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# The Impact of Soccer Betting Behaviours on Teaching Engagement: A Phenomenological Study of Selected Senior High Schools in Ghana's Eastern Region

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## Article info

## Abstract

### Keywords:

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This phenomenological study investigates the relationship between soccer betting behaviours and teaching engagement among male educators in selected senior high schools within Ghana's Eastern Region. Through in-depth interviews with 30 participants and focus group discussions, the research explores how gambling activities, particularly soccer betting, influence teachers' professional performance and classroom engagement. The study employed a phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of educators involved in sports betting activities.

The findings reveal complex patterns of betting behaviours among teachers and their subsequent effects on teaching responsibilities. Data collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions highlight various impacts on classroom preparation, teacher-student relationships, and overall professional commitment. The research identifies several key factors influencing betting behaviours, including economic pressures, peer influence, and the accessibility of mobile betting platforms.

Analysis indicates significant correlations between intensive betting activities and decreased teaching engagement, manifesting through tardiness, reduced lesson preparation time, and diminished classroom interaction quality. The study also reveals coping mechanisms developed by teachers to balance their betting activities with professional responsibilities, though these often prove inadequate in maintaining optimal teaching standards. These findings are contextual to the Eastern Region of Ghana and may not be generalizable to other educational contexts without further research.

The research underscores the need for institutional support systems and policy frameworks to address gambling-related challenges in educational settings. Recommendations include the development of financial literacy programs, counselling services, and clear institutional guidelines regarding gambling activities among teaching staff. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on teacher welfare and professional conduct in Sub-Saharan Africa, offering insights for educational administrators and policymakers.

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## 1. Introduction

The intersection of gambling behaviours and professional engagement among educators represents an emerging area of concern in educational research. As gambling, particularly soccer betting, becomes increasingly prevalent, its implications on teachers' professional responsibilities warrant careful examination. This study focuses on selected senior high schools in Ghana's Eastern Region, where cultural and economic factors contribute to the growing popularity of betting activities among teachers. Understanding how these behaviours influence teaching engagement can inform policies aimed at improving educational outcomes and teacher welfare.

Various studies have highlighted the psychological and social dimensions of gambling, particularly within educational contexts. Teachers, who play a crucial role in shaping future generations, may experience varying degrees of distraction and disengagement due to their betting activities. This phenomenon raises questions about the balance between personal interests and professional obligations,



especially in a setting where educators are expected to maintain high standards of teaching and mentorship [1].

The economic pressures faced by educators in Ghana have been well-documented, with many teachers struggling to make ends meet amid rising living costs. Such financial strains often lead individuals to seek alternative income sources, including gambling [2]. While some may view betting as a means to alleviate financial burdens, it can also result in negative repercussions on their teaching responsibilities, leading to a decline in classroom engagement and effectiveness [3].

This study employs a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of teachers engaged in soccer betting. By conducting in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, we aim to uncover the nuanced ways that betting behaviours affect teaching engagement. Such an approach allows for a deeper understanding of the emotional and psychological impacts of gambling on educators' professional lives, providing valuable insights into their coping mechanisms and challenges.

Research into the effects of gambling on professional engagement is still relatively nascent, particularly in the Sub-Saharan African context. This study seeks to contribute to the literature by examining how soccer betting behaviours influence teaching dynamics in Ghana's Eastern Region. The findings will enhance our understanding of the phenomenon and inform institutional strategies to support educators facing gambling-related challenges.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Economic Pressures and Gambling Motivation

Economic pressures represent a primary driver of gambling behaviours among educators in Ghana. Research indicates that teachers, facing financial constraints, may turn to gambling as a perceived solution to their monetary issues [4]. However, this approach often leads to detrimental outcomes, such as increased financial instability and stress, which can ultimately hinder their teaching performance and commitment to their roles [5].

