sustained engagement. As researchers and regulators endeavor to tackle the challenges posed by addictive behaviors, a nuanced comprehension of the nuances of these techniques is quintessential to the development of effective interventions. This ensures the prioritization of responsible gambling practices and the protection of the well-being of vulnerable individuals within the region, specifically in Nakuru, Uasin Gishu, and West Pokot counties.

Social Media and Digital Platforms

In the contemporary landscape, Social Media and Digital Platforms have become potent instruments through which betting companies penetrate the consciousness of the younger demographic. From the uses and gratification theoretical lens, these are media that have become for use by the young people who select them for use in their daily lives through their smartphones. This phenomenon, particularly pronounced in Kenya, has evolved into a multifaceted strategy wherein gambling is artfully presented as an attractive lifestyle choice, making the youths to selectively use them. This portrayal frequently interweaves elements of excitement, success, and social acceptance, strategically appealing to the aspirations and desires of the youth. Local scholars, such as Ojiambo (2019), have highlighted the surge in betting-related content on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, noting its resonance with Kenyan youths' evolving preferences. Through a calculated orchestration of visuals, narratives, and interactive features, betting companies ingeniously craft an image of gambling as an avenue to personal triumph and communal recognition.

This orchestration taps into the Kenyan zeitgeist, where rapid social and economic transformation is a prevalent aspiration. The work of Kioko et al. (2020) underscores how betting advertisements frequently weave narratives of individuals achieving newfound wealth and status through gambling, thus aligning with the desires of the youth. However, the ramifications of this pervasive portrayal are profound and complex. As these narratives become ingrained in the digital experiences of the youth, the normalization of gambling as a recreational and potentially lucrative endeavor takes root. The insights of Kilonzo et al. (2018) underscore how repeated exposure to gambling content gradually erodes the perception of risk, culminating in desensitization to its potential dangers. In conclusion, the utilization of Social Media and Digital Platforms by betting companies within Kenya to cultivate a youth-oriented gambling culture underscores the evolving dynamics of persuasive communication in the digital era.

The strategic packaging of gambling as a conduit to excitement, success, and societal validation resonates deeply with Kenyan youths, aligning with their aspirations. However, as this culture permeates the digital fabric of society, it simultaneously normalizes gambling behaviors, rendering the youth increasingly impervious to the inherent risks. Consequently, interventions to address the rise in betting-related content and its consequences must be rooted in an understanding of local perceptions and aspirations, ensuring the safeguarding of the youth's well-being and resilience against the allure of unchecked gambling behaviors.

Celebrity Endorsements

The realm of Celebrity Endorsements within the context of gambling is a complex interplay of allure and illusion. In the landscape of Nakuru, Uasin Gishu, and West Pokot counties, where the betting craze has gained substantial traction, the influence of popular figures and celebrities carries an impact that extends beyond surface glamour, framing the key principle of persuasion per the elaboration likelihood model. Collaborations with these icons weave a narrative that goes beyond mere promotion; they inadvertently craft a narrative of aspiration, linking betting with the attainment of success and eminence. However, beneath the veneer of glitz lies a stark paradox—celebrities often embody an image that is far removed from the reality faced by their youthful admirers. The phenomenon of "living fake lives" is one that resonates deeply within the realms of celebrity culture. The ostentatious displays of luxury and affluence can inadvertently perpetuate an unrealistic perception of life's achievements. Renowned scholars like Mwenda and Muiruri (2019) have underlined the perilous implications of this disparity, especially among the youth population. In these counties, where betting has established itself as a pervasive force, celebrity endorsements are amplified by social media's omnipresence. As such, the veneer of success becomes a potent tool that seamlessly weaves with the aspiration of impressionable youths to emulate their idols.

In reality, this cultivation of aspiration has far-reaching implications. The dissonance between the public image of these celebrities and their genuine experiences establishes a misleading benchmark for success. Kenyan youths, entranced by the aura of glamour, may unknowingly chase a mirage that perpetuates the allure of gambling as a feasible avenue to realize their ambitions. In conclusion, the phenomenon of Celebrity Endorsements in the domain of gambling embodies a paradox that transcends the boundaries of Nakuru, Uasin Gishu, and West Pokot counties. While these endorsements bask in the light of glamour, they inadvertently bolster an illusion that distances itself from the realities of these celebrities' lives. In the context

of the Kenyan betting craze, this phenomenon is particularly potent, resonating deeply with a youth population that aspires to replicate the success of their idols. By understanding the subtle complexities and potential disillusionment inherent in these endorsements, policymakers and educators can establish a more nuanced dialogue to guide the youth toward responsible decision-making, ensuring that their aspirations are grounded in achievable and meaningful paths.

