

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**



**INVESTIGATING THE SOCIAL INFLUENCE OF GAMBLING  
ADVERTISEMENT ON BASIC SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF SEMPE  
WEST BASIC SCHOOL JAMES TOWN, ACCRA**



**MASTER OF ARTS**

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**



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ADVERTISEMENT ON BASIC SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF SEMPE  
WEST BASIC SCHOOL JAMES TOWN, ACCRA**



**A dissertation submitted to the school of graduate studies in  
partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of  
the degree of Master of Arts  
(Strategic Communication)**

**DEPARTMENT OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION  
SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**JUNE, 2025**

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## DECLARATION

### Student's Declaration

I, **Ebenezer Amponsah**, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature .....

Date.....

### Supervisor's Declaration

I, hereby certify that the preparation and presentation of this thesis was supervised in accordance with guidelines and supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Education, Winneba

Supervisor's Name: Mr. Stephen Osei Akyiaw

Signature.....

Date.....

## **DEDICATION**

To my family and friends

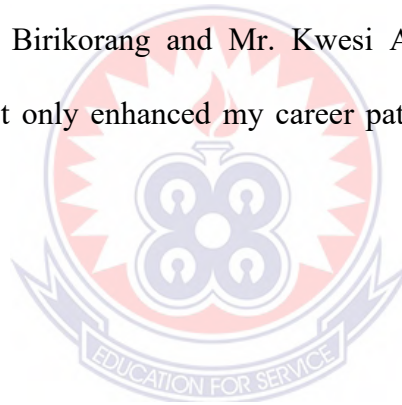


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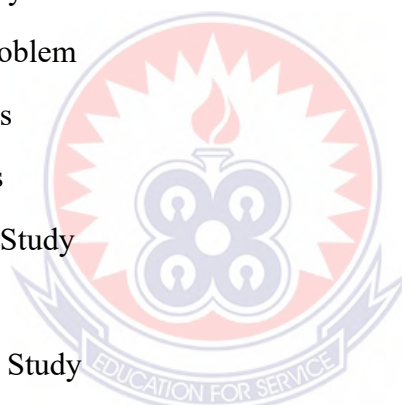
Finally, this dissertation would not have been made possible without input from the staff and students of Sempe West Basic School in James town.

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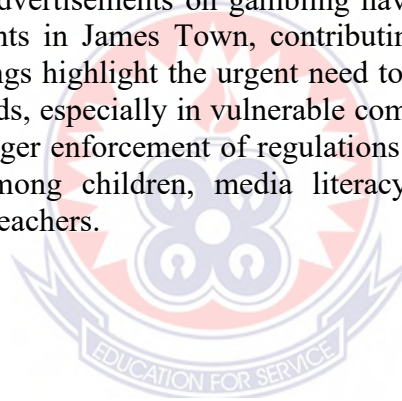
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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the social influence of gambling advertisements on basic school students, Sempe West Basic School, James Town-Accra. It explores how exposure to such advertisements may influence the behaviour of these students, potentially leading to changes that affect their academic performance. The study employed a qualitative research approach, using interviews and focus group discussions to gain in-depth insights into students' perceptions, experiences, and behavioral responses to gambling advertisements. The research approach involved using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. A purposive sample of 10 students were selected for the interview while 6 students participated in the Focus Group Discussions (FGD), comprising students from Junior High School (JHS) 1, 2, and 3. This enabled the researcher gain different perspectives from students across different grade levels. Data analysis involved identifying recurring patterns and key influences of gambling ads on students' lives. The findings of the study revealed that students are mostly exposed to gambling advertisements through television, radio and social media. Many students reported developing curiosity about gambling, with some even considering it as a means to acquire material wealth. There was also a noticeable link between frequent exposure to these ads and poor academic performance. The study concludes that advertisements on gambling have a significant social influence on basic school students in James Town, contributing to shifts in attitudes toward gambling. These findings highlight the urgent need to address the exposure of young students to gambling ads, especially in vulnerable communities. Recommendations of the study include stronger enforcement of regulations on gambling advertisements to reduce their reach among children, media literacy and supportive environment involving parents and teachers.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of Study

The gambling market has become widespread with various multi-national companies establishing their footprints with casinos and online betting centres especially in many developing countries (Agur, 2016). Gambling is permitted in 45 African nations, and the majority of sub-Saharan nations engage in some form of gambling including lottery, offering casino services, sports betting and sometimes horse racing in some countries. Africa still generates a little portion of the world's revenue roughly US\$4.7 billion, or 1% despite the expanding market (Bitanihirwe et al., 2022). The market for illegal gaming is expanding in Ghana. For instance, in April 2014, the Ghana police Service detained 101 lottery operators who were illegally engaged in lottery that goes contrary to the National Lotteries Acts. Ghana earns about 0.125% of GDP from gambling (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022). Revenue generated from gambling is used by many governments for various developments (Williams et al., 2011).

However, people who win gambling wagers keep them as secret particularly when they think they won them through illegal means (Amegashie-Viglo et al., 2014). In recent times, advertising has become a powerful tool that shapes perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors, transcending its original commercial purpose of promoting goods and services (Maniss et al., 2021). One area of concern is the influence of gambling advertisements, which have become more prevalent in many communities, including James Town. Gambling which was in the past seen as very addictive and has serious social consequences is no longer a problem for some people given its wide promotional activities in a lot of both traditional and new media platforms (Griffiths

& Parke, 2005). These advertisements often glamorize gambling, portraying it as an easy way to gain financial success, achieve fame, or enjoy leisure (Kostek, 2022). While these advertising messages are primarily targeted at adults, young children and adolescents are increasingly exposed to them, potentially impacting their development and social behaviors (Pitt et al., 2017). Basic school students, particularly those aged 12 to 15, are at a formative stage of their lives and are easily influenced (Jeong & Gwon, 2018). At this age, children begin to form their social identities, develop critical thinking skills, and shape their views on risk-taking behaviors (Kwon & Telzer, 2022). However, because they are young without much experience, they become vulnerable to the persuasive ways in which these gambling adverts are portrayed to them (Ofori-Boateng et al., 2020).

In James Town, a historic urban community in Accra, many families face socioeconomic challenges such as poverty and unemployment. As a result, young students in the area may be fascinated by gambling as a means of escaping financial hardships as suggested in other studies (Derevensky et al., 2010). The community's proximity to entertainment hubs, coupled with so many gambling advertisements, further increases the risk of exposure for these students (Griffiths & Parke, 2005). Previous studies on how gambling ads affect society have mostly examined adults frequently neglecting the profound impacts these commercials can have on younger children. Studies have revealed that the more people are exposed to gambling ads, the more their interest grows as it emboldens them to take risk and start gambling early (Derevensky et al., 2010). Also, the advertisements present gambling as a profitable and enjoyable activity discounting the negative effective of gambling and its addictive nature, financial loss and social consequences (Pitt et al., 2017). Once these basic

school students are repeatedly exposed to gambling messages, they tend to believe it's a normal activity that has no negative consequences (Griffiths & Parke, 2005).

The long-term effects of such exposure are profound. Early engagement in gambling-related activities can lead to poor academic performance, strained social relationships, and increased likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors (Derevensky et al., 2010). Additionally, students may have a different perception about financial success equating it to luck rather than hard work and education (Pitt et al., 2017). This research seeks to explore the extent of gambling advertisement exposure among basic school students in James Town, focusing on the social influence of these advertisements on them.

Reports of gambling incidence and the challenges facing young people must be tackled to reduce the harm it is likely to cause (McMahon et al., 2019). Even though most countries have regulations on gambling, enforcing these laws have proven difficult. The youth have continuously been exposed to ads from various media that advertises gambling (Parke et al., 2014). Studies have shown that a number of people especially the youth are impacted by gambling resulting in absenteeism, increased dropout rates in recent times (Dowling et al., 2017). As a result of sometimes the desire for students to make quick money, many youths use gambling especially betting as an avenue to generate some money for themselves (Amoah-Nuamah et al., 2023). Gambling then makes people become vulnerable and engage in undesirable behavior regardless of the challenges associated with it (Clark, 2014).

Gambling is the act of placing a wager in hopes of winning money on an uncertain outcome. Every type of gambling involves some degree of chance, even those that are usually thought of as being more skilled based such as sports betting (Harwood,

2023). Although it is either a lost or win game, it serves as a form of entertainment for some people (King, 2019). Others have also been influenced to engage in gambling because these venues enable them to interact with their friends though other people engage in gambling largely because of the money they would get (Bestman et al., 2016). Some also go to these gaming centres to escape from some problems facing them especially for people who have engaged in gambling for a long time (Davidson, 2022). Many studies are currently being conducted on some factors that are likely to contribute to normalization of gambling as well as the positive attitudes towards gambling and its products (Thomas et al., 2018). As the gambling environment continues to change with the developments of especially sports betting, many researchers have now focused on the vulnerabilities of people (Bestman et al., 2018).

According to Masiku and Kisongo (2022), youths are susceptible to negative impacts of gambling because they may not be aware of the implications of gambling on their livelihoods. This is because gambling has assumed a different form that may not be regarded by young people as harmful (Langham et al., 2015).

It is important to investigate this issue due to distinct social dynamics and cultural heritage blended with urban life though they are faced with youth unemployment, inadequate education infrastructure. In such environment, gambling is viewed by many as a means to acquire quick wealth with lots of adverts influence them (Derevensky et al., 2010; Pitt et al., 2017). The research will contribute to the knowledge on how gambling advertisements influences young children especially in the African contexts, where studies on this issue are largely unexplored. The study will also provide valuable information for educators, parents, and policymakers to be

able to intervene and design programmes for students from been influenced by gambling ads (Thomas et al., 2012).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Gambling advertisements have become increasingly common across various media platforms especially on television, new media platforms during sports events (Riley et al., 2021; Torrance et al., 2021). While these advertisements are generally intended for adult audiences, children also engage in it which inadvertently shape their behaviour and perceptions toward gambling (Rossi et al., 2021). Research indicates that young children who are exposed to gambling advertisements may acquire risky attitudes and behaviour that may adversely affect their wellbeing and academic performance (Adu, 2018).

Most existing studies on gambling advertisement impacts rely on meta-analytical reviews and mixed-methods approaches, often involving limited sample sizes and focused on older adolescents or university students (Deverensky et al., 2010; Bouguetaya et al., 2020; Labrador et al., 2021). Further studies by Riley et al., (2021) highlight the limited number of studies originating from countries like Ghana, and where present, these studies seldom focus on basic school students aged 12 to 18. In fact, the majority of past research emphasizes secondary and tertiary-level students, neglecting the unique vulnerabilities of younger students in basic education.

Badu et al., (2023) states that studies on gambling is still in its early stages with most of the studies focusing on individual determinants and limited attention to regional variations in gambling exposure and impacts in communities such as James town in Accra. This area, characterized by poverty and unemployment, may present gambling as a false promise of quick financial relief. Basic school students in such

communities, who are still-developing cognitive abilities and susceptible to peer influence, are especially vulnerable to the glamorized portrayals of gambling in advertisements (Pitt et al., 2017). Despite these concerns, there are limited qualitative studies exploring how these advertisements influence the social and academic performance of these young students (Avenyo et al., 2024). This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating how gambling advertisements shape the attitudes, behaviors, and academic performance of basic school students in Jamestown.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

1. To examine the level of exposure of gambling advertisements among basic school students in James Town.
2. To examine how gambling advertisements inform students' attitudes and behaviours.
3. To assess how gambling advertisements shape the academic performance and social relationships of basic school students.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The study sought to answer the following questions

1. What is the level of exposure to gambling advertisements among basic schools students in James town?
2. How does gambling advertisements influence students' attitudes and behaviours?
3. How does gambling advertisements shape the academic performance and social relationships of basic school students in James town?

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The study is significant because it addresses a crucial but underexplored area of social influence, the impact of gambling advertisements on young students. The findings will provide empirical data that can be used to inform educators, parents, and policymakers about the potential risks associated with the exposure of young students to gambling advertisements. By identifying how these advertisements shape attitudes and behaviors, this research can lead to the development of targeted interventions aimed at protecting students from the adverse effects of gambling. Furthermore, the study will contribute to policy discussions around the regulation of gambling advertisements in Ghana, particularly in areas like James Town, where young people are at higher risk due to socioeconomic challenges.

### **1.5.1 Delimitation**

This research will be conducted within James Town, focusing on basic school students aged 12 to 16. The study examined their exposure to gambling advertisements and assessed the social, academic, and behavioral impacts of these advertisements. The scope is limited to gambling advertisements, and other forms of advertising was not be explored. Also, the study did not investigate the adult population or other potential influences on students' gambling behaviors. Data collection involved interviews conducted at a selected school in James Town.

## **1.6 Organization of the Study**

Chapter one provides an introduction of the study while Chapter two also discusses the work others have done on gambling advertisements. Chapter three discusses research methods used for data collection and data analysis. Chapter four looks at

analysis of the data and discusses the results while chapter five further discusses the conclusions and makes recommendations for future studies.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

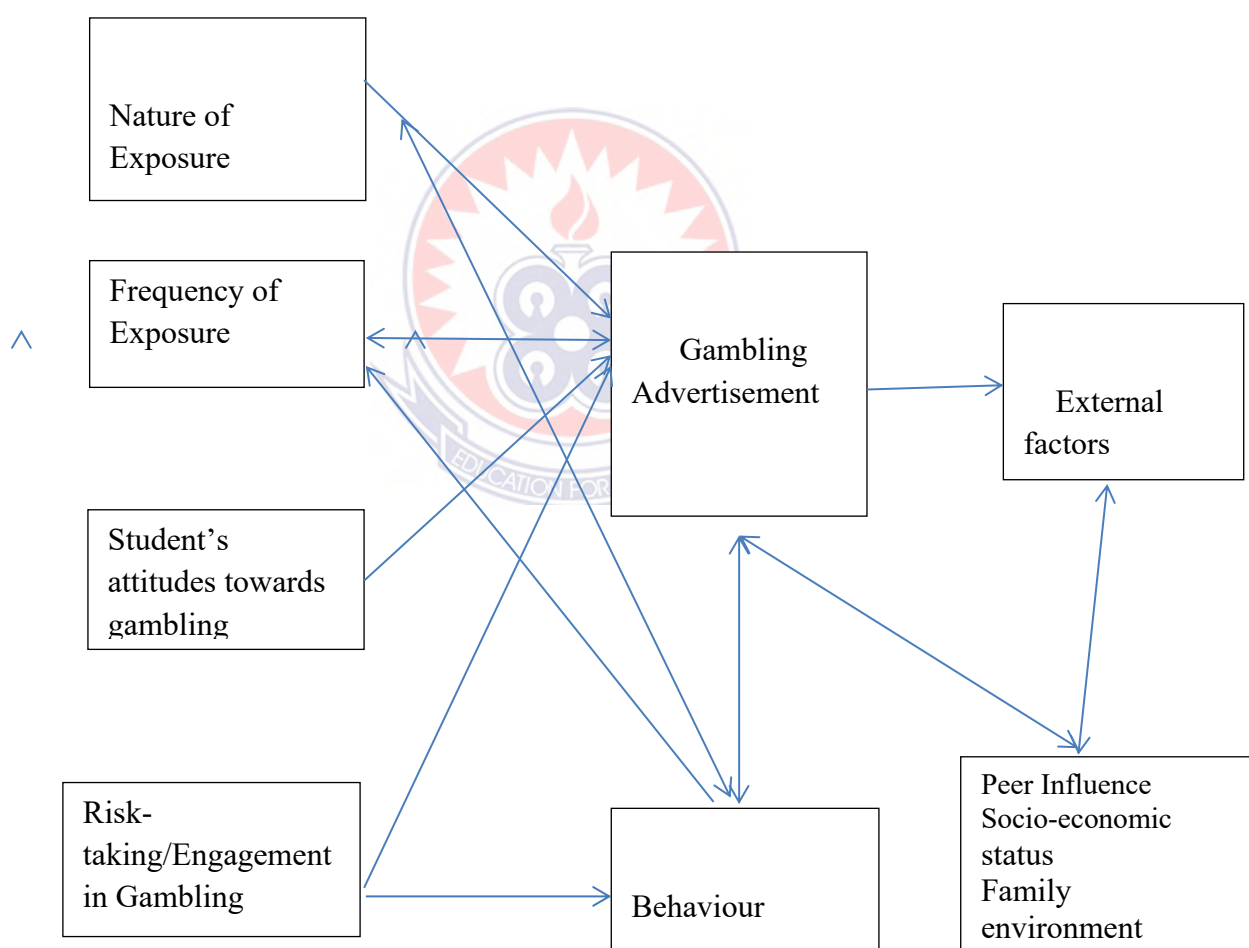
#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses how basic school students between the ages of 12 -16 years are influenced by gambling advertisements in both social and academic life. The study further expands the concept of gambling and examines how repeated exposure to gambling advertisements can shape students' attitudes toward gambling; it further draws on theoretical, conceptual and empirical framework for the foundation of the study. This chapter further delves into how gambling advertisements can significantly influence children's attitudes and perceptions, the online gambling industry in Ghana, the impacts of gambling on educational outcomes in Ghana as well as the role of family and Parental Guidance.

