

Gambling in Transition: Assessing Youth Narratives of Gambling in Nigeria

- [Tunde Adebisi](#),
- [Oluwatobi Alabi](#),
- [Ogadimma Arisukwu](#) &
- [Festus Asamu](#)

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Abstract

Nigeria has witnessed some significant changes in gambling which have resulted in more people becoming interested in the activity. In an attempt to increase participation, bookmakers have introduced a variety of innovations. Literature has established that this increased participation is inter-generational, cross-cultural, and inter-religious. Particularly among Nigerian youth, participation in gambling cuts across all age groups, socio-economic status, and gender. Both financial and social rewards have been identified as reasons why many youths gamble. Through a qualitative lens, this study investigates how the dynamics of gambling in recent times have affected the biographies of youth within a relatively deprived socio-economic locality in Kwara State, Nigeria. Thirty young gamblers between the ages of 15 and 29 were engaged in a semi-structured interview session. Drawing from the meaning of 'youth' from a sociological lexicon, one can advance this unique narrative of the transitions in gambling activities which can occur as a result of the youths' biographies and socio-economic status. Nigerian youth adopt three specific gambling types as a coping strategy in the face of a crisis-ridden socio-economic structure characterised by poverty, and unemployment. As such, gambling has become a normative activity experimented by the youth to survive the harsh economic conditions. This study therefore argues the need to situate the discourse of youth gambling within the social, cultural, and economic context in which they are located in Nigeria. In addition, the authors provide a framework for understanding the complexity of youth gambling in Nigeria.

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Author information

Affiliations

1. **Department of Sociology, Landmark University, Omu-Aran, Kwara State, Nigeria**
Tunde Adebisi, Ogadimma Arisukwu & Festus Asamu
2. **Department of Sociology, University of Johannesburg, Auckland Park, South Africa**
Oluwatobi Alabi

Corresponding author

Correspondence to [Tunde Adebisi](#).

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