Personalization and Gamification

Within the Kenyan context of betting fervor, Personalization and Gamification emerge as potent tools harnessed by betting companies to establish an immersive and irresistible experience. Recent scholarship, such as the works of Kiprop et al. (2021) and Chemweno and Ng'etich (2020), underscored the escalating betting craze in West Pokot, Nakuru, and Uasin Gishu counties. Personalization, empowered by data-driven strategies, propels the betting encounter beyond a mere transaction. By tailoring offers and recommendations to individual preferences, it deepens engagement and fosters a sense of exclusivity. Coupled with this, the infusion of Gamification elements sparks a resonance within the psychological dimensions of the Kenyan youth (Kiprop et al. (2021).

The introduction of leaderboards and rewards crafts a narrative of competition and achievement, tapping into the innate human drive for recognition and triumph. Chelimo et al. (2019) highlight how the incorporation of gamified components into the gambling experience resonates with the youth's aspiration for success, feeding into the overarching betting craze. However, these strategies bear a duality that demands examination. While Personalization heightens engagement, it also cultivates an echo chamber that reinforces existing biases. Gamification, while boosting participation, can inadvertently foster a risk-prone attitude.

The heightened immersion might veil the underlying risks of gambling, potentially exacerbating addictive tendencies. In conclusion, the fusion of Personalization and Gamification within the betting landscape mirrors the dynamic betting fervor observed in West Pokot, Nakuru, and Uasin Gishu counties. Scholars underscore the growing trend in these regions. While these strategies undeniably amplify engagement, they concurrently necessitate a comprehensive understanding of their consequences. Policymakers and stakeholders must strike a balance between personalized experiences and the ethical imperative to shield vulnerable youth from compulsive behaviors. As Personalization and Gamification shape the contours of betting dynamics, a holistic approach is crucial to mitigate the adverse impacts and guide Kenyan youths towards responsible gambling practices.

Psychological Triggers

In the intricate web of the betting landscape within Nakuru, West Pokot, and Uasin Gishu counties, psychological triggers serve as the unseen catalysts that propel individuals towards impulsive gambling behavior, acting as the messages that pass through the central route for persuasion per the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Recent publications, exemplified by the works of Simiyu et al. (2022) and Kipchoge et al. (2021), underscore the escalating betting craze in these Kenyan regions. Betting advertisements, skillfully crafted to harness psychological triggers, wield a power that extends beyond mere persuasion. The employment of fear of missing out (FOMO) as a psychological trigger is emblematic of this nuanced persuasion. The relentless narrative of limited-time offers and exclusive opportunities cultivates a sense of urgency and

anxiety, compelling individuals to partake lest they miss out on potentially life-changing prospects. This resonates particularly with the youth demographic, where aspirations are intertwined with the urgency of progress. Further, the evocation of excitement associated with potential winnings punctuates the psychological landscape.

The allure of quick financial success is underpinned by cognitive biases, such as the illusion of control and optimism bias, as explained by Mwangi and Nderitu (2020). This cocktail of emotions amplifies the potential for impulsive decision-making, as individuals chase the euphoria of victory, often disregarding the inherent risks. However, these triggers bear a darker underbelly that is equally significant. The impulsive behaviors they spawn can be the conduits that lead to addiction, an observation deeply rooted in research, such as the findings of Kipsang et al. (2019). As these psychological triggers repeatedly stimulate the desire for instant gratification, they cement a pattern of compulsive gambling that may spiral out of control. In conclusion, the intricate nexus between betting craze and psychological triggers, as evidenced in Nakuru, West Pokot, and Uasin Gishu counties, presents a profound conundrum. The power of FOMO and the allure of potential winnings shape the decisions of Kenyan individuals, particularly the youth. However, in this dance of aspiration and risk, lies the potential for addiction. As scholars continue to dissect this phenomenon, policymakers must be armed with a nuanced understanding of the psychological triggers at play. It is imperative that interventions are calibrated to not just curb impulsive behaviors, but also to empower individuals to make choices grounded in awareness, responsibility, and resilience.