#### 2.1 Conceptual Framework

The study focuses on the relationship between exposure of gambling advertisements and its influence on students' social and academic lives. Key variables include the frequency and nature of exposure to gambling advertisements, students' attitudes toward gambling, and the resultant behaviors such as risk-taking or engagement in gambling. The framework also considers external factors such as socio-economic status, peer influence, and family environment, which may moderate the relationship between exposure and behavior. For example, students from low-income households may be more likely to see gambling as one of the fastest means through which they can gain financial freedom thus increasing the negative impact of gambling advertisements (Derevensky et al., 2010).

The conceptual model proposes that repeated exposure to gambling advertisements can lead to the normalization of gambling, promoting attitudes that may translate into actual gambling behaviours. This process is mediated by students' susceptibility to peer influence, their cognitive development stage, and the environment they live. The framework also recognizes the potential long-term effects on academic performance and social relationships with students who engage in gambling at an early age possibly facing negative consequences in their education and interpersonal interactions (Pitt et al., 2017).



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on Gambling Advertisement**

Source: Authors construct 2025

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

The increasing presence of gambling advertisements across various media platforms has raised serious concerns about their influence, particularly on younger audiences such as basic school students (Rossi & Naim, 2022). Studies have shown that gambling advertisements often glamorize the activity, portraying it as a source of entertainment, wealth, and success while downplaying the associated risks of addiction, financial loss, and social harm (Derevensky et al., 2010; Abarbanel et al., 2017). The research explores how gambling advertisements influences young children with a focus on basic school students in James Town.

### **2.3.1 History of Gambling**

The history of gambling started many years ago with evidence of games of chance recorded in the oldest civilization era. China was the first country gambling is said to have been recorded in history, where games of chance were played as far back as 3000 BCE (David, 2013). Similarly, in ancient Egypt, around 2000 BCE, games of chance and betting were popular among the nobility (Mark, 2017). In ancient Greece and Rome, gambling was also widespread, with games like dice and cards being popular among the population (Brenner & Brenner, 1990).

During the Middle Ages, gambling continued to evolve, with games like chess and backgammon becoming popular (Eadington, 1999). However, with the rise of Christianity, gambling was increasingly viewed as a sinful activity, leading to its prohibition in many European countries (Herman, 2013).

During the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, gambling experienced resurgence, with the establishment of casinos and lotteries (Ashton, 1998). The

introduction of new games like roulette and blackjack also contributed to the growth of the gaming industry (Schwartz, 2013).

In the modern era, gambling has continued to evolve, with the rise of online gaming and sports betting (Gainsbury, 2012). The emergence of new forms of technologies has resulted in the development of games including e-sports (Kim, 2019).

The history of gambling is a long and complex one, spanning thousands of years and numerous civilizations. From ancient games of chance to modern online gaming, gambling has evolved significantly over time, reflecting changing societal attitudes and technological advancements.

### **2.3.2 Gambling in Ghana**

The history of gambling in Ghana dates back several decades (Azu, 2017). The country has a long history of traditional games of chance, but modern gambling started gaining popularity around the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Boafo, 2015). In 1958, the Department of National Lotteries introduced lottery, which was initially used as a means of generating revenue for the government. Two years later, the Lotto and Betting Act was enacted, allowing lotteries to operate legally in the country.

In the 1970s, the National Lotto Act (722) was passed, establishing the National Lottery Commission and providing a framework for the regulation of lotteries (Ayeetey, 2004). The industry continued to grow, with the introduction of sports betting in 2006. This move was seen as a way to boost economic growth and create jobs.

Currently, gambling industry is booming with the establishment of various casinos and sports betting centres and online betting digital platforms. Studies show that

revenue generated from gambling and related activities such as sports betting is estimated at about USD 27million in 2024. Ghana places fifth recording the highest gambling market in terms of online in Africa (Statista, 2023). The industry is regulated by the Ghana Gaming Commission, which is responsible for licensing and overseeing the activities of gaming operators (Gaming Commission, 2020). Despite the growth of the industry, many have complained about the social influence of gambling recently in Ghana. A lot of youths are becoming increasingly addicted to sports betting, leading to financial and social problems. There are also concerns about the lack of effective regulation and the need for stricter laws to protect vulnerable individuals. Advertising has become the vehicle for perpetuating this phenomenon as it continues to increase. The increase in recent times has drawn many people to discuss its impact on the youth especially among stakeholders in the sector. Gambling can have effects on individuals which can ultimately affect others and people in society (Wadle et al., 2024; Langham et al., 2016). The effect may recur after an individual has stopped gambling referred to as 'legacy harms' (waddle et al., 2024).

### **2.3.3 The Online Gambling Industry**

Gambling, particularly in the form of sports betting has experienced a marked expansion in Ghana over the past decade (Toklo, 2024). This growth is attributed to the increasing penetration of internet services and mobile technology (Ghana Statistical Service, 2020) along with aggressive and highly visible marketing strategies across various media platforms. Advertising has emerged as a pivotal factor in both normalizing and proliferating gambling behaviors across a wide demographic, notably among the youth (Di Censo et al., 2024). The online gambling industry, also referred to as Gaming, has undergone rapid expansion, fueled by widespread internet access, the ubiquity of mobile technology, and evolving consumer behaviors. Europe

illustrates this trend clearly: in 2022, the continental gross gaming revenue reached €108.5 billion, with €38.2 billion (35%) derived from online gambling, reflecting its growing dominance over traditional gambling modalities (European Gaming and Betting Association, 2023).

Online platforms offer unique advantages over land-based gambling, including ease of access, anonymity, and convenience. These features are especially appealing to digitally native demographics. UK studies note that younger adults particularly university students are inclined toward online platforms, influenced by seamless interfaces, multiple payment options, and aggressive digital marketing (Kanne et al., 2002; James et al., 2017).

Technological sophistication extends to machine learning applications in the industry: bookmakers utilize neural networks, support vector machines, and random forests to dynamically adjust odds, optimize risk management, and detect fraud (Galekwa et al., 2024).

Online gambling marketing employs diversified strategies ranging from sponsorships and inducement-based advertising to targeted push notifications and affiliate marketing. These create pervasive visibility and can subtly encourage both frequent and novice gamblers (Bunn et al., 2024). Indeed, inducements such as “free bets” or early payouts can reinforce gambling behavior, especially in higher-risk populations (Hing et al., 2014; Deans et al., 2017).

A broader review of gambling marketing noted that highly targeted content particularly in sports-related contexts correlates with riskier gambling behavior, especially among vulnerable groups (Current Addiction Reports, 2019).

Advertising not only increases exposure but also shapes attitudes and intentions. Youth and problematic gamblers report stronger susceptibility to advertising campaigns, suggesting marketing may aggravate gambling symptoms (Tessier et al., 2021). Online gamblers also frequently cite coping, financial gain, and leisure as key motivators reflecting how digital gaming environments overlap with gambling rationale (Dowling et al., 2015; Goldstein et al., 2016; Gainsbury et al., 2015). Moreover, the anonymity and convenience of online platforms can heighten risk, particularly for individuals predisposed to problematic gambling (McCormack et al., 2013; Hubert & Griffiths, 2018). The online gambling industry is both a lucrative economic domain and a nexus of social and regulatory challenges. In Ghana, market expansion is catalyzed by mobile penetration, favorable regulation, and evolving consumer behaviors. Globally, technological innovation continues to redefine industry models through AI and personalized services. Yet, rising concerns over addiction, underage exposure, and economic diversion underscore the urgent need for robust, adaptive regulation that fosters growth while protecting public welfare (Ghana's gambling market is booming, 2025).

#### **2.3.4 Online Gambling Industry in Ghana**

In recent years, Ghana has experienced a remarkable surge in online gambling activities, encompassing sports betting, online casinos, and remote gaming (Assan, 2024). The Gaming Commission of Ghana reports the existence of 12 licensed online casinos alongside numerous digital sports betting operators, confirming the industry's rapid expansion (Assan, 2024). A 2023 TGM Research survey found that 41.7% of Ghanaians engaged in sports betting over the preceding year, placing Ghana among the top four African nations in betting participation (Assan, 2024).

The proliferation of smartphones, coupled with improved internet accessibility, has underpinned the widespread uptake of online gambling. According to Ghana Business News, about 70% of all sports bets are now placed via mobile devices using mobile money platforms such as MTN Mobile Money and Vodafone Cash lowering the barrier to entry for younger and rural populations (Ghana Business News, 2025). Internet penetration of approximately 57% in 2020 laid the digital foundation for market growth (Ghana Business News, 2024). Ghana's cultural affinity for football drives betting demand (Adu, 2018).

The online gambling industry contributes significantly to state coffers through licensing and taxation. Operators are subject to licensing fees (e.g., \$120,000 annually per sports betting company and \$80,000 for online casino operators), a 20% tax on gross profits, and a 10% withholding tax on winnings collectively generating substantial national revenue (Assan, 2024).

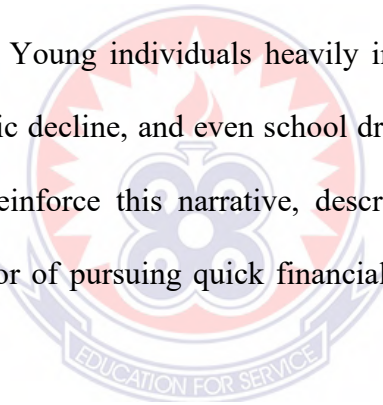
The sector supports diverse employment opportunities, with an estimated 10,000+ jobs created directly and indirectly. From customer support roles to software development and marketing, the industry fosters significant economic activity.

The Gaming Act 2006 (Act 721) mandates licensing of all gambling operators and tasked the Gaming Commission of Ghana with regulating fair operations, ensuring transparency, and protecting youth (Ghana News Agency, 2024). Rigorous vetting processes such as background checks and minimum capital requirements are enforced for online casino operators.

Newall and Swanton (2024) in a study postulates that to mitigate social harms, regulators require features such as self-exclusion tools, deposit limits, and age

verification systems. Underage access is strictly prohibited, and operators must comply with responsible gambling standards to sustain licensing (Deverensky & Gilbeau, 2019). In response to rapid industry growth, Ghanaian authorities have updated regulation to strengthen compliance introducing enhanced identity verification, stricter licensing conditions, and consumer safeguards that reassure both bettors and investors (Yidana & Nkansah, 2024).

Despite regulatory safeguards, youth exposure to online gambling remains a concern. Baraka Policy Institute data shows that 40.6% of bettors were under age 18, despite clear legal prohibitions (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019). The pervasive nature of advertising and the cultural glamorization of betting contribute to these alarming trends (Raymen, 2019). Young individuals heavily involved in online betting often exhibit truancy, academic decline, and even school dropouts (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019). Media reports reinforce this narrative, describing how thousands of youth forego education in favor of pursuing quick financial gains via gambling (Packin et al., 2024).



While the industry contributes tax revenue, a notable proportion of profits is repatriated offshore, limiting local reinvestment. This financial outflow, along with the diversion of household income from essential needs to betting, has macroeconomic implications, including weakening of the cedi (Assan, 2024). Online platforms are increasingly pairing digital services with physical touch points (Hallikainen et al., 2019). The online gambling industry in Ghana is a complex and dynamic sector, offering economic benefits and technological innovation while posing social challenges, especially to youth and educational systems. Balancing growth with public health and ethical governance necessitates continuous enhancements in

regulation, targeted youth protection strategies, public awareness campaigns, and economic policies that channel profits back into community development (Ghana's gambling market is booming, 2025).

According to Badu et al., (2025), a key consequence of pervasive gambling advertising is the gradual erosion of foundational educational values such as perseverance, delayed gratification, and merit-based success. Commercial messaging that equates gambling with shortcuts to wealth subtly undermines traditional value systems within educational contexts. In Ghana, repeated exposure to slogans like "Bet now, win today" or depictions of winners enjoying luxury lifestyles reframes success as something achievable through chance rather than sustained effort (Griffiths, 2010; Badu et al., 2025).

Mandahu (2025) in a study on Education and social mobility revealed that in many schools, especially those in under-resourced areas, academic success is seen as the primary vehicle for upward social mobility. Gambling advertising, however, offers compelling alternative narratives: that success can come through minimal effort with potentially high returns (Rossi et al., 2021). This narrative is amplified by visible "success stories" in media and community discourse, which distract from the long-term merits of education. As a result, children in these basic schools may become increasingly disenchanted with traditional academic pursuits seeing them as slow, uncertain, and disconnected from the lifestyle promises offered by gambling adverts (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019).

Within the peer ecosystem of Ghanaian basic schools, the value accorded to certain behaviors also shifts in response to advertising messaging (Adopter & Dadzie, 2025). Students applauded for academic excellence may begin to lose peer recognition, while

peers who demonstrate perceived betting acumen such as correctly predicting match outcomes or mimicking gambling behaviors may gain social status (Adarkwah & Osei, 2021).

Over time, the internalization of alternative success narratives can foster psychological disengagement from academic tasks. Nigerian and Ghanaian adolescents exposed to gambling messaging have shown tendencies toward cognitive restructuring, where they reframe academic effort as unlikely to yield equivalent rewards to betting (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022). Pupils begin to doubt the effectiveness of effort-based strategies, such as study and practice, while overemphasizing luck and impulse a shift that leads to lower academic motivation, reduced concentration, and poor performance.