### 2.2 Peer Influence and Social Dynamics

Peer influence emerges as another critical factor influencing gambling behaviours among teachers. Research shows that social circles can significantly impact an individual's decision to engage in betting, with many educators feeling pressured to conform to group norms [6]. This social pressure can lead to a cycle of increased gambling and decreased professional engagement. Studies have found that teachers often engage in gambling activities as a means of social bonding with colleagues, creating peer dynamics that perpetuate betting behaviours [7].

### 2.3 Psychological Impact on Professional Performance

The relationship between gambling behaviours and workplace performance has been explored in various fields, with educators being a relatively under-researched demographic. Studies indicate that gambling can create significant distractions for teachers, adversely affecting their focus and engagement in classroom activities [8]. The psychological toll of managing gambling habits can lead to increased absenteeism and a decline in teaching effectiveness, highlighting the need for targeted interventions within educational settings.

Furthermore, research has shown that gambling can lead to increased stress and anxiety, further detracting from educators' ability to engage effectively with their students [9]. This psychological burden can manifest in various ways, including reduced classroom interaction and lesson preparation.

### 2.4 Institutional Policies and Support Systems

The role of institutional policies in addressing gambling-related issues among educators is crucial. Research indicates that clear guidelines and support services can help mitigate the adverse effects of gambling on teaching engagement [10]. Implementing financial literacy programs and counselling services can provide educators with the tools they need to navigate the challenges associated with gambling.

Coping mechanisms developed by teachers to balance their gambling activities with their professional responsibilities have also been documented. However, many of these strategies are often inadequate in mitigating the negative impacts of betting on teaching performance, highlighting the need for institutional support systems to assist educators in managing their gambling behaviours [11].

### 2.5 Normalization of Gambling in Society



Research has shown that the normalization of gambling in society can influence educators' perceptions and behaviours. As gambling becomes more mainstream, particularly with the rise of online platforms, teachers may feel compelled to participate, believing it to be a socially acceptable form of entertainment [12]. This normalization can lead to a culture where gambling is viewed as a harmless activity, thereby masking its potential negative impacts on professional responsibilities.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing a phenomenological approach to gain insights into the lived experiences of educators engaged in soccer betting. This design is appropriate for exploring complex social phenomena and allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives and subjective experiences.

#### **3.2 Target Population and Sampling**

The target population consists of male teachers employed in selected senior high schools within the Eastern Region of Ghana. This demographic is particularly relevant due to the increasing prevalence of soccer betting activities among educators in this area.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who are actively involved in soccer betting. The inclusion criteria were: (1) male teachers currently employed in senior high schools in the Eastern Region, (2) active participation in soccer betting activities for at least six months, and (3) willingness to participate in interviews and focus group discussions. Exclusion criteria included teachers with less than one year of teaching experience and those unwilling to discuss their gambling activities.

#### **3.3 Sample Size**

A total of 30 teachers were selected to participate in the study, representing various schools within the Eastern Region. This sample size is deemed sufficient to capture a range of experiences and perspectives regarding the impact of betting on teaching engagement, following the principle of data saturation in qualitative research.

#### **3.4 Data Collection Methods**

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. These methods allow for open-ended responses and facilitate a deeper exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with all 30 participants, while 15 focus group discussions were held with small groups of 4-6 participants each.

#### **3.5 Data Collection Procedures**

Individual interviews were conducted in private settings to ensure confidentiality and encourage honest dialogue. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. Focus group discussions were facilitated to promote interaction among participants, allowing for the emergence of diverse viewpoints. These sessions lasted 60-90 minutes each.

#### **3.6 Data Analysis Method**

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the collected data following Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach. This method involves identifying patterns and themes within the data, providing insights into the relationships between soccer betting behaviours and teaching engagement. The analysis process included data familiarization, initial coding, theme searching, theme reviewing, theme definition, and report writing.