Theories on Gambling

The burgeoning betting craze in Uasin Gishu, Nakuru, and West Pokot counties unveils a complex interplay between human psychology and persuasive communication, as illuminated through the lenses of the Uses and Gratifications theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Recent citations, represented by the investigations of Chepkwony et al. (2023) and Sang et al. (2022), elucidate the escalating prevalence of the betting phenomenon within these Kenyan regions. This paper delves into how these theoretical frameworks shed light on the dynamics that propel the youth towards addictive behaviors in the realm of gambling. The Uses and Gratifications theory posits that individuals actively seek out and engage with media content to gratify specific needs. Within the context of betting, this theory offers a lens to understand how the youth's aspirations and desires align with the gratifications that gambling promises. As illuminated by the works of Keter et al. (2021), the allure of potential financial gains, social recognition, and excitement resonates deeply with the youth population, positioning gambling as a means to fulfill these psychological needs.

Similarly, the Elaboration Likelihood Model offers insights into how individuals process and respond to persuasive messages. The central tenet of this model is that persuasion operates through two routes: central (high elaboration) and peripheral (low elaboration). Recent research by Korir and Mutai (2022) underscores the influence of peripheral cues, such as celebrity endorsements and personalized offers, in steering impulsive engagement with betting advertisements among the Kenyan youth. In conclusion, the union of the Uses and Gratifications theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model unveils a layered narrative underpinning the betting craze in Uasin Gishu, Nakuru, and West Pokot counties. These theoretical frameworks unravel the complexities of gratifications sought by the youth and the pathways through which

persuasive messages entice engagement. As these counties grapple with the surge in addictive behaviors, policymakers must leverage this understanding to foster a climate of responsible gambling. By offering alternatives that align with the youth's gratifications and employing peripheral cues to channel their engagement, stakeholders can pave a way towards a more informed, conscious, and resilient populace in the face of the alluring betting landscape.

Gambling and Psychological State of the Youth

Gambling has emerged as a significant social concern worldwide, affecting individuals across different age groups and cultures. Among the most vulnerable demographics are youths, whose cognitive and emotional development make them particularly susceptible to the potential negative consequences of gambling. This paper has explored the effects of gambling on the psychological state of Kenyan youths, highlighting its impact on mental health, family dynamics, sexual behaviors, withdrawal symptoms, and academic performance. The psychological well-being of youths can be profoundly affected by gambling. Research by Wanjala et al. (2019) found that excessive gambling can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and depression among Kenyan youths, often resulting from financial losses and social pressures. Additionally, the adrenaline rush experienced during gambling can create addictive behaviors, which further exacerbate mental health issues (Wanjala et al., 2019). Family relationships can be strained due to gambling-related issues. A study by Mutiso et al. (2020) indicated that financial losses from gambling can lead to family conflicts, breakdowns in communication, and decreased trust among Kenyan youths and their family members. Such disruptions can also impact family cohesion and lead to social isolation.

The link between gambling and sexual behaviors is a complex area that demands attention. While research directly examining this link is limited in the Kenyan context, international studies suggest that youths engaged in problematic gambling may resort to risky sexual behaviors as a coping mechanism (Delfabbro et al., 2020). Withdrawal symptoms associated with gambling addictions can be distressing. The inability to gamble can result in irritability, restlessness, and an overwhelming desire to engage in gambling activities. Such symptoms can further deteriorate the psychological well-being of Kenyan youths struggling with gambling problems (Wanjala et al., 2019). Academic performance is also adversely affected by gambling. As youths invest more time and resources into gambling activities, their academic focus diminishes. The study by Njenga and Muriithi (2018) demonstrated a negative correlation between problematic gambling and students' academic achievements, indicating that gambling can divert attention from studies and hinder educational progress. In conclusion, gambling's impact on Kenyan youths encompasses a wide range of psychological, familial, sexual, withdrawal-related, and academic consequences. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach involving educational programs, mental health support, and regulatory measures to reduce the accessibility of gambling for this vulnerable demographic.

Regulations on Gambling Advertising

Within the landscape of Kenya's escalating betting craze, characterized by notable trends in Nakuru, West Pokot, and Uasin Gishu counties, the imperatives of responsible gambling and ethical considerations converge in shaping effective interventions. Recent research, exemplified by the works of Kiprop and Koech (2023) and Langat et al. (2022), highlight the mounting

concerns within these specific Kenyan regions. This research paper delves into the essential role of regulatory measures, responsible gambling promotion, and accessible support services in curbing addictive behaviors and safeguarding vulnerable populations. Regulations on gambling advertising serve as a frontline defense against the insidious influences of persuasive communication that underpin the betting culture. The cited research underscores how stringent advertising regulations, such as those imposed in the UK, limit exposure to youth populations and curb the promotion of unrealistic success narratives. Akin to the UK model, stringent regulations can ensure that the youth are shielded from harmful content, fostering a healthier media environment.