When educational values are undermined in formative years, the long-term consequences are significant. Ghanaian youth already face high unemployment and limited formal opportunities so choosing gambling over education can carry corrosive consequences on life trajectories. The early erosion of educational values increases the risk of truancy, school dropout, vulnerability to exploitation, and entrenchment in cycles of economic instability. Moreover, public health studies in Ghana confirm links between youth gambling and adverse outcomes financial distress, family conflict, poor mental health, and diminished academic future (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022; Public Health Commission Ghana, 2025).

The concept of educational displacement refers to the redirection of students' time, attention, and emotional investment away from learning and academic development toward non-educational pursuits in this case, gambling-related activities. In Ghana, the proliferation of gambling advertisements is increasingly linked to such

displacement, particularly among basic school pupils who are highly impressionable and vulnerable to external influences (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019).

Research has shown that children in school-age categories are particularly susceptible to distraction, especially when competing stimuli provide higher immediate emotional gratification than classroom activities (Steinberg, 2008). Gambling advertisements strategically designed with flashy visuals, upbeat music, and charismatic endorsements command young people's attention far more effectively than traditional educational messages. As a result, pupils may become preoccupied with betting-related content, both during and after school hours (Badu et al., 2025).

One direct manifestation of this displacement is seen in time allocation. Pupils who are influenced by gambling content may prioritize time discussing betting odds, monitoring match results, or engaging in informal betting over completing homework, participating in school activities, or studying for exams. For example, it is not uncommon for pupils especially boys between the ages of 11 and 15 to engage in discussions about potential betting outcomes during class breaks or even sneak out of class to visit nearby kiosks or check scores on mobile phones (Adarkwah & Osei, 2021). This reflects a growing trend where students' intellectual engagement with education is gradually substituted with interest in gambling mechanics and short-term rewards.

Furthermore, the normalization of gambling behavior through advertisements leads some pupils to believe that academic success is neither the only nor the most efficient route to financial security. This belief has been reinforced by highly visible winners in communities who attribute their economic gains to betting rather than education or employment. The cumulative effect is a declining interest in long-term academic

goals, particularly among students from economically marginalized households where education is already devalued due to systemic failures or limited access to quality schooling (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019).

The shift in focus also has implications for school attendance. Some teachers and education officers in urban areas such as Madina, Nima, and Cape Coast have reported increased cases of absenteeism and tardiness among students who frequent betting centers before or after school (Assan, 2024). Additionally, students distracted by gambling outcomes may suffer from poor classroom participation, incomplete assignments, and a general decline in cognitive performance due to divided attention. More importantly, the internalization of betting logic where outcomes are attributed to external luck rather than internal effort may erode students' academic resilience (Nelson, 2018). Pupils who begin to think like gamblers may give up easily on difficult academic tasks, preferring activities with a quick payoff.

In contexts where educational institutions lack sufficient support systems (e.g., guidance counselors, extracurricular clubs, or psychological services), the displacement effect of gambling advertising becomes even more pronounced. Without counter-narratives or structured interventions, pupils continue to be influenced by the highly persuasive and emotionally rewarding appeals of gambling ads, resulting in long-term disengagement from education (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022).

In conclusion, the unchecked spread of gambling advertisements is contributing to an alarming form of educational displacement among Ghana's school-age population. If the trend continues without targeted regulatory, school-based, and parental interventions, the educational aspirations of a significant portion of the youth may be

compromised undermining national efforts to build a skilled, educated workforce (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019).

The influence of advertising on shaping individual aspirations and identity development is well-established in communication and media studies literature (Happonen et al., 2022). In the Ghanaian context, gambling advertisements increasingly serve as more than just promotional tools; they act as vehicles for lifestyle reframing where the youth, especially basic school pupils, begin to reconfigure their values, aspirations, and perceptions of success based on the idealized images presented in such adverts.

These advertisements are strategically crafted to present gambling particularly sports betting as a culturally acceptable, fast-track Avenue to wealth and prestige. Promotions frequently feature visuals of jubilant winners, cash prizes, luxury vehicles, and celebratory atmospheres that appeal directly to youth aspirations (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019). Phrases like "Small stake, big win," *or* "Change your life with one bet", encourage the notion that life transformation is just one lucky gamble away. For children and adolescents in low-income communities where educational or employment prospects seem distant, such portrayals become compelling blueprints for success.

This lifestyle reframing is not occurring in isolation. It interacts with existing socio-economic pressures such as high youth unemployment, poor infrastructure, and the perceived inadequacy of the formal education system (Adusei, 2022). Moreover, the media's repetitive portrayal of gambling as fun, socially acceptable, and rewarding embeds such activities into the fabric of everyday youth culture (Ababarnel, 2017). This is particularly problematic because these messages are unbalanced they often

emphasize the potential for winning without acknowledging the high probability of loss or the psychological risks involved (Weng & Chang, 2022). Children, lacking the cognitive maturity to assess these risks critically, are prone to internalizing the messages at face value.

Importantly, the accessibility of these messages across media platforms further amplifies their impact. Billboards in urban centers like Accra, Kumasi, and Takoradi are ubiquitous, while digital platforms including Facebook, TikTok and sports betting apps provide 24/7 exposure to gambling content (Assan, 2024). This saturation of gambling culture in children's everyday environments accelerates their emotional and psychological attachment to the idea that betting is not merely a game but a legitimate, even necessary, life strategy.

In sum, gambling advertisements in Ghana are effectively reframing how basic school pupils conceptualize adulthood, success, and personal worth. Rather than fostering values of discipline, education, and delayed gratification, the new narrative fueled by persistent media exposure champions risk, chance, and immediacy. If left unchecked, this lifestyle reframing threatens to undermine both the moral and educational development of young people in Ghana (Badu et al., 2024). Beyond behavioral and academic effects, gambling advertisements exert subtle but profound emotional and psychological impacts on basic school pupils in Ghana (Amos et al., 2025). While such advertising is often framed as harmless entertainment, it employs persuasive psychological tactics that can stimulate emotional responses ranging from excitement and hope to anxiety, disappointment, and even despair (Griffiths, 2010).

Young people are neurologically predisposed to seek reward and excitement, often without the cognitive maturity to assess long-term risks (Steinberg, 2008). Gambling

advertisements exploit this vulnerability by using bright visuals, dramatic music, celebratory winners, and compelling language like “Get rich now!” or “Jackpot just one click away.” These messages create a psychological state of anticipation and arousal, drawing children into a mental space where gambling is not just appealing but emotionally gratifying.

Among pupils in basic schools, especially those aged between 10 and 14, the result is often fantasy-based identification where they imagine themselves as winners, visualize what they would do with large sums of money, or mimic behaviors seen in the advertisements (Pitt et al., 2017). These fantasies, though seemingly harmless, begin to shape children's worldviews and expectations, which may be misaligned with the reality of effort-based achievement. The emotional volatility induced by gambling ads also has consequences when expectations are not met. For instance, when pupils lose small informal bets or find they cannot engage in betting due to age restrictions or lack of money, they may experience frustration, sadness, or feelings of exclusion. These reactions can compound pre-existing emotional challenges particularly in children facing difficult home lives or poverty. Over time, repeated emotional highs and lows associated with gambling engagement can result in desensitization, mood swings, or even addictive tendencies (Molinaro et al., 2018).

Additionally, gambling advertising contributes to distorted cognitive frameworks, where luck is perceived as more important than effort. This distortion can erode children's motivation to persist in difficult academic tasks, fostering a mindset of helplessness when immediate success is not achieved. Students may begin to believe that success is arbitrary and externally determined, rather than earned through persistence and discipline (King & Delfabbro, 2014).

For pupils who are more emotionally sensitive or lack strong social support, the psychological impact can be particularly damaging. The excitement generated by advertisements may lead to heightened impulsivity, causing children to take risks with money, lie to adults, or engage in secretive behaviors. In communities where informal access to betting kiosks or older siblings exists, these children may begin engaging in real-money gambling without parental knowledge placing them at greater risk of psychological harm (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022).

In the long term, this pattern of emotional stimulation and disappointment may contribute to the development of problematic gambling behaviors in adolescence or adulthood (Mitchell, 2025). A study by Julius (2025) also revealed that early exposure to gambling advertisements increases the risk of addiction and poor mental health outcomes in later life (Williams et al., 2012). To mitigate these risks, it is critical to implement early interventions in schools, including emotional literacy programs, media analysis skills, and psychosocial support services.

One of the most concerning effects of gambling advertisements on basic school pupils is the displacement of time and attention away from academic responsibilities. This phenomenon, termed educational displacement, refers to the reallocation of cognitive, emotional, and temporal resources from school-related tasks to non-educational engagements such as sports betting, gambling-related discussions, or following game outcomes. Among Ghanaian schoolchildren, this displacement is exacerbated by the constant visibility and appeal of gambling content, both online and offline (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019).

With the expansion of mobile phone usage and increased access to internet services in Ghana, pupils are now more frequently exposed to real-time betting ads on platforms

such as Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp (Assan, 2024). These platforms not only deliver ads but also provide updates on match results, betting tips, and winning odds thereby encouraging children to track games during school hours (Assan, 2024). For many pupils, particularly boys aged 10–15, this becomes a habitual routine that competes directly with academic schedules. Some students reportedly sneak smartphones into class to check live scores or discuss odds during break periods (Adarkwah & Osei, 2021).

Moreover, time that would traditionally be allocated to homework, reading, or after-school tutorials is increasingly consumed by gambling-related content. Children may spend hours analyzing fixtures, talking with peers about upcoming games, or even watching promotional videos about betting success stories. These patterns of behavior contribute to chronic distraction and reduced academic productivity, a challenge that many teachers across basic schools in Ghana are beginning to report anecdotally (Acheampong et al., 2022).

According to Becker's (1993) theory of human capital, time spent away from educational investment reduces future potential returns in productivity and income. For basic school pupils, the opportunity cost of gambling involvement includes not only lower academic achievement but also missed foundational learning opportunities, which are critical for later cognitive development (Latvala et al., 2022). In communities where educational outcomes are already poor due to under-resourced schools and overpopulated classrooms, the additional burden of gambling-related distractions creates a compounded disadvantage. For instance, students in schools in parts of Ashaiman, Madina, and Tamale Zongo have reported lower academic

performance due to irregular attendance and poor concentration behaviors linked in part to gambling engagement (Badu et al., 2025).

Furthermore, there is a hidden curriculum being shaped by these influences. Pupils increasingly come to value sporting knowledge and betting accuracy over scholastic excellence. Students who can predict scores or identify betting “strategies” are sometimes admired more than those who excel academically thus reshaping the peer-based reward system within the school environment (Acheampong et al., 2022).

The long-term implications of this shift are troubling. As educational engagement wanes, so too does the potential for social mobility and economic stability. In a country where the youth demographic is large and growing, educational displacement caused by gambling advertisement may result in a generation of students disengaged from formal education, with limited options for professional development (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019).

Behavioral modeling refers to the psychological process by which individuals, particularly children, learn and adopt behaviors by observing others, especially when those behaviors are perceived as rewarding (Bandura, 1986). In the context of gambling advertisements in Ghana, children attending basic schools are not merely passive consumers of promotional content they are active observers who mimic the gambling behaviors they see in their immediate environment and in the media (Badu et al., 2021).

Torrance et al., (2021) in a study titled ‘emergent gambling advertising’ revealed that Gambling advertisements often depict betting as easy, fun, and rewarding. These portrayals can lead to imitation among youth who seek to emulate what they see on

television, billboards, or in digital platforms. Oduor (2024) also explains that when a betting commercial shows a young man celebrating a big win with friends, driving a new car, or receiving praise, the advertisement is implicitly suggesting a desirable behavioral script one that children may try to replicate. According to Pitt et al., (2017), even when children are not legally permitted to gamble, they often adopt related behaviors such as talking about odds, following sports results with unusual interest, or pretending to bet using fake or borrowed money.

In Ghana, this modeling behavior is not limited to media representations. Peers, older siblings, and even parents who actively engage in sports betting serve as real-life models (Genaro, 2021). In some basic schools, it is common for students to discuss betting outcomes, imitate bet slip analysis, or attempt to use mobile phones to access gambling sites, despite age restrictions (Helfrich, 2025). These behaviors are often reinforced by peer admiration or status within social groups, especially when students predict game outcomes accurately or claim to have "won" small bets (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019).

Moreover, behavioral modeling can escalate over time, moving from harmless mimicry to actual gambling behaviors, particularly among children with access to smartphones, mobile money accounts, or older friends willing to place bets on their behalf. Studies from similar African contexts reveal that even when children do not place real bets, the psychological act of simulating betting reinforces gambling ideation and normalizes risk-taking (Molinaro et al., 2018).

The absence of media literacy education in most Ghanaian basic schools leaves children ill-equipped to deconstruct or critique gambling advertisements. They are more likely to accept the representations as factual rather than fictionalized

promotions. This opens the door to long-term cognitive distortions where luck is equated with intelligence or success, and calculated risk is misinterpreted as bravery or cleverness (Cunliffe-Jones et al., 2020).

In addition, behavioral modeling related to gambling can interfere with classroom behavior. Teachers have reported instances where students are distracted by sports fixtures, debate odds during recess, or sneak away during school hours to access betting centers (Assan, 2024). These behaviors, though often dismissed as minor, represent deeper shifts in identity formation where gambling is embedded into children's daily routines.

In sum, gambling advertisements in Ghana contribute significantly to the behavioral modeling and imitation cycle among school-aged children. These behaviors are reinforced by media, community influences, and peer culture posing a critical challenge to educators, policymakers, and caregivers concerned with the holistic development of the nation's youth.

In socioeconomically disadvantaged communities in Ghana, such as parts of Jamestown in Accra or Zongo neighborhoods in Tamale, children often grow up witnessing economic hardship, limited access to quality education, and few visible pathways to success. In these settings, gambling advertisements particularly those promoting sports betting can create and amplify aspirational shifts, presenting gambling as an accessible and effective way to overcome poverty. As argued by Miller et al., (2020), children who are repeatedly exposed to imagery associating betting with luxury lifestyles (e.g., flashy cars, celebratory cash winnings, and international travel) may begin to internalize these representations as achievable life outcomes.

The emotional appeal of such advertisements is particularly potent among children in basic schools who have not yet developed the critical thinking skills necessary to understand the low probabilities of winning or the risks involved. For instance, slogans like "Stake small, win big" or "Your millions await" not only oversimplify the gambling process but distort children's perception of wealth accumulation (Griffiths, 2010). Rather than associating wealth with education, discipline, or skill, some pupils begin to associate success with luck, risk-taking, and chance.

This phenomenon is compounded by the visibility of youth role models or even local community members who appear to benefit from gambling. A qualitative study by Adarkwah and Osei (2021) found that in Accra, some children aspired to become betting agents or "gambling entrepreneurs" because they saw others making quick money from the practice, even if inconsistently. These aspirational distortions are a direct response to the pervasive and persuasive marketing tactics employed by betting companies, especially on platforms like social media, which are heavily used by young people.

The problem is exacerbated in schools lacking adequate career guidance, mentorship programs, or extracurricular activities. In the absence of structured environments that promote long-term goal setting, students may increasingly rely on short-term gratification models promoted by gambling ads. This not only alters their career aspirations but may also result in behavioral consequences, such as reduced engagement in classroom learning, diminished interest in academic achievement, or even absenteeism to follow sports betting results (Adu-Akoh et al., 2022).