#### **3.7 Validity and Reliability**

To ensure data validity and reliability, several strategies were employed: (1) triangulation through multiple data collection methods (interviews and focus groups), (2) member checking with participants to verify interpretations, (3) peer debriefing with research colleagues, and (4) thick description of findings with supporting quotations. The phenomenological approach inherently emphasizes the subjective nature of experiences, with reliability ensured through consistent data collection procedures and systematic analysis.



### 3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. The study received approval from the institutional ethics committee. Participants provided informed consent before participating, and confidentiality was maintained by anonymising data. Additional ethical procedures included:

**Informed Consent:** All participants received comprehensive information about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks

**Confidentiality:** Participants' identities and personal information were kept confidential through data anonymisation

**Right to Withdraw:** Participants were informed of their right to withdraw without negative consequences

**Minimization of Harm:** Efforts were made to minimize potential psychological distress

**Debriefing:** Participants were provided information about support resources

**Cultural Sensitivity:** The research was conducted with respect for the cultural context

## 4. Result

### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Participants (N=30)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age Range	21-30 years	10	33.3%
	31-40 years	8	26.7%
	41-50 years	7	23.3%
	51+ years	5	16.7%
Educational Background	Bachelor's Degree	30	100%
Teaching Experience	1-5 years	8	26.7%
	6-10 years	10	33.3%
	11-15 years	7	23.3%
	16+ years	5	16.7%
School Type	Public Schools	18	60%
	Private Schools	12	40%

### 4.2 Thematic Analysis Results

#### 4.2.1 Impact on Classroom Preparation and Engagement

The findings indicate a significant correlation between teachers' soccer betting behaviours and their teaching engagement. Analysis revealed that teachers who engaged in frequent betting reported higher levels of distraction during classroom hours, leading to decreased focus and effectiveness in lesson delivery.

"Sometimes I find myself checking the scores during class time instead of focusing on my students. It affects how I deliver my lessons because my mind is elsewhere"\* (Participant 15, 35 years old, 8 years' experience).

Many participants noted that their preoccupation with betting outcomes affected their ability to prepare adequately for classes, resulting in subpar instructional quality. \*"When I lose a bet, I spend the whole night thinking about it instead of preparing for the next day's lessons"\* (Participant 23, 42 years old, 12 years' experience).

#### 4.2.2 Teacher-Student Relationships

A substantial number of educators expressed concerns about their relationships with students, stating that their gambling activities contributed to a lack of emotional availability in the classroom. Teachers reported feeling guilty about their betting habits, which often led to increased anxiety and stress, further impacting their interactions with students.

I used to be very close to my students, but now I'm always worried about my next bet. I don't have the same energy to connect with them"\* (Participant 7, 29 years old, 4 years' experience).



This emotional strain manifested in reduced classroom participation and a decline in nurturing teacher-student relationships.

#### 4.2.3 Absenteeism and Professional Commitment

Data collected highlighted that intensive betting behaviours were associated with increased absenteeism. Teachers who regularly placed bets were more likely to miss classes, citing reasons related to the stress and emotional turmoil caused by gambling losses.

"After a big loss, I sometimes can't face going to school. I call in sick because I'm too stressed to teach properly"\* (Participant 11, 38 years old, 9 years' experience).

This absenteeism negatively affected students' learning experiences, as continuity in instruction was disrupted.

#### 4.2.4 Inadequate Coping Mechanisms

Coping mechanisms employed by some educators were found to be inadequate. While many teachers attempted to balance their betting activities with their professional responsibilities, they often struggled to maintain optimal teaching standards.

"I try to set limits on when I bet, but when I'm losing, I can't stop thinking about the next game. It's hard to separate it from my work"\* (Participant 19, 33 years old, 6 years' experience).

Participants reported feelings of frustration and inadequacy as they juggled both worlds, indicating a need for better support systems within educational institutions.

#### 4.2.5 Economic Pressures as Driving Factors

The study identified economic pressures as a significant factor driving teachers toward betting behaviours. Many educators cited financial difficulties as a primary reason for their gambling, viewing it as a potential source of income.