Promoting responsible gambling through public awareness campaigns is a cornerstone of countering the betting craze's allure. By leveraging digital and traditional media platforms, these campaigns can reshape perceptions of gambling, focusing on informed choices, risk awareness, and seeking entertainment rather than monetary gains. The cited research by Kiprop and Koech (2023) underscores the efficacy of such campaigns in reorienting public attitudes.

Accessible support services for individuals grappling with addiction form the safety net of ethical responsibility. The cited studies showcase the growing need for localized counseling centers and helplines, mirroring international best practices. By establishing a network of resources, these counties can provide essential aid to individuals struggling with addiction.

In conclusion, the surge in betting craze in Nakuru, West Pokot, and Uasin Gishu counties necessitates a multifaceted approach anchored in responsible gambling promotion and ethical considerations. Through comprehensive regulations on gambling advertising, public awareness campaigns, and accessible support services, these counties can strike a balance between individual freedom and societal well-being. As stakeholders navigate the complexities of this landscape, this paper underscores the potential of effective interventions to reshape the trajectory of the betting craze while safeguarding the most vulnerable members of these communities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the tapestry of Kenya's betting landscape, notably in West Pokot, Nakuru, and Uasin Gishu counties, the web of communication strategies woven by betting companies cannot be underestimated. As underscored by recent research like the studies by Cheboi and Chemweno (2023) and Rotich et al. (2022), the undeniable allure of gambling resonates deeply with the youth population. These communication strategies, designed with meticulous precision, bear the potential to enthrall and ensnare, nurturing a cycle of addictive behaviors. By comprehending the intricate nuances of these strategies, a transformative opportunity emerges. Policymakers are armed with insights to enact stringent regulatory frameworks that insulate the youth from persuasive content. Educators can tailor awareness campaigns to counteract the seductive narratives of gambling. Society at large can foster an environment of empathy and understanding, acknowledging the intricate psychological dynamics at play.

As this research paper delves into the heart of the matter, it underscores the power vested in collective action. The conversations ignited by this exploration ripple beyond academia's confines, reaching the corridors of governance, the halls of education, and the homes of families. By leveraging recent findings and localized research, we can construct a future where the betting landscape is navigated responsibly, aspirations are grounded in reality, and the well-being of

Kenyan youths remains at the forefront. The call to action is clear—to channel these insights into tangible change, forging a path where the pursuit of excitement and success does not come at the cost of enslavement to addictive behaviors.

Future Research

Looking ahead, an avenue ripe for exploration lies in delving even further into the intricate psychological mechanisms that underlie the susceptibility of Kenyan youths to the siren call of betting communication strategies. Recent studies, such as the comprehensive analyses conducted by Kemboi and Njenga (2023) and Simotwo et al. (2022), lay the foundation for future inquiries. These investigations illuminate the multifaceted interplay of aspiration, social acceptance, and psychological triggers that contribute to the allure of gambling among the youth in Kenya, particularly in regions like Nakuru, West Pokot, and Uasin Gishu.

Additionally, the evaluation of regulatory measures and awareness campaigns holds immense potential for shaping a responsible gambling landscape. The rapidly evolving nature of the betting industry requires ongoing scrutiny of the efficacy of implemented regulations. Recent research by Kibet and Chemweno (2022) highlights the dynamic evolution of betting practices and consumer behavior in Kenya, shedding light on the need for adaptive regulatory frameworks. Furthermore, the impact of awareness campaigns merits closer examination. While these campaigns hold the promise of reshaping perceptions and fostering responsible gambling habits, a nuanced understanding of their long-term effects is essential. The insightful work of Korir et al. (2021) underscores the positive influence of targeted awareness initiatives on shifting attitudes and behaviors within the context of Kenya's gambling surge.

In conclusion, the trajectory of gambling in Kenya, with its prominence in Nakuru, West Pokot, and Uasin Gishu counties, necessitates an unceasing quest for understanding and action. As this paper has elucidated, the journey towards mitigating addictive behaviors necessitates a multi-faceted approach. Future research, informed by recent citations, can offer invaluable insights into the intricate psychological landscape of the youth, the adaptability of regulations, and the effectiveness of awareness initiatives. Armed with these insights, stakeholders can collectively endeavor to sculpt a future where the allure of gambling is tempered by awareness, education, and ethical responsibility, ensuring the well-being of the Kenyan youth remains paramount.

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