Furthermore, as Badu et al., (2025) assert, aspirational shifts caused by gambling advertisements can weaken the traditional socialization processes whereby elders,

teachers, and religious figures instill values of patience, hard work, and ethical living. The media becomes a competing force in value transmission one that often rewards impulsivity and promises wealth without labor. This reframing of aspirations can deeply affect children's psychological development, self-concept, and sense of purpose.

In summary, in vulnerable Ghanaian communities where poverty is widespread and legitimate opportunities are scarce, gambling advertisements do more than promote a product they reshape aspirations, reframe social mobility, and threaten the developmental trajectory of young children (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022).

#### **2.4 Gambling Advertisements**

Gambling advertisements have become increasingly prevalent in Ghana, with the rise of online gaming and sports betting (Toklo, 2024). Gambling advertisement is pervasive in Ghana and expected to escalate as operators pursue new markets for profit growth (Badu et al., 2025). Permissive attitudes toward gambling advertising have led to its widespread presence, impacting young and vulnerable populations (Badu et al., 2025).

The Ghanaian gaming industry has experienced significant growth in recent years, with the introduction of new games and betting platforms (Tagoe et al., 2018). This growth has been accompanied by an increase in gambling advertisements, with many companies using social media and other platforms to promote their products (Lopez-Gonzalez & Estevez, 2017). According to a study published in the *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, the prevalence of problem gambling in Ghana is estimated to be around 2.3% (Avenyo et al., 2024).

Research shows that being exposed to gambling advertisements can increase the likelihood of developing problem gambling behaviors in vulnerable people (Syvertsen et al., 2022; Critchlow et al., 2019). Other studies have also found that adolescents in Ghana who are exposed to gambling advertisements are more likely to engage in gambling and be negatively impacted by gambling and its associated activities (Glozah et al., 2021; Tagoe et al., 2021; Odame et al., 2021). The negative influence of advertisement on gambling is of concern to many as problem gamblers are more likely to experience mental health problems, including depression and anxiety (Oksanen et al., 2018).

The regulation of gambling advertisements in Ghana is currently inadequate, with many companies using loopholes to promote their products (Sichali et al., 2023). The Ghana Gaming Commission has established guidelines for the advertising of gaming products, but more needs to be done to protect vulnerable individuals (Osei, 2018). A study published in the *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing* found that stricter regulations on gambling advertisements can reduce the likelihood of problem gambling among vulnerable individuals (Gaming Commission, 2020). The impact of gambling advertisements on Ghanaian society is of significant concern.

The rise of online gaming and sports betting has led to an increase in gambling advertisements, which can contribute to problem gambling among vulnerable individuals. Gambling is frequently promoted to young people, at least once a week, through multiple channels that surround them in their daily lives, from home and school to social media and online spaces (Wadle, 2019). These promotions are carried out through various channels, including TV, social media, online ads, gambling

websites and apps, billboards, and other public spaces (Torrance et al., 2021; Abarbenel et al., 2017).

According to McMullan et al., (2012), gambling promotions often focus on three main themes: the potential to win money, portraying gambling as a normal part of daily life, and offering entertainment value. The goal of gambling advertising is to portray betting as a normal leisure pursuit, highlighting the possibility of significant, life-altering profits (Shalin, 2016). These ads promise economic gains, a boosts in social status offering access to a more luxurious world (Sklar & Derevensky, 2010). To normalize gambling, ads often blend it into mainstream social settings, presenting it alongside news, events, and other non-gambling content (Gainsbury et al., 2016). Ads depict gambling as a form of entertainment that fosters social connections, friendship, and togetherness (Deans et al., 2016). Gambling is presented as a socially accepted activity, stripped of financial risks, and viewed as a legitimate way to socialize (Pitt et al., 2016). Gambling is legitimized by linking it to culturally significant events like sports, creating a connection between team loyalties and betting. The normalization of gambling ads seems effective, as factors that typically lead to rejection of tobacco or alcohol ads don't have the same impact on gambling ads (Fried et al., 2010).

Notably, the most salient messages are those that emphasize gambling as a means to acquire substantial prizes, suggesting that the promise of significant rewards resonates strongly with individuals (Gainsbury et al., 2016). Gambling advertisements often perpetuate the concept of "easy money" by highlighting high winning possibilities and using inclusive messaging, to create the impression that it is possible for anybody to win (Piraneo, 2024). The analysis reveals that betting is constructed as a form of

entertainment that evokes a lifestyle devoid of worry and effort, contrasting with the demands of studying or working. The association between gambling and the "winning spirit" is reinforced through a range of semiotic markers, including words, signs, and myths (Raymen & Smith, 2020). The advertising discourse surrounding gambling is seldom counterbalanced by meaningful information about its negative outcomes, highlighting a significant gap in the presentation of risks and benefits (Torrance, 2023). Research suggests that responsible gambling messaging, although prevalent on most gambling operators' websites, is often ineffective due to its lack of visibility and perceived authenticity, and does not resonate with users (Abarbanel et al., 2017; Hing et al., 2017; McMullan Miller, 2010). Since the main target of this kind of advertising is a young man (Kim et al., 2013). Gambling advertising frequently employs strategies that promote a sense of urgency and control among players, offering advice and recommendations to bet more judiciously, which can paradoxically intensify their engagement with gambling (Deans et al., 2017).

The advice provided in these recommendations often favours complex betting options, which can impede gamblers' ability to accurately assess their chances of winning, thereby distorting their perception of risk and reward (Newall et al., 2017). Moreover, the terms and conditions governing promotional offers were often opaque, difficult to locate, and couched in legalistic jargon. Furthermore, some gambling platforms claimed to provide "educational content" or positioned themselves as "betting schools," potentially misrepresenting their purpose (Kim et al., 2013). In essence, the gambling strategies employed impedes a rational approach to gambling, obscuring the true probabilities of winning, thereby undermining gamblers' ability to make informed decisions (Torrance, 2023). Frequent television broadcasts, interactive

online simulations, and strategic partnerships with sports and celebrities further amplify their appeal, ultimately normalizing gambling as an acceptable activity.

McMullan et al., (2012) highlight three themes: winning money, presenting gambling as a normal everyday activity and promise of entertainment. Advertising intends to normalize gambling as a leisure activity, and highlights possible profits which would change the life of the gambler. These could well be economic benefits, change in social status or quality of life, by gaining access to a more glamorous world (Sklar & Derevensky, 2010). To normalize gambling, advertising places it in a wider social context, together with news and events, related or not to gambling (Gainsbury et al., 2016). Thus, gambling appears as a form of entertainment or diversion to share with friends, associating gambling with friendship and social cohesion (Deans et al., 2016), without giving relevance to economical profits or losses. Gambling can be seen as an accepted and legitimate social activity (Pitt et al., 2016), providing it with recognition since it is paired with culturally relevant events such as sports, emphasizing the relation between loyalty to a sports team and betting in its favour. The most perceived messages are those that reference gambling as an activity that brings substantial prices (Gainsbury et al., 2016), highlighting the concept of easy money (high winning possibilities, “it can happen to you”). Furthermore, it can be noted that betting is entertaining, it begins with a lifestyle without worries, which does not require the efforts of studying or working. Gambling is associated, through words, signs, myths and symbols, to the image of “winning spirit”. This publicity is rarely compensated with effective information on the negative consequences of gambling.

The messages of responsible gambling, although present in the majority of gambling companies’ websites, are perceived as inefficient, not very eye-catching and not very

believable. In other areas, such as SM, there are almost no messages of responsible gambling amongst the published content (Abarbanel et al., 2017; Hing et al., 2017). Since the main target of this kind of advertising is a young man (Kim et al., 2013). Additionally, advertising offers strategies and leads to bet “better”, with the intent of increasing the players’ perception of control, a relevant factor in their implication in gambling (Deans et al., 2017). These recommendations are centred in promoting complex bets, instead of simpler ones, in a way that makes it difficult for gamblers to form a realistic opinion on their odds to win (Newall et al., 2017). In other cases, the wording of the terms in which such promotions were funded were obscure, hard to find and written in legalistic language. Some gambling platforms advertise themselves as having “educational contents” or as “betting schools” (Kim et al., 2013).

In summary, strategies that make a rational approach to gambling difficult are employed, in particular making it difficult for gamblers to identify the real odds to win. Ultimately, advertisements that generate a greater impact in A & Y are those that result striking and visually appealing; those that offer free money (bonuses) and give rise to expectations of control over the game, showing it as a test of skills; those that are shown repeatedly in channels such as television; those that offer some kind of simulated online game; and those that appeal to gambling as a normalized activity, associating it with sports, with famous people and with sports idols.

Organic advertising reach is earned through content creativity, relying on a brand's follower count and engagement metrics like shares and retweets, unlike paid ads which guarantee visibility (Rossi & Naim 2022). High-quality content can spread rapidly through shares and virality, reaching new audiences beyond the original target group (Mousavi et al., 2022). It's about crafting engaging narratives that inform,

entertain, and motivate customers to act subtly, without direct instruction. (Kemp et al., 2021). Effective content can take many forms, such as entertaining competitions, relatable memes, adorable animal pics, informative tutorials, or engaging infographics. The key is to create content that resonates with users, puts a smile on their face, and inspires them to share it with others (Southerland, 2024). Content marketing has been booming as key form of organic ads almost since the advent of social media and it is extensively used by gambling brands (Torrance et al., 2021).

A large-scale study into the UK gambling advertising ecosystem on Twitter found that of 888,745 gambling ads over 40% were classified as content marketing making it a major part of gambling brands' advertising strategy (Rossi & Naim, 2021). Effects on Children Whilst most gambling content market effects on Children Whilst most gambling content marketing ads are designed to make the receiver giggle, there are severe concerns over their effect on children. Although gambling content marketing uses a variety of different techniques they tend to have something in common: they seem very inconspicuous, innocent and harmless despite being adverts for a highly addictive product (Critchlow et al., 2019). People may use it as a bait to attract others to get involve in gambling without knowing that that account is a gambling account (Howells, 2016). Gambling advertisers make particularly heavy use of 'insider sentiments' which is the use of an 'in joke' or niche expert information to enhance the feeling of belonging to a special club/group (Rossi & Naim, 2022). The use of this technique by e-sports gambling adverts is particularly worrisome given the young age of e-sports fans (Yuzyk & Seidner, 2022). Adolescence is a crucial phase in the search for activities and attributes which form identity often via the means of consumption (Reyero et al., 2021). Gambling providers use this developmental vulnerability by

designing insider sentiments so that the narratives and stories in many e-sports tweets are almost entirely meaningless for non-gamers (Benden, 2023).

Contemporary data reveal a concerning trend, children and adolescents are frequently exposed to gambling-related content and advertisements. Advertising, in particular, plays a central role in introducing minors to the world of gambling. (Hartmann et al., 2024). Marketing and advertising strategies intend to make gambling products more attractive to consumers and are generally considered a situational factor that can play a part in the development of gambling-related harm (Griffiths, 2005; Browne et al., 2019). Gambling advertising emphasizes specific aspects of gambling including how easy it is to win, how glamorous a gambler's life is, how normal and frequent it is to gamble, and how easy it is to use gambling apps (McMullan & Miller, 2008; Sklar & Derevensky, 2011; Milner & Nuske, 2012; Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2018).

There is also empirical evidence from a qualitative study that interviewed gamblers about the impact they perceive gambling advertisement had on their behaviour. In two of the interviews conducted in Britain and Spain, individuals experiencing gambling problems acknowledged that advertising was a distress problem for them but rarely identified it as the main cause of their gambling problems (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2024).

#### **2.4.1 Children /Adolescents Exposure to Gambling Advertisements**

Empirical studies have consistently found that children and adolescents are exposed to significant amounts of gambling advertisements, which may have profound impacts on their attitudes and behaviors. The youth are currently exposed to an unprecedented level of gambling advertising, with a lot of marketing messages for sports betting and other forms of gambling integrated into their daily lives (Critchlow et al., 2019; Rossi

& Naim, 2022). A study investigating the impact of gambling advertising on children discovered that exposure to these advertisements was widespread and across multiple forms of media (Derevensky et al., 2010; Binde, 2014).

The researchers found that adolescents exposed to gambling advertisements were more likely to express interest in gambling and view it as a fun and socially acceptable activity (Abdi et al., 2015). Moreover, they noted that repeated exposure could lead to desensitization, making children more likely to engage in gambling activities at an earlier age (Hayer et al., 2018). Adolescent exposure to advertising is associated with an increase in the likelihood of engaging in gambling activities (Abdi et al., 2015; Freund et al., 2022; Hayer et al., 2018; Kristiansen and Severin-Nielsen, 2021).

Similarly, a study by Pitt et al., (2017) that examined the exposure of children to televised sports betting advertisements in Australia found that children were frequently exposed to these ads during popular sporting events, which were often family-friendly. The research indicated that many children could recall specific advertisements and their messages, demonstrating that the content was highly memorable. The researchers concluded that such advertisements could shape children's attitudes toward gambling, making it seem like a normal and attractive activity. This finding is particularly relevant for students in James Town, where economic hardships may make them more attracted to gambling through advertisements.

Griffiths and Parke (2005) also explored the prevalence of online gambling advertisements and their effects on youths. They found that as internet access became more widespread, children and adolescents were increasingly exposed to gambling

advertisements online, especially through social media and gaming platforms. The study emphasized that online gambling advertisements often used strategies such as offering "free play" or "bonus rewards" to attract younger users.

These advertisements not only normalized gambling but also introduced children to online gambling environments where the lines between entertainment and real gambling were often blurred. This exposure may be particularly harmful to basic school students, as their cognitive development makes it difficult to discern between these forms of gambling. A quantitative study among adolescents found that among those who recalled seeing advertisements for lottery tickets, 39% believed that seeing the advertisements made it more likely that they would buy a lottery ticket (Felsher et al., 2010).

Studies also show that companies that promote gambling sometimes specifically target vulnerable communities (Griffiths, 2005; Monaghan et al., 2008). Two other studies also showed that gamblers perceive advertising as factor that lure them to engage in gambling (Binde, 2009; Grant & Kim, 2001). It is difficult to know how many people have gambling problems due to advertising, perhaps because of the small impact this might have or because it could not be the most relevant factor (Binde, 2014).

In 2005, UK took a pioneering step in deregulation by liberalizing its gambling industry, thereby allowing widespread advertising for sports betting, online gaming, and poker (Kerr et al., 2021). This move likely contributed to the normalization of betting across all age groups in the UK, leading to widespread social acceptance of new gambling opportunities, such as loot boxes and e-sports betting, as well as innovative digital and social media ads (Wadle, 2021). There's growing concern that

regulations aren't adapting quickly enough to the evolving gambling landscape, leaving children particularly vulnerable to its negative impacts (Wadle et al., 2024). The influence of gambling on children's health is huge and largely unaddressed issue (Pitt et al., 2023). In response to growing concerns, the UK Government is reviewing the Gambling Act 2005 to update regulations and make them relevant in today's digital landscape (Rossi & Naim, 2022). The rise of new social media gambling marketing, coupled with the complexities of researching children, has led to a shortage of data to guide policy makers. As a result, we lack essential information, such as the extent of children's exposure to gambling ads and whether ads intentionally target minors (Critchlow et al., 2019). Since social media advertising spend is unlikely to slow down in the foreseeable future, this article aims to provide direction to policymakers and the scientific community, by reviewing what literature there is on social media gambling ads and its effect on youth. This study examines the scope of social media gambling marketing, explore new advertising formats and their potential impact on youth, and provide insights for policymakers and researchers.