"My salary is not enough to take care of my family. I started betting hoping to make some extra money, but it has made things worse"\* (Participant 3, 41 years old, 15 years' experience).

However, this reliance on betting for financial relief often exacerbated their financial situations, creating a vicious cycle of stress and poor engagement.

### 4.3 Need for Institutional Support

The findings underscore the urgent need for institutional interventions. Participants emphasized the importance of financial literacy programs and counselling services to help educators manage their gambling behaviours and cope with associated stressors.

"Our school doesn't provide any help for teachers with gambling problems. We need someone to talk to and guidance on how to manage our finances better"\* (Participant 26, 44 years old, 16 years' experience).

The lack of institutional support was seen as a critical gap, suggesting that schools should take proactive measures to address gambling-related challenges among their staff.

## 5. Discussion

The results of this study align with previous research indicating that gambling behaviours can significantly impact professional performance. The findings support existing literature that suggests teachers engaged in gambling often experience declines in job satisfaction and classroom engagement [13]. This study reinforces the notion that gambling not only affects personal lives but also has far-reaching consequences within educational settings.

Moreover, the emotional toll of gambling on teachers, as highlighted in this study, resonates with previous findings that observed educators struggling with feelings of guilt and anxiety related to their gambling habits [14]. This emotional distress can hinder educators' ability to foster positive relationships with students, ultimately affecting the learning environment.

In contrast to prior studies that focused solely on the financial implications of gambling, this research highlights the broader psychosocial effects on teaching engagement. While previous literature emphasized the economic pressures driving educators to gamble [15], this study expands on that by



illustrating how these financial strains lead to emotional challenges that directly impact teaching performance.

The study also emphasizes the need for institutional support systems, echoing recommendations from recent literature. While previous research has pointed to the importance of addressing gambling behaviours, this research calls for specific interventions tailored to the unique challenges faced by educators [16].

The findings further suggest that peer dynamics play a crucial role in perpetuating gambling behaviours among educators, supporting previous observations about how social circles can influence individual choices [6]. This aspect reveals an additional layer of complexity, indicating that addressing peer influences could be key in mitigating gambling-related issues.

### 5.1 Implications of the Study.

1. **Educational Policy Development:** The findings highlight the need for educational institutions to develop comprehensive policies addressing gambling behaviours among teachers, emphasizing the importance of teacher welfare and professional conduct standards.

2. **Teacher Support Systems:** The study underscores the necessity for institutional support systems, including financial literacy programs, counselling services, and peer support groups to help educators manage gambling-related challenges effectively.

3. **Enhanced Teaching Quality:** By addressing the negative impacts of soccer betting on teaching engagement, schools can improve overall educational quality, student outcomes, and institutional reputation.

4. **Professional Development:** The need for targeted professional development programs that address work-life balance and stress management for educators facing personal challenges.

#### Limitations

The study acknowledges several limitations:

**Sample Size and Scope:** While 30 participants provided rich qualitative data, a larger sample could enhance the study's comprehensiveness and allow for deeper analysis across different demographic subgroups.

**Geographical Limitation:** The study is limited to selected senior high schools in Ghana's Eastern Region, which may not represent the experiences of educators in other regions or countries, limiting generalizability.

**Gender Limitation:** The sample consists only of male educators, which limits the generalizability of findings to female educators or mixed-gender populations in similar contexts.

**Self-Reporting Bias:** The reliance on self-reported data from interviews and focus groups may introduce biases, as participants might under-report negative behaviours or overemphasize certain impacts.

**Temporal Limitation:** The cross-sectional nature of the study provides a snapshot of experiences but does not capture the evolution of gambling behaviours and their impacts over time.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

**Institutional Guidelines:** Educational institutions should establish clear, comprehensive guidelines regarding gambling activities among staff, including codes of conduct and disciplinary measures for problematic behaviours that affect professional performance.