#### **2.4.2 Influence on Attitudes and Perceptions**

Empirical research has demonstrated that gambling advertisements can significantly influence children's attitudes and perceptions of gambling. A qualitative study by Thomas et al., (2012) on adults' interactions with gambling promotions, revealed that gambling advertisements often downplayed the risks and highlighted success stories. Although their study focused on adults, the findings are applicable to younger audiences as well, as children may lack the critical thinking skills needed to evaluate the risks associated with gambling. The researchers found that the repetitive exposure to such advertisements often led to the internalization of the idea that gambling is a risk-free, enjoyable activity, which could lead to long-term behavioral consequences.

A study by Bestman et al., (2015), specifically on how children perceived the messages in gambling advertisements, found that children often interpreted these advertisements as an easy means of acquiring wealth, despite their awareness of the risks. The researchers noted that children were particularly influenced by advertisements that featured celebrities or sports stars, as these figures often served as role models.

In James Town, where students may already face financial challenges, the appeal of gambling as a solution to economic difficulties could be even stronger, potentially shaping their attitudes and decision-making. Evidence also suggests that the depiction of gambling in advertisements can lead to positive attitudes toward gambling among youth. In a study conducted by Derevensky et al., (2010), the researchers found that gambling advertisements often portrayed the activity in a glamorous light, associating it with social success, wealth, and excitement.

This glamorization was particularly effective in shaping the attitudes of younger viewers, who were more likely to perceive gambling as a desirable activity. The study concluded that the normalization of gambling through advertisements could lead to early initiation into gambling behaviours, especially in vulnerable communities. Rapid technological change over the last 20 years has increased accessibility to gambling (Drakeford & Smith, 2015).

### **2.4.3 Promotional strategies of Gambling Advertisements**

Several empirical studies have been conducted to assess strategies adopted by organizations to promote gambling. Most of the studies have found that gambling is influenced by so many factors, most of which has been predicted by some theories. Most of the studies have found that companies use various strategies to influence

people to become attracted to gambling. They include targeted advertising, social media marketing, influencer marketing, content marketing, search engine optimization and others.

#### **2.4.3.1 Advertising using Persuasive Techniques**

Ads persuasive qualities can be summed up in terms of strategies that marketers employ to increase sales. This is accomplished through the use of testimonials, bandwagon tactics, message appeals, celebrity endorsement and argumentation techniques (Ogah & Abutu, 2021). Many athletes accept products endorsement deals on condition that the company will pay them for their time and efforts (Christian, 2019). Today's consumers encounter celebrity brand associations in a variety of situations and ways that directly affect both their perception of the celebrity and their reactions to the brand. The idea behind testimonial advertising is that when a product has been endorsed by a well-known person or customer, a consumer may want to imitate (Dwivedi et al., 2015). Consumers therefore buy products without thinking through. The bandwagon effect is used especially in groupthink in the behavioural sciences. It is also known that beliefs spread among people and they may want to put them into action. People will therefore analyse the behaviour positively and imitate it (Howard & Howard, 2019).

Advertisers use message appeal to elicit favourable reactions in order to meet the psychological needs of consumers (Zhan et al., 2014). Majority of practitioners believe that emotional messages are the most powerful form of persuasion in advertising even though the messages can be communicated digitally (Fennis, 2020).

Advertising contributes significantly to the development of society. The beliefs, values and lifestyles of people are shaped by sometimes advertising (Subramanian,

2017). Advertisement provides opportunity for consumers to get to know what types of products are available in the market. According to Lee and Johnson (2017), advertising serves as a means through which people promote goods and services in society. The role of advertising can therefore not be downplayed. Today, advertisers push consumers appealing and alerting them with reminders at every point in time (Southerland, 2020).

According to Setyadi et al., (2024), advertising provides information about the products, what it is used for and where people can buy them. Due to that, Fennis (2020) posits that advertising could use different strategies to assess how products are performing in the markets.

Advertisements are created in social marketing not only to inform consumers about a product but to also influence their behaviour (Flaherty et al., 2021).

Even though there are new forms of technological devices where people could have information in the media, people still continue to watch television and continue to be lured by messages from advertisers (Lac, 2023).

#### **2.4.3.2 Targeted Advertising**

Gambling companies have over the years used various strategies to promote their products and services, especially in the digital age (Guillou-Lanreat et al., 2021). Ads forms part of strategies companies' uses to markets products and services. People have said gambling advertisements have the potential of luring the youth to patronize gambling products (Di Censo et al., 2024). One of the studies published in the Journal of Behavioral Addictions indicates that companies target young people to be able to achieve results considering their interests (Binde, 2014). The approach provides companies opportunity for them to assess how they have executed their campaigns as

expected (Luzon et al., 2022). Advertisers broadcast their messages to those who may yield to them and others who may not likely to be influenced (Farahat & Bailey 2012). Companies who are able to use targeting effectively are able to make profits (Johnson, 2013).

Studies have also revealed that companies that use digital means of targeting are able to get responses from consumers (John et al., 2018). Companies can engage consumers by clearly identifying those who are interested in the products and gets results (Shin & Yu, 2021). One of the technological devices that are used by most companies in recent times are mobile devices. Bhavya and Sambhav (2020) research has shown that revenue generated by the mobile market amounted to \$408.58 billion in 2026 (Ullah et al., 2020). In recent times, advertising have also assumed a different form where people are targeted based on their presence online and related activities. (Collier et al., 2022).

#### **2.4.3.3 Social Media Marketing**

According to Gainsbury et al., (2015) gaming enterprises now rely heavily on social media to advertise their goods and services. Research conducted and recorded in the journal of Public Policy and Marketing revealed that companies engaged in gambling use social media to advertise their products and services (Hing & Russell, 2016). Social media marketing provides an opportunity for organizations to reach large number of people and later become a household name in most places (Jeswani, 2023). With the emergence of vast social media platforms companies can use various means including interaction to sell products and services (Constantinides, 2014).

The emergence of technology and social media have in recent times been adopted by companies to sell products and services because that is where most people particularly

the youth engage and interact rather than the traditional advertising mediums used more in the past (Frans et al., 2023). Social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook have in recent times been used by many companies when presenting brands to consumers (Malik & Rana, 2024). Due to the quick response rate that companies receive in their engagement with potential customers, they prefer using these new media platforms to achieve results (Walsh & Godfrey, 2000). Companies are able to achieve results by designing contents that are identifiable with consumers who will intend patronize their products and services (Singha, 2024).

Businesses create immersive brand experiences by using appealing story lines to enhance their brand equity (Jeswani, 2023). Many years ago, traditional media was the dominant media used by many. It was therefore regarded as very important tool in disseminating information, but digital media is the new media widely used for communicating by scores of businesses and organizations especially businesses in the advertising space (Alzubi, 2023). Many people use social media often times during the day. This supports the view by many that a lot of people use it globally in executing their businesses (Alamsya et al., 2021).

#### **2.4.3.4 Influencer Marketing**

Influencer marketing has become a popular strategy for gambling companies to promote their products and services (Singha, 2024). A study published in the Journal of Advertising Research indicates that influencer marketing provides opportunity for gambling companies to reach a large number of audience (Derevensky & Gupta, 2016). Influencers can promote gambling products and services for their followers, increasing brand awareness and driving traffic to gambling websites (Torrance et al., 2021). Due to the numerous advertising messages, consumers try to avoid many of

these advertising messages a lot of times (Bakker, 2018; Cervanka et al., 2018). Teenagers often times have attachment with influencers and see them as friends and part of their lives. Endorsements provided by influencers are generally said to have a lot of credibility than several advertising strategies used by most of the traditional media (e.g. De Veirman et al., 2017; Sweeney et al., 2017). Companies continue to use various kinds of media platforms to reach their target audience. Influencer marketing support brands to advertise their products and services through sometimes opinion leaders (Scott, 2015). The endorsements are sometimes done by some celebrities by word of mouth and sponsorships using content (Evans et al., 2017).

Individuals engaged in Influencer marketing usually use Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Snap chat as one of the effective medium to reach their audience (acikgoz & Burmaz, 2021). In influencer marketing, influencers are capable of influencing people to believe in their ideas (Combley, 2011). Individuals engaged in influencer marketing in social networks; influencers have higher than average potential to change the ideas of people towards a brand due to how often they share their views on a particular thing or the number of people who follow them in their daily activities.

Marketers therefore take advantage of these influencers and provide them messages that are persuasive enough to reach customers and potential customers. Influencers shape the ideas of people whenever they want to buy a product or seek for services from an organisation. These messages can be in the form of text or they could narrate them using persuasive messages (Abidin, 2015). Companies using influential marketing approach therefore targets influential guys in society to support their brands (De Veirman et al., 2017).

YouTube influencers often collaborate with other influencers to create trending videos, so companies and marketing managers view these influencers as a form of online advertising. This generally comprises partnerships that are paid for by one or more people described as YouTube influencers who promote a brand (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012). YouTube is used as one of the main platforms used by companies in influencer marketing. This enables people watch a video or sometimes downloads offline and watch the content later.

#### **2.4.3.5 Partnerships and Sponsorships**

Companies engaged in advertising campaigns continue to use various brands sometimes television shows, websites, online blogs magazines and movies (Cain, 2011; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2016). The use of content that are sponsored change in various forms and consist of brand placement. These are changed into print, television movies (Boerman et al., 2012). Companies sometimes adopt strategies aimed at promoting their products and services. According to a study by the Journal of Sports Management, partnerships and sponsorships provide an avenue for gambling companies to disseminate information to a wider population (Sproston & Hanley, 2017).

Partnerships include sponsorships of sports teams, events, and individuals. The sponsored content are paid by the brands and companies who advertise the sports event using social medial channels (Hwang & Jeong, 2016). People particularly social media users see social media influencers as trusted people they can rely on for information hence tend to believe whatever they are told.

#### **2.4.3.6 Content Marketing**

Gambling companies now rely heavily on content marketing to reach and engage their target audience. A *Journal of Marketing* study found that content marketing helps gambling companies create meaningful messages that resonate with their desired audience (Pitt & Thomas, 2017). Content marketing can include blog posts, videos, podcasts, and other types of content that provide value to the target audience.

For years, content marketing has been a key digital strategy for online companies, leading to the establishment of a global organization for content marketing education and training (Pulizzi, 2012). Content marketing is about crafting and distributing valuable content to a defined audience, aiming to build brand loyalty, engagement, and ultimately, customer profit (Lou & Xie, 2021).

This definition highlights the importance of creating and sharing valuable content that encourages user engagement, aimed at building a mutually beneficial long-term relationship rather than just short-term sales (Pulizzi, 2014). By sharing relevant content, brands can create value and generate significant financial returns that will attract, engage and retain customers (Rancati et al., 2015). By embracing consumer-generated content and consumer-to-consumer interactions, businesses can build trust that will fuel long term relationships with customers (Holliman & Rowley, 2014).

Published content can take many forms, such as blog posts, videos, articles, case studies, and white papers (Holliman & Rowley, 2014; Pulizzi, 2014; Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016; Opreana & Vinerean, 2015; Rancati et al., 2015). Research also indicates that social media plays a crucial role in content marketing and inbound marketing by increasing the reach and impact of organizational content (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). Several authors concur that social media is crucial for successful

content marketing, enabling close contact and high engagement with potential customers (Agnihotri et al., 2016; Andersson & Wikström, 2017; Buratti et al., 2018; Nunan et al., 2018; Raji et al., 2019).

Marketers use social media to build brand awareness, strengthen loyalty, and drive engagement through targeted appeals that encourage audience interaction and boost popularity (Swani et al., 2017).

Ghana's legal structure for gambling regulation is primarily guided by the Gaming Act of 2006 (Act 721) and the supplementary Advertising Guidelines issued by the Gaming Commission of Ghana (Toklo, 2024). These provisions collectively establish the regulatory basis for permissible gambling promotion (Sulkunen & Babor, 2021). Specifically, all advertisement content is required to undergo pre-approval by the Gaming Commission of Ghana and must clearly indicate that the Commission is the regulatory authority. Operators must also adhere to the terms outlined in their licensing agreements (Danquah, 2024).

The use of public figures, including celebrities and influencers, to endorse gambling products is expressly forbidden (Pitt, 2024). All advertising materials must display standard disclaimers such as "Gamble responsibly," "Only 18+," and "Gambling is addictive" (Danquah, 2024). Non-compliance with these standards on Gambling can result in penalties, including license suspension or non-renewal.

Despite the comprehensiveness of the regulatory framework, its enforcement has been characterized by significant inconsistencies. Scholars and practitioners highlight gaps in monitoring, especially in the digital domain, where online advertisements and

foreign-operated betting platforms often operate beyond the jurisdiction of the Commission (Klutse, 2025; The Ghana Report, 2023).

Although regulatory frameworks have been established to curb the promotion of gambling, advertisements remain pervasive across both traditional media and digital platforms in Ghana (Toklo, 2024). Some studies have highlighted the deliberate placement of betting outlets in close proximity to sensitive locations, including educational institutions, marketplaces, and places of worship, thereby violating established legal provisions (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019; Mazoochi et al., 2024). This strategic siting facilitates early and frequent exposure of children and adolescents to gambling stimuli, which may contribute to the normalization and increased acceptability of betting practices among young populations (Amoah et al., 2021; Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022).

Digital advertisements transmitted through mobile apps, social media, and radio further exacerbates exposure. A large-scale mixed-methods study involving 5,024 children aged 8 to 17 years found that 3.1% of respondents had engaged in gambling activities (Mantere & Savolainen, 2025). Key predictors of youth gambling behavior included access to mobile devices and radios, peer influence, gender, educational background, and exposure to gambling advertisements (Kyei Gyamfi et al., 2022). The study further revealed that children who gamble perceive the activity as detrimental, with reported effects including absenteeism, poor academic performance, and even criminal behavior such as theft to fund gambling (BMC Public Health, 2022).

Narrative accounts add qualitative depth to these findings. For instance, a widely reported case involved a school-aged child who misused school fees for betting

purposes and subsequently attempted suicide due to shame and parental disappointment (The Ghana Report, 2023). Anecdotal observations from the public also highlight the increasing normalization of gambling content in mainstream media (Torrance et al., 2021).

The implications of gambling advertising on young people in Ghana are profound and multifaceted. Research links gambling involvement among minors to various negative developmental outcomes, including academic disengagement, emotional instability, and increased psychosocial stress (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019). Within the broader adolescent population, gambling has been associated with heightened risk of psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation (Klutse, 2025).

Beyond psychological and academic impacts, gambling also has adverse physical health outcomes (Latvala et al., 2019). Malik & Amoako-Mensah (2025) argue that addiction to gambling often stimulated by persistent advertising leads many individuals to forgo meals, prioritize spending on betting over nutrition, or resort to low-quality food choices.

The exponential growth of the gambling industry in Ghana cannot be overlooked in economic discourse. Technological advancements particularly mobile phone accessibility has facilitated a shift towards digital and mobile betting platforms, with approximately 70% of all bets placed via mobile devices (Saran, 2024).

However, the economic benefits of gambling are tempered by considerable social costs (Ana, 2019). Studies have shown that gambling disproportionately affects lower-income households, diverting resources from basic needs such as food, health

care, and education. Marekha and Scherbachenko (2019) also argue that there are also concerns over capital flight, as many betting companies are foreign-owned and remit profits outside the country. From a developmental perspective, the allure of quick wealth through gambling can disincentivise academic and career aspirations among young people (Klutse, 2025).

Media plays a dual role in both promoting and critiquing the gambling industry in Ghana (Badu et al., 2023). On one hand, gambling operators invest significantly in sponsorships for local football teams, community events, and media advertising, thereby presenting themselves as socially responsible corporate entities (Dhandhanian & Higgins, 2022). Again, public discourse especially on digital forums reveals growing concern about the societal normalization of gambling through mass media (McGee, 2020). For example, some radio stations reportedly run betting-related segments during peak listening hours, which critics argue desensitize the public to the risks associated with gambling (Torrance, 2023).

Such concerns are not unique to Ghana, a comparative analysis reveals that countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia have enacted stricter advertising controls, including broadcasting limitations and age-verification mechanisms (Wood, 2024). Other jurisdictions have implemented self-exclusion programs to empower individuals in managing their gambling behaviors (Reddit Discussions, 2024). Recent initiatives in Ghana have emphasized financial literacy as a strategic intervention to mitigate gambling among youth. Research suggests that individuals with higher financial literacy are less likely to hold distorted beliefs about gambling outcomes and more capable of resisting the influence of persuasive advertisements (Ackaah, 2025). Public health advocates have also called for the integration of responsible gambling

campaigns into school curricula, alongside the establishment of rehabilitation centers that address the psychological and nutritional challenges associated with gambling addiction (Malik & Amoako-Mensah, 2025).

Amoah-Nuamah et al., (2025) states that to enhance regulatory efficacy, stakeholders recommend the adoption of international best practices. These include time-bound advertising restrictions, robust digital ad monitoring systems, comprehensive age-verification technologies, and mandatory self-exclusion platforms (Nyemsock et al., 2021). While Ghana has taken commendable steps toward regulating gambling advertisements, substantial gaps remain in enforcement and public health protection (Badu et al., 2024). Gambling promotions remain pervasive, often reaching youth and other vulnerable groups despite legal safeguards (Lawn et al., 2025). Oster et al., (2025), also argues that the resultant impacts ranging from academic disruption and mental health challenges to household financial strain underscore the urgent need for a more coordinated and research-informed approach. To address these challenges effectively, Ghana must prioritize stronger regulatory enforcement, public education, financial literacy, and alignment with global best practices on gambling (Wadle et al., 2024; Badu et al., 2025).

The strategic placement and saturation of these ads contribute significantly to the normalization of gambling behaviors within the Ghanaian public sphere (Lawn et al., 2025).

Toklo (2024) explains that billboards are present across major urban centers like Accra, Kumasi, Ho and Hohoe, frequently placed along highways and transportation hubs. These visual ads often employ compelling language to convey an illusion of

accessibility and use slogans such as “1XBET: Easy to use, many chances to win” and “Take control of your bets with Cash Out (Badu et al., 2023).

Digital and online advertising are increasingly dominant, enabled by Ghana’s growing internet and smart phone penetration (Ankapong, 2023). These platforms social media, websites, mobile apps deliver highly targeted, algorithm-driven content directly to users, including youth (Nassif, 2024). As a result, digital exposure often bypasses traditional regulatory guardrails (Badu et al., 2025). Badu et al. (2024), stressed that gambling operators in Ghana employ a diverse array of advertising strategies, often carefully designed to appeal to the psychological, cultural, and socio-economic realities of the target population. These marketing techniques utilize emotional and aspirational imagery, localized cultural references, and technologically driven personalization to normalize gambling behavior and encourage widespread participation (Dillion, 2020).

A common advertising tactic used by gambling firms in Ghana is the emotional framing of gambling as an empowering and lucrative activity (Oduor, 2024). Marketing content often presents betting as a pathway to financial independence, upward mobility, and personal fulfillment particularly resonant themes in a country where high youth unemployment and economic uncertainty prevail (Madara & Chang’orok, 2024). Advertisements frequently depict relatable characters, such as young men from low-income communities, achieving success or social recognition through gambling (Critchlow et al., 2019). This portrayal aligns with the broader global trend of framing gambling as a means of achieving dreams and overcoming adversity (Deans et al., 2017).

In the Ghanaian media landscape, such messaging capitalizes on widely held economic anxieties, subtly presenting gambling as a rational response to limited opportunities (Badu et al. 2025). Advertisements in Ghana often emphasize the potential for “big wins” while omitting references to financial risk, thereby promoting a distorted image of gambling as a reliable income-generating activity as cited in (Badu et al., 2025). This aspirational appeal reinforces positive attitudes toward gambling while concealing its probabilistic and often detrimental outcomes (Oduor, 2024).

Badu et al., (2025) points out those Gambling advertisements in Ghana are frequently localized to resonate with specific linguistic, cultural, and regional identities. Marketing campaigns often employ vernacular languages (e.g., Twi, Ga, Ewe, and Hausa), local idioms, and references to community norms or values (Asamoah & Nyarko, 2023). These culturally tailored messages are often disseminated through radio programs, public events, and informal community gatherings, making them more familiar and socially acceptable (Asamoah & Nyarko, 2023).

According to Adusei and Osei-Tutu (2022), the integration of gambling promotion into everyday cultural expressions creates a “soft landing” for audiences, subtly legitimizing the activity. This localization strategy strengthens consumer identification with the gambling brand while reducing the perceived risks, as advertisements are framed within familiar and trusted cultural settings (Torrance et al., 2021). The technique not only increases audience receptivity but also makes critical reflection on the content of such messaging less likely as cited in Adusei & Osei-Tutu (2022).

Another strategic technique prevalent in gambling advertising in Ghana is the emphasis on the bettor's ability to influence outcomes through knowledge or skill, particularly in the context of sports betting (Adu, 2018). Phrases such as "Take control of your bets" or "Bet smart, win big" convey the misleading impression that gambling outcomes are subject to rational decision-making or personal expertise (Adu, 2018). This strategy fosters what Griffiths and Delfabbro (2021) describe as the "illusion of control," a cognitive distortion in which individuals overestimate their ability to affect random outcomes.

These messages are particularly effective in sports betting, where bettors may believe that understanding teams, statistics, or game strategies gives them a competitive edge. In reality, however, the stochastic nature of gambling means those outcomes remain largely unpredictable. Nonetheless, this marketing tactic contributes to the normalization of frequent betting behavior and downplays the inherent risks involved (Gainsbury et al., 2016).

In recent years, gambling operators have expanded their brand visibility through sponsorship of local sports teams, events, and entertainment programming (Torrance et al., 2021). For example, betPawa's high-profile sponsorship of the Ghana Premier League illustrates the embedding of betting companies into Ghana's national sports culture (Asamoah & Nyarko, 2023). Such sponsorships enhance the legitimacy of gambling brands by aligning them with national pride and community development. Moreover, gambling companies often engage in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities such as sponsoring educational materials, sanitation drives, or youth empowerment programs as a way of building public goodwill. While these efforts may appear philanthropic, Hancock and Smith (2017) argue that, CSR in the

gambling sector can function as a form of reputational management, deflecting criticism of the industry's role in contributing to gambling-related harms.

In the Ghanaian context, such initiatives further entrench the presence of gambling brands in everyday life, blurring the line between commercial interests and community welfare. This approach makes critical engagement with the industry's ethical implications more difficult for both the public and policymakers (Badu et al., 2024).

The advent of digital media has significantly transformed advertising strategies in the Ghanaian gambling industry. With increasing internet and smartphone penetration, gambling operators now leverage algorithmic advertising tools to deliver highly personalized promotional content through platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube. These advertisements are often tailored based on users' browsing history, geographic location, and online behavior, enabling real-time delivery of offers, bonuses, and time-sensitive promotions (Journal of Public Health Policy, 2025).

This form of marketing is particularly concerning due to its opacity and lack of regulatory oversight. Unlike traditional media, which is subject to national broadcasting regulations, digital platforms operate largely outside the jurisdiction of Ghana's Gaming Commission. As Badu et al., (2025) highlight, the regulatory vacuum in the digital space enables aggressive and unregulated targeting of vulnerable groups, including underage users and individuals exhibiting signs of problem gambling.

Furthermore, digital gambling promotions frequently use persuasive cues such as push notifications, flashy visuals, and countdown timers to elicit impulsive

engagement. According to Gainsbury et al., (2016) such features are associated with increased betting frequency and a higher risk of gambling-related harm.

Badu et al., (2024) posit that the advertising strategies employed by gambling operators in Ghana are multifaceted and deeply embedded within both the media environment and broader cultural fabric.

## **2.5 Regulation of Gambling Advertisements**

The regulation of gambling advertisements is a critical issue in many countries, as it can have a significant impact on the prevalence of problem gambling and the protection of vulnerable populations (Binde, 2014). Gambling advertisements can have a significant impact on consumer behavior, particularly among vulnerable populations such as youth (Di Censo et al., 2024). Studies have shown that exposure to gambling advertisements can increase the likelihood of gambling among these groups. Many countries have as a result implemented regulations to restrict the advertising of gambling products (Hancock et al., 2018; Sulkuinen et al., 2021; Lopez Jimenez & Dittmar, 2025).

Factors that are used to restrict and regulate the advertising of gambling products vary across countries. Some of the most popular restrictions in Ghana are content restrictions: These regulations restrict the content of gambling advertisements, such as prohibiting the use of certain language or imagery- Placement restrictions: These regulations restrict the placement of gambling advertisements, such as prohibiting advertisements during certain times of day or in certain locations. Warning labels: These regulations require gambling advertisements to include warning labels or other disclosures about the risks of problem gambling (Abarbanel et al., 2017; Rossi et al., 2021; Norman et al., 2024; Melkamu, 2020).

Research has shown that regulations can be effective in reducing the prevalence of gambling and protect vulnerable populations (Sulkunen et al., 2021; Gainsbury et al., 2014). For example, a study published in the *Journal of Behavioral Addictions* found that regulations restricting the advertising of gambling products decrease gambling among youth.

Despite the potential benefits of regulations, there are also challenges and limitations to consider. For example, regulations can be difficult to enforce, particularly in the context of online advertising (Matyash, 2024). Additionally, regulations can have unintended consequences, that can conceal gambling advertising (Potolia, 2021).

Different countries have taken different approaches to regulating gambling advertisements. For example, Australia has implemented a range of regulations to restrict the advertising of gambling products, including content restrictions and placement restrictions (Torrance et al., 2021; Randle et al., 2022). The United Kingdom has also implemented regulations requiring gambling advertisements to include warning labels and other disclosures about the risks of problem gambling (Parke, 2014). Studies conducted by Holden and Edelman (2020) found that United State has a more permissive approach to regulating gambling advertisements, with fewer restrictions on the advertising of gambling products.

The regulation of gambling advertisements is a complex issue that requires careful consideration of the potential benefits and challenges. While regulations can be effective in reducing the prevalence of problem gambling and protecting vulnerable populations, they can also be difficult to enforce and have unintended consequences.

In the Ghanaian context, the increasing rate of gambling has provided enormous resources to create advertising campaigns for many companies to develop.

Government has also implemented regulations to restrict the advertising of gambling products (Badu et al., 2024). Revenue from online betting is estimated to increase from USD 27million (USD 15million from sports betting) in 2019 to about USD 57 million (Statista. Online gambling – Ghana, 2023).

The Ghana Sports Betting Association claims expenditure of approximately GHS200 million (equivalent to about 17 million USD) is spent annually on advertising (Ainuson, 2023). Operators have now shifted gambling opportunities from predominantly land-based and traditional activities to online or digital platforms (Bunn et al., 2020). They have adopted sophisticated online advertising strategies to attract new customers. For example, around 80% of gambling in Ghana is now reportedly done online.

The current regulations governing gambling advertisement in Ghana include the Gaming Acts, 2006 and regulation by the Gaming Commission of Ghana which is responsible for enforcing the regulations governing the gaming industry including the advertising of gambling products.

According to Badu et al., (2025), increased gambling advertising in Ghana can be linked to the enactment of the Gaming Act 2006 (Act 721), which legalizes gambling and permits all forms of gambling and gambling product advertising. Prior to the Gaming Act 2006 (Act 721), gambling advertising was restricted. The introduction of the Act made it possible for gambling to be part of the entertainment sector and allowed operators to advertise without putting in place steps to ensure advertising is limited. As a result, gambling advertisements are pervasive (Toklo, 2024). The Games Act 2006 (Act 721) and associated regulations explicitly prohibit underage gambling and campaign for distancing betting centers from schools. Yet, widespread

noncompliance such as nearly 38% of betting centers are located near schools which underscore enforcement failures (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019).

Again, the advertising regulation in Ghana has failed to address the challenges facing the sector given how it has evolved in recent times making it easy for the operators to promote gambling as a risk-free way to make money (Sichali et al., 2023; Glozah et al., 2023). While the gambling industry has created jobs and generated revenue, there are also concerns about its social impact and the need for more effective regulation (Tetrevova, 2023).

## **2.6 Impact of Gambling Advertisements**

The impact of gambling advertisements on actual gambling behaviour has been a significant focus of empirical research. Studies indicate that children and adolescents who are frequently exposed to gambling advertisements are more likely to engage in gambling activities at an earlier age (Hing & Russel, 2016). For instance, a study by Gupta and Derevensky (2001), revealed that young children who have had one form of experience in gambling have the tendency to engage in gambling than those have not. The study also noted that early exposure to gambling advertisements was a strong predictor of future gambling problems, suggesting that these advertisements could have long-term behavioral consequences (Gupta & Derevensky, 2001).

Hing et al., (2014) in a related study that explored the relationship between gambling advertisements and youth gambling behaviors also showed that youth who usually come in contact with promotions on gambling often report participating in gambling, even if they were underage. The study highlighted that gambling advertisements often blurred the lines between gambling and entertainment, making it difficult for young viewers to recognize the risks involved. The researchers called for stricter regulations

on the content and timing of gambling advertisements to protect vulnerable populations, such as children and adolescents. Gambling impacts can be observed at the personal, interpersonal, and community/society levels. Personal level refers to the gamblers themselves and interpersonal level to people close to the gambler: friends, family and work colleagues (Latvala et al., 2019). Impacts of gambling can be individual or external. Individual impacts induce effects on a personal level to the gambler (Marko et al., 2023).

According to Gunay (2023), Gambling generates externalities, including costs and benefits that are borne by others. The financial toll of problem gambling can be considerable, marked by increased indebtedness and financial stress, which can lead to negative consequences beyond the individual (Swanton & Gainsbury, 2020). Gambling therefore may affect family members and potentially resulting in financial difficulties, including bankruptcy and homelessness (Vandenberg et al., 2022). Studies indicate that problem gambling is associated with a range of negative consequences, including elevated rates of criminal behavior and financial distress among individuals experiencing gambling problems (Adolphe et al., 2019). A study by Lavaca et al., (2019) posits that the economic impact of gambling is complex and multifaceted, yielding both positive effects on economic activity and negative consequences for individuals and society, thereby resulting in a nuanced understanding of its overall impact.