**Support Program Implementation:** Schools should implement evidence-based programs including financial literacy education, professional counselling services, and peer support groups specifically designed for educators facing gambling-related challenges.

**Regular Assessment and Monitoring:** Institutions should conduct regular assessments of staff well-being and professional engagement to identify and address gambling-related issues proactively, implementing early intervention strategies.

**Policy Framework Development:** Educational authorities should develop regional and national policy frameworks that address gambling-related challenges in educational settings, providing resources and guidelines for institutional implementation.



**Research and Evaluation:** Continuous research should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of implemented interventions and to understand evolving patterns of gambling behaviour among educators.

#### Suggestions for Future Research

**Comparative Studies:** Future research should compare gambling behaviours and their impacts on teaching engagement across different regions, countries, and cultural contexts to identify universal and culture-specific factors.

**Longitudinal Studies:** Conducting longitudinal studies would provide insights into how gambling behaviours evolve over time, their long-term impacts on educators, and the effectiveness of interventions over extended periods.

**Diverse Demographics:** Investigating the experiences of female educators, different age groups, and educators from various socioeconomic backgrounds would enrich understanding of gambling's impact across diverse populations.

**Intervention Effectiveness Research:** Systematic research assessing the effectiveness of implemented support programs and interventions aimed at reducing gambling-related challenges among educators.

**Mixed-Methods Approaches:** Combining qualitative insights with quantitative measures to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the prevalence and impact of gambling behaviours in educational settings.

## 6. Conclusion

This phenomenological study provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between soccer betting behaviours and teaching engagement among male educators in Ghana's Eastern Region. The findings reveal that gambling activities significantly impact teachers' professional performance, manifesting through decreased classroom preparation, compromised teacher-student relationships, increased absenteeism, and overall reduced teaching effectiveness.

The study contributes to the growing body of literature on teacher welfare and professional conduct in Sub-Saharan Africa by highlighting the interconnectedness of financial, emotional, and social factors that influence educators' professional lives. The research demonstrates that while economic pressures may drive teachers toward gambling as a perceived solution, the resulting consequences often exacerbate their challenges and negatively impact their professional responsibilities.

The urgent need for comprehensive institutional support systems, including financial literacy programs, counselling services, and clear policy guidelines, emerges as a critical finding. Educational institutions must recognize their role in supporting educators facing gambling-related challenges to maintain teaching quality and student outcomes.

This research provides a foundation for future studies and practical interventions aimed at addressing gambling-related challenges in educational settings, ultimately contributing to improved teacher welfare and enhanced educational quality in Ghana and similar contexts.

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## Appendix A: Interview Guide

### Individual Interview Questions

1. Can you describe your experiences with soccer betting? How often do you participate in it?
2. In what ways do you believe your betting activities impact your teaching responsibilities?
3. Have you noticed any changes in your classroom engagement since you started betting? If so, please elaborate.
4. How do financial pressures influence your decision to engage in betting?
5. What emotional effects, if any, do you experience as a result of your gambling activities?
6. Can you discuss your relationships with students and how they may be affected by your betting behaviours?
7. What coping mechanisms do you use to balance your betting activities and professional responsibilities?
8. Do you feel that your school provides adequate support for educators dealing with gambling-related issues? Why or why not?

### Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. How do you all feel about the role of soccer betting among educators in your school?
2. What common experiences have you noticed regarding the impact of betting on your teaching engagement?
3. In your opinion, how does peer influence affect your decisions to participate in betting?
4. What are some of the financial challenges you face that lead to gambling?
5. How do you think gambling affects your emotional well-being and overall job satisfaction?
6. What suggestions do you have for improving institutional support for teachers who engage in betting?
7. Can you share any strategies that have worked for you in managing the impact of betting on your teaching?
8. What changes would you like to see in your school's policies regarding gambling among educators?