Also, Adieme and Subramanian (2020) in a similar study stated that Gambling can have significant labor market consequences, showing in various ways such as compromised productivity, absenteeism, suboptimal job performance, job loss, and unemployment, ultimately affecting individuals' employment stability and career

prospects. The health and well-being impact of gambling comprises a broad range of effects on individuals' physical, psychological, and social health, influencing the overall well-being of a person (Tulloch et al., 2022).

Globally, sports betting are presently the most common form of gambling, characterized by a notable increase in participation rates over the past decade, with a particularly pronounced trend among young people (Hing, 2014). Sports' betting is the activity of predicting sports results and placing a wager on the outcome. Sports betting vary by culture exhibit with the majority of betting activity focused on specific sports, notably association football, American football, basketball, baseball, hockey, track cycling, auto racing, mixed martial arts, and boxing, at both the amateur and professional tiers. A range of online sports betting platforms are currently operational, including Betway, 1xbet, Wazobet, Bet365, Bet9ja, Betking, 22Bet, Sportybet, and Parimatch, among others. Notably, sports betting have emerged as the most prevalent form of gambling in the country, reflecting a significant shift in gaming preferences.

According to a 2014 survey, approximately 30% of Nigeria's population participates in sports betting, with an estimated expenditure of around \$2 billion on this activity (Tribune, 2022). The rising trend of participation in gambling has sparked significant discussion among academics worldwide, underscoring the need for critical evaluation. Hing (2014) argued that, gambling advertisements in the media contribute to the normalization of gambling, potentially resulting in more people engaging in it especially vulnerable groups like children which may become a problem for the individual and their families. These concerns, therefore, warrant the need to investigate the social influence of gambling on students in public schools with a view to find out what is influencing them to engage in gambling.

In a community context similar to James town, where socioeconomic challenges may increase the appeal of gambling, the impact of gambling advertisements on behavior could even be more significant (Dowling & Smith, 2017). Students who are exposed to these advertisements may see gambling as a quick and easy way to escape poverty, leading to early initiation into gambling activities. Over time, this behavior could interfere with their academic performance and social relationships, as students may prioritize gambling over education and other positive activities.

Young people are likely to encounter numerous gambling ads across various media platforms, including radio, TV, print, and online. Given that youth spend about a third of their day consuming media, exposure to these ads is almost inevitable. (Roberts, 2000). Research indicates that traditional advertising can drive consumer behavior, while entertainment media, such as movies and TV programs, can also significantly impact people's thoughts, values, and actions (DeJong, 2002; Earle, 2000).

Young people engage in various forms of gambling, such as betting with friends, playing cards, sports betting, buying lottery tickets, and participating in other games of chance (Gupta & Derevensky, 2004). Social media platforms are flooded with gambling ads, including tailored content such as hyperlinks to exclusive offers, funny posts, and ads that blend in with other content, making them hard to identify as gambling-related (Gainsbury et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2015). Research suggests that gambling advertising influences various types of gamblers and is associated with increased participation in gambling (Binde, 2014; Newall et al., 2019). Studies have found that seeing more gambling ads is associated with a higher likelihood of wanting to gamble, which may be driven by more positive attitudes toward gambling. Studies have found that seeing more gambling ads is associated with a higher likelihood of

wanting to gamble, which may be driven by more positive attitudes toward gambling (Felsher et al., 2004; Hing et al., 2013).

Exposure to gambling ads is linked to more frequent gambling and a higher risk of problem gambling (Clemens et al., 2017; Gavriel-Fried et al., 2010; Hanss et al., 2015). Direct or indirect promotional ads can be particularly influential since they encourage gambling more explicitly than brand-focused ads (Hing et al., 2019).

### **2.6.1 Impact on Educational outcomes**

The increasing prevalence of gambling activities in Ghana, particularly among young people, has become a pressing public health and educational concern (Kyei Gyamfi, 2022). This trend is significantly driven by the aggressive and widespread marketing strategies employed by gambling companies, which utilize a range of media platforms such as radio, television, social media, and outdoor billboards to promote betting services (Badu et al., 2024; Leavy, 2025; Hallett, & Leavy, 2025). These advertisements frequently present gambling as a socially acceptable, economically beneficial, and easily accessible activity, often downplaying or omitting the associated risks.

Notably, children and adolescents are increasingly exposed to these messages, with many engaging in betting despite being underage. The allure of quick financial gain, as portrayed in these advertisements, poses a significant threat to young people's academic focus, attendance, and overall educational performance (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019). This literature review explores the extent to which gambling advertising influences educational outcomes in Ghana, with particular attention to school attendance, academic achievement, and cognitive development among youth.

The connection between gambling advertisement exposure and youth participation in betting is well-documented in Ghana. According to a survey conducted by the Baraka Policy Institute (2019), approximately 40.6% of surveyed bettors were below the legal age of 18—5.0% aged between 10–13 years and 35.6% between 14–17 years. This indicates a significant breach of legal gambling restrictions and highlights the widespread exposure of minors to gambling-related content.

The presence of such advertising across diverse platforms, including traditional media and digital channels, has normalized gambling behaviors among children. Badu et al., (2025) assert that the proliferation of these messages particularly in environments with minimal regulatory oversight has contributed to the perception of gambling as a viable and low-risk activity, which is especially appealing to socioeconomically disadvantaged youth. Radio and television remain dominant sources of such advertising, often integrated into sports programs and talk shows, while digital media has enabled targeted messaging to tech-savvy young audiences (Spencer, 2019).

Exposure to gambling advertisements has a discernible impact on school attendance and participation in academic activities. The Baraka Policy Institute (2019) reported that among underage gamblers, only 50.8% attended school consistently, while the remaining participants showed irregular attendance patterns 23.1% attended once a week and 26.1% three times weekly. Such absenteeism can be directly linked to students' preoccupation with betting activities, including watching sports matches, checking betting results, or participating in online gambling during school hours.

Kyei-Gyamfi and Attah (2022) similarly observed that students who engaged in gambling were more likely to skip school, neglect academic responsibilities and demonstrate a decline in classroom participation.

In addition to affecting school attendance, gambling advertising influences cognitive performance and learning outcomes (Latvala, 2022). Continuous exposure to gambling messages and subsequent engagement in betting activities can result in psychological and cognitive impairments such as reduced concentration, increased stress, and distorted decision-making processes (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022). These effects can significantly impair students' ability to focus during lessons, complete assignments, or prepare effectively for examinations.

Moreover, the financial distress that often accompanies gambling losses can lead to further anxiety and poor academic motivation (Urien, 2025). Students from low-income families who may have initially turned to gambling in search of financial relief creating a cycle in which academic underachievement leads to increased gambling activity (Obwoye, 2021).

Zhu (2024) in a study on the influence technology, internet gambling among college students asserts that beyond gambling engagement influenced by advertising also contributes to broader psychosocial difficulties that affect educational trajectories. Youth involved in gambling are more likely to report symptoms of depression, anxiety, and social withdrawal, conditions that are negatively correlated with school performance (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022). In some cases, adolescents' resort to dishonest behavior such as stealing from family members to sustain their gambling habits, leading to disciplinary action at school or social ostracism (Hassan and Kareem, 2023).

Family conflict arising from financial losses, especially when adolescents gamble with money intended for educational needs, further compounds these issues. The long-term implications include school dropout, substance abuse, and an increased risk

of criminal involvement, ultimately undermining the protective role that formal education is intended to serve (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022).

Gambling advertisements in Ghana are often localized and culturally adapted to resonate with young audiences. They employ familiar language, community idioms, and local sports figures to enhance relatability and increase brand trust. Asamoah and Nyarko (2023) argue that this strategic localization embeds gambling within the social and cultural fabric of communities, diminishing its perceived risks and moral objections. Kyei-Gyamfi et al., (2022) further indicated that such normalization makes gambling appear as an everyday activity, akin to playing a game or supporting a sports team, which lowers psychological barriers to participation among youth. Consequently, educational priorities may be deprioritized in favor of gambling, especially when advertisements emphasize success stories that suggest that financial success can be quickly achieved through betting.

One of the most persuasive strategies in gambling advertising is the promotion of the “illusion of control,” whereby users are led to believe that skill, knowledge, or strategy can influence outcomes (Joel, 2024).

For students in financially constrained households, the portrayal of gambling as an avenue for economic advancement creates unrealistic expectations and alters their aspirations. Deans et al., (2017) noted that such messages can reorient young people’s goals away from academic success and toward gambling as a more immediate route to wealth.

Digital platforms have emerged as powerful conduits for gambling promotions, largely due to the ability to tailor advertisements to users’ behaviors and preferences.

The use of algorithms allows gambling companies to target specific age groups and regions, often with little oversight (Badu et al., 2025).

Although the Gaming Act of Ghana (2006) prohibits underage gambling and restricts advertising near schools, enforcement remains inconsistent. Reports indicate that over a third of betting outlets operate within close proximity to educational institutions, with visible promotional signage (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019). Furthermore, many advertisements do not display age restrictions prominently, and digital platforms often lack region-specific compliance mechanisms.

These lapses underscore the need for a more coordinated regulatory approach that encompasses both traditional and emerging media channels. A national policy on gambling advertising that prioritizes child protection and educational welfare is urgently required. To mitigate the educational impacts of gambling advertising, schools can implement preventive education and media literacy programs. These initiatives would equip students with critical thinking skills to deconstruct misleading messages and understand the statistical realities of gambling outcomes (Williams et al., 2007). Additionally, involving parents, religious leaders, and community organizations in awareness campaigns can create a more supportive environment that reinforces the value of education over speculative betting.

Adopting a public health framework, as recommended by Badu et al., (2025), would allow for more comprehensive strategies that address gambling as a socio-economic and behavioral risk factor, rather than simply a regulatory issue. This includes placing restrictions on the times and contexts in which gambling can be advertised, especially during youth-targeted programming.

The pervasive nature of gambling advertisements in Ghana, combined with socio-economic vulnerabilities and weak regulatory enforcement, has created an environment where young people are increasingly drawn into betting activities. This exposure significantly disrupts educational outcomes by contributing to school absenteeism, impaired academic performance, and psychosocial challenges. Moreover, the strategic marketing techniques employed such as cultural localization, financial allure, and digital targeting amplify the risks posed to educational development (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022).

Kyei-Gyamfi et al., (2022), noted that addressing these impacts requires a multi-level response involving stricter regulation, public health interventions, school-based education, and community engagement. Without decisive action, the long-term consequences may include not only diminished educational attainment but also increased social inequality and reduced national human capital.

A sport betting has become deeply embedded in Ghanaian urban life, especially within socioeconomically disadvantaged areas such as Jamestown in Accra. This literature review examines the proliferation of sports betting in such communities, its socio-educational consequences, and the regulatory challenges it poses (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019).

Jamestown, a densely populated neighborhood with high youth unemployment and limited formal employment opportunities, has witnessed a dramatic increase in betting centers. These establishments operated by brands like Soccer Bet, Safari Bet, and Premier Bet are strategically located along main streets and residential zones, making betting highly visible and readily accessible. Such saturation conveys an implicit legitimacy to youth, rendering betting a normalized daily activity.

Sports betting's prevalence among minors is alarming. A survey by the Baraka Policy Institute (2019) of 360 patrons across major Ghanaian cities revealed that approximately 40.6% were under 18 years, including children as young as 10–13 (5%) and adolescents aged 14–17 (35.6%) (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019). The research also found that nearly 38% of betting centers were situated within 200 meters of basic schools, directly contravening regulations intended to shield minors from exposure (Baraka Policy Institute, 2019). Such environmental proximity encourages school absenteeism, resulting in educational disengagement.

Other studies corroborate these findings, indicating that youth who gamble frequently miss classes, achieve lower academic performance, and in some cases even drop out altogether (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022). The normalization of betting and the perception of risk-free opportunity further compound the educational fallout (Graphic Online, 2025; Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022).

Beyond attendance, sports betting negatively impacts youth well-being. Research indicates that gambling correlates with elevated risks of depression, anxiety, financial strain, and academic underperformance (Lewis, 2025). Notable incidents including a retired chief's suicide and students diverting tuition fees to gamble highlight the severe personal and societal consequences of unchecked betting (Ghana News Online, 2023). These findings align with regional research emphasizing the broader mental and social tolls of gambling among vulnerable populations (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022).

Youth unemployment in Ghana stands at a critical 19.7% (Lambon-Quayefio et al., 2023). In Jamestown and similar zones, the absence of viable employment or educational opportunities has catalyzed a shift toward sports betting as a perceived

route to financial solvency. Many young individuals facing poverty and limited prospects are drawn into betting with hopes of quick returns (Ghana Business News, 2022; E-PLAY Africa, 2024).

Experts advocate for treating gambling as a public health concern, emphasizing systemic regulation banning advertising directed at youth, monitoring proximity of facilities to schools, and implementing educational interventions (Badu et al., 2025). Strengthening the capacity of the Gaming Commission and integrating community-based programs are vital for curbing the harmful impacts of sports betting.

Baraka Policy Institute (2019) says that in vulnerable Ghanaian neighborhoods such as Jamestown, sports betting transcends entertainment becoming a normalized, pervasive socio-economic concern. Key issues include widespread access for minors, educational disruption, psychological distress, and regulatory neglect. Comprehensive public health-oriented policies combined with youth-focused empowerment programs are urgently needed to counteract this growing threat and safeguard educational outcomes.

Attitudes toward money also play a significant role. Students with “power–prestige” or anxious money mindsets are more likely to gamble and experience adverse outcomes (Lostutter et al., 2019).

Moreover, limited financial literacy exacerbates these risks. In contexts of financial stress, students frequently resort to gambling as a coping mechanism, highlighting the urgent need for educational interventions (Financial stress and gambling motivation: the importance of financial literacy). Psychological needs especially boredom, escapism, and emotional discomfort are commonly cited triggers for gambling.

Theoretical perspectives suggest that behavior arises from attempts to counteract under-stimulation and self-concept challenges (Neighbors et al., 2002; biopsychosocial models). Adolescents' stage of brain development further predisposes them to risk-taking, as pleasure-seeking circuits dominate impulse control pathways (Addictive behavior – development in adolescence).

Studies among preadolescents highlight key predictors: male gender, poor school behavior, parental gambling habits, and unregulated exposure to online gambling, all increasing the likelihood of engagement (Cross-sectional studies on preadolescent gambling behaviors). Emotional states such as impulsivity and depression further elevate risk. Socioeconomic conditions shape gambling behavior in nuanced ways. Lower socioeconomic status (SES) is frequently associated with increased gambling as a means to relieve financial burdens and access perceived mobility, while higher SES in other regions correlates with gambling as a leisure choice (Nordic and general SES studies).

Family dynamics also impact risk. Youth with caregivers who also gamble, or who experience gaming-related conflict at home, show higher engagement in gambling activities. The presence of gambling opportunities especially through mobile and online platforms makes betting highly accessible to students (Deans et al., 2016). Digital environments often employ algorithms and advertising that normalize betting behavior and bypass traditional oversight mechanisms (Rusinova, 2024).

In many regions, e-sports and simulation (skin) gambling further blur the boundaries with traditional gambling, especially among youth exposed through gaming culture. The merging of gambling and gamified entertainment in digital landscapes heightens exposure for impressionable individuals (Kim et al., 2023).

## **2.7 Role of Family and Parental Guidance**

The family is widely recognized as the primary socialization agent in early childhood and plays a pivotal role in shaping a child's attitudes, values, and behaviors (Liu, 2024). In the context of gambling and its advertising, the influence of parental behavior, attitudes, and oversight cannot be overstated (Hartmann, 2024). In Ghana, where gambling advertisements are increasingly pervasive across both traditional and digital media, the family environment can either serve as a buffer against or a conduit for the normalization of gambling practices among school-aged children (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022).

Parental modeling, where children adopt behaviors observed in their parents or older family members, is especially important (Liu, 2024). According to Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, children internalize and replicate behaviors that they observe being rewarded or accepted by significant adults. If parents are actively engaged in betting, openly discuss gambling wins, or even involve children in the selection of betting options whether consciously or not they indirectly validate gambling as an acceptable and desirable activity (Molinaro et al., 2018). Several studies have documented that adolescents who report parental gambling are more likely to view gambling positively and engage in similar behavior (Donati et al., 2023).

In low-income urban and peri-urban communities in Ghana such as Nima, Ashaiman, and Jamestown the social dynamics of family life may further complicate this picture (Mensah, 2023). In households where financial hardship is prevalent, parents may engage in gambling as a coping strategy, hoping for sudden monetary relief (Badu et al., 2025). Children in these households often witness gambling being portrayed not as a vice, but as a potential solution to poverty.

Again, parental control mechanisms regarding media exposure are often weak (Schmuck et al., 2023). Many basic school children in Ghana have access to smartphones, radios, and televisions devices through which gambling advertisements are regularly broadcast. In many homes, especially where both parents work long hours or lack digital literacy, there is minimal supervision of children's media consumption. As a result, children are often exposed to unfiltered promotional content that glamorizes gambling without understanding its risks (Assan, 2024).

In contrast, families that establish open communication, clear behavioral expectations, and consistent monitoring have been shown to mitigate risky behaviors, including gambling (Sulkanen et al., 2021). Parental disapproval of gambling, when explicitly communicated and reinforced through rules and discussions, serves as a protective factor even when external media influences are strong.

However, in Ghana, the formal integration of parental education about gambling risks is still underdeveloped. There are few community-based or school-led initiatives to equip parents with the knowledge to identify gambling-related behaviors or challenge the messages their children receive from advertisements. This gap creates a vacuum in which media influences dominate without effective counterbalance from home (Badu et al., 2024).

In sum, the role of the family in influencing basic school pupils' response to gambling advertisements is critical. Whether through modeling, permissiveness, or proactive guidance, parents shape how children interpret and react to the social cues embedded in gambling promotions (Pivetta, 2024). Without deliberate parental involvement and awareness, the home environment risks reinforcing the very values that these advertisements propagate undermining education and promoting risky aspirations

(Antwi-Baffour, 2018). The pervasive influence of gambling advertisements on youth in Ghana is exacerbated by significant awareness and communication gaps both within families and in broader societal structures (Badu, 2025). These gaps limit effective understanding of the risks associated with gambling, reduce the capacity for meaningful dialogue, and ultimately hinder protective mechanisms against the normalization of gambling behaviors among children (Glozah et al., 2019).

One of the most critical challenges identified in recent studies is the low level of awareness among parents and caregivers regarding the extent and impact of gambling advertisements targeting young audiences (Assan, 2024; Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022). Many parents underestimate the degree to which children are exposed to gambling marketing, especially via digital media platforms such as social media, mobile applications, and online streaming services, which are difficult to monitor effectively (Glozah et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the commercialization of gambling in Ghana, including sponsorships of sports events and celebrity endorsements, often blurs the line between entertainment and marketing. This amalgamation complicates parental ability to recognize gambling advertisements as a form of persuasive messaging, leading to diminished vigilance and reduced engagement in conversations about gambling risks with their children (Badu et al., 2025).

Effective communication about gambling between parents and children is a protective factor shown to reduce youth gambling initiation and problem gambling behaviors (Dowling et al., 2017). However, in many Ghanaian households, open discussions about gambling are infrequent or avoided entirely due to cultural taboos, discomfort, or lack of knowledge. The stigma surrounding gambling as a vice, combined with

limited parental confidence in discussing such topics, creates an environment where children receive little guidance or critical perspectives on gambling (Tagoe et al., 2018). This communication void leaves children vulnerable to internalizing the positive messages portrayed in gambling advertisements without critical reflection or counter-narratives (Badu et al., 2023). Children may interpret gambling as a socially acceptable, even glamorous activity, as their primary sources of information are advertisements that emphasize winning, wealth, and lifestyle enhancement, rather than the realities of risk and potential harm (Molinaro et al., 2018).

Beyond the family, schools and community institutions represent vital arenas for awareness-building and preventive education about gambling risks. However, gambling and its advertisement impacts are rarely integrated into school curricula or extracurricular programs in Ghana. The absence of structured education on gambling means that children lack critical skills to analyze, question, and resist advertising messages (Assan, 2024).

Community outreach efforts, which could reinforce awareness and stimulate dialogue, are similarly underdeveloped. Despite some initiatives by NGOs and government bodies, gambling prevention programs are limited in scope and reach, often failing to address the specific contexts and needs of vulnerable youth in basic schools (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022). The result is a fragmented preventive landscape with insufficient coordination and impact. The rapid proliferation of digital gambling advertisements presents regulatory challenges that further widen awareness gaps. Regulatory frameworks in Ghana struggle to keep pace with evolving digital marketing strategies that leverage sophisticated targeting algorithms, personalized content, and influencer promotions (Badu et al., 2025).

According to Raihan et al., (2025), the digital divide unequal access to technology and digital literacy compounds communication gaps. While some youth may be adept at navigating and critically evaluating online content, others remain susceptible due to limited digital skills, making them easy targets for misleading advertisements (Glozah et al., 2019). Addressing the awareness and communication gaps surrounding gambling advertisements requires a multifaceted approach (Hartmann et al., 2024). Increasing parental digital literacy, promoting open and informed family discussions, integrating gambling education into school programs, enhancing community outreach, and strengthening regulatory frameworks are all essential components (Throuvala, 2021). Without targeted efforts in these areas, the influence of gambling advertising will continue to shape youth attitudes and behaviors in ways that undermine their well-being and educational outcomes (Public Health Perspective, 2025).

Financial literacy and economic resources within families significantly influence youth susceptibility to gambling behaviors, especially in contexts where gambling advertising is pervasive (Barone 2025). In Ghana, many households face socio-economic challenges that limit both the financial means and the educational resources available to parents and children, thus creating fertile ground for risky gambling engagement (Ackaah, 2023).

Youth with limited understanding of financial principles, such as budgeting, saving, and probability are more likely to be influenced by the misleading portrayal of gambling as a quick and easy path to wealth (Hing et al., 2024).

In Ghana, formal financial education is often absent from basic school curricula, and many families do not have the capacity or awareness to provide this education at home (Tagoe et al., 2018). As a result, children and adolescents often develop

unrealistic expectations about the outcomes of gambling, influenced heavily by advertisements that emphasize winning and financial freedom while downplaying the risks and probabilities of loss (Badu et al., 2025).

Tagoe et al., (2018) argues that Economic hardship experienced by many Ghanaian families increases the vulnerability of youth to gambling. Limited household income and unstable employment compel both parents and children to view gambling as an attractive opportunity for financial gain, despite its speculative and risky nature (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022). The allure of quick cash, promoted aggressively through gambling advertisements, resonates strongly in communities where poverty is widespread and social mobility is constrained (Packin et al., 2024).

Pitts et al., (2017) explains that resource constraints restrict parental supervision and engagement with children's media consumption, including gambling content. Parents working multiple jobs or long hours have less time to monitor or discuss the risks of gambling, which further distances children from protective adult guidance (Glozah et al., 2019). According to Labrador et al., (2021), the gap in supervision increases youth exposure to gambling advertisements and their persuasive messages.

The combination of inadequate financial literacy and economic pressures leads many young people to engage in gambling activities without a clear understanding of the potential negative consequences, including financial loss, academic decline, and social problems (Derevensky & Gupta, 2023). Studies in Ghana have linked youth gambling with decreased school attendance and performance, as well as increased risky behaviors (Tagoe et al., 2018). According to Mazoochi et al., (2024), the normalization of gambling as a financial strategy, propagated by advertisements and socio-economic realities, contributes to a cyclical pattern of debt and hardship in

vulnerable communities. Without intervention to enhance financial skills and address economic inequalities, gambling-related harms are likely to persist and worsen (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022).

Addressing inadequate financial literacy requires multi-level interventions. Integrating comprehensive financial education into basic and secondary school curricula can equip youth with critical money management skills and an understanding of the risks associated with gambling (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014). Complementing school-based education, community programs aimed at parents and caregivers can improve financial literacy and empower adults to model and communicate sound financial behaviors (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022).

Additionally, government and non-governmental organizations should consider socio-economic interventions that alleviate poverty and provide alternative livelihood opportunities for families, thereby reducing the economic incentives for gambling (Badu et al., 2025). Media literacy campaigns targeted at both youth and adults can also demystify gambling advertisements and encourage critical evaluation of their messages.

In Ghanaian society, the family unit extends beyond the nuclear family to include an expansive network of relatives, neighbors, elders, and community leaders who collectively influence the socialization and development of children (Adaki, 2023). This extended family and community framework plays a pivotal role in shaping youth behavior, including attitudes toward gambling and exposure to gambling advertisements (Glozah et al., 2019). Understanding the influence of these broader social systems is essential when addressing the social impact of gambling advertising on basic school children (Pitt 2017).

The extended family in Ghana operates as a primary agent of socialization, where values, norms, and behaviors are communicated and reinforced across generations (Owusu, 2024). When gambling is perceived as socially acceptable or even beneficial by relatives such as uncles, aunts, or grandparents this perception is likely to influence children's attitudes toward gambling (Pitt et al., 2017). In many communities, older relatives may actively participate in gambling or endorse betting activities, normalizing these behaviors for the younger generation (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022).

Moreover, celebrations, family gatherings, and communal events sometimes involve gambling activities or betting pools, reinforcing the practice as a communal norm rather than an individual vice (Westberg, 2017). This collective acceptance can counteract efforts by parents or educators to discourage gambling or to critically discuss gambling advertisements (Torrance, 2024).

Beyond the family, peer groups and community social networks significantly shape youth behaviors and perceptions. Peer influence, especially during adolescence, can be a strong motivator for engaging in gambling activities (Derevensky & Gupta, 2004). Community-based gambling venues, informal betting groups, and popular social hubs expose youth to gambling opportunities and reinforce gambling as a normative pastime (Niwagaba, 2017).

In some Ghanaian neighborhoods, such as Jamestown in Accra, where socio-economic challenges are pronounced, gambling is often framed as a viable strategy for economic advancement or social mobility (Badu et al., 2025). These community narratives, disseminated through peers and local leaders, can glamorize gambling while downplaying associated risks. Clune (2024) also states that despite the potential for community and extended family to reinforce gambling norms, these structures can

also serve as critical points for intervention and protection. Churches, mosques, youth clubs, and traditional leadership institutions wield considerable influence and can facilitate educational programs addressing gambling harms (Glozah et al., 2019). Faith-based organizations in Ghana have historically played a central role in shaping moral and ethical standards, and their involvement in gambling prevention can help reframe community norms.

Similarly, local schools and community centers provide platforms for delivering media literacy and financial education, empowering children to critically evaluate gambling advertisements and resist peer pressure. Collaboration between educational institutions, community leaders, and families can foster a unified approach to mitigating gambling-related risks (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022).

However, several challenges limit the effectiveness of community and extended family engagement in mitigating gambling advertisement impacts (Abbott et al., 2018). These include cultural acceptance of gambling, limited resources for community-based programs, and insufficient training for community leaders and educators to address gambling issues effectively (Tagoe et al., 2018). Furthermore, the saturation of gambling advertisements and their strategic placement in public spaces make it difficult for community messaging to compete with the allure of gambling's promises (Joel, 2024).

Hahmann (2021) also argues that socio-economic hardships prevalent in many communities reduce the capacity of families and community organizations to prioritize gambling prevention. When daily survival is a challenge, issues such as gambling may be reprioritized despite their long-term consequences (Currie et al., 2021).

To enhance the protective potential of community and extended family engagement, multi-sectorial collaboration is essential. Government agencies, NGOs, educational authorities, and traditional leaders must coordinate to develop culturally sensitive, context-specific interventions that resonate with community values (Badu et al., 2025). Capacity building for community leaders, including training on media literacy, gambling risks, and youth counseling, will equip them to serve as informed advocates and role models. Moreover, community dialogues and participatory approaches involving youth can amplify their voices and foster peer-led initiatives that counteract pro-gambling narratives (Pitt et al., 2017). Such grassroots mobilization can create sustainable shifts in social norms and reduce the appeal of gambling advertisements (Gunnarsdottir et al., 2025).

Parental awareness and mediation are critical factors in shaping how children and adolescents respond to gambling advertisements and, by extension, their susceptibility to gambling behaviors (Pitt et al., 2017). In the context of Ghana, where gambling advertisements have become increasingly pervasive across various media platforms, the role of parents in monitoring, interpreting, and guiding their children's exposure to these advertisements are paramount (Amoah et al., 2021).

Parental awareness refers to the degree to which parents recognize the presence, content, and potential influence of gambling advertisements on their children (Hartmann et al., 2024). Studies conducted in Ghana reveal a varied level of awareness among parents regarding the extent and impact of gambling advertising targeted at youth (Tagoe et al., 2018). Some parents acknowledge the ubiquity of gambling promotions on television, radio, social media, and billboards but may

underestimate their influence on their children's attitudes and behaviors (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022).

A significant challenge is that many parents lack adequate knowledge about gambling's risks and the sophisticated marketing strategies employed by gambling operators to attract young audiences (Pitt et al., 2017). This knowledge gap limits their ability to critically assess the content of gambling advertisements and to educate their children accordingly (Amoah et al., 2021). Consequently, children may be left to interpret gambling messages uncritically, increasing the likelihood of normalized gambling perceptions (Westberg & Thomas 2017). Parental mediation encompasses the strategies parents use to regulate and influence their children's media consumption, including exposure to gambling advertisements (Fam & Kääriäinen, 2023).

In Ghana, restrictive mediation is often challenging due to the omnipresence of gambling advertisements in public spaces and on widely accessed platforms such as television and social media. Additionally, many parents face resource and time constraints that limit their ability to supervise media use closely (Glozah et al., 2019). However, active mediation has been identified as a potentially effective approach, where parents engage in dialogues that demystify gambling advertisements and discuss the realities and risks associated with gambling (Amoah et al., 2021).

Several barriers hinder effective parental mediation in Ghana. First, the high penetration of smartphones and internet access among youth means that gambling advertisements can be accessed privately and instantaneously, bypassing parental control (Badu et al., 2025). Second, cultural norms that treat gambling as a socially

acceptable adult activity may reduce parental urgency to shield children from such content (Tagoe et al., 2018).

Moreover, parental attitudes toward gambling influence mediation effectiveness (Zhang et al., 2023). Parents who gamble themselves or hold favorable views about gambling may be less inclined to critically address gambling advertisements with their children or may even inadvertently encourage gambling behaviors (Kyei-Gyamfi et al., 2022).

### **2.7.1 Conclusion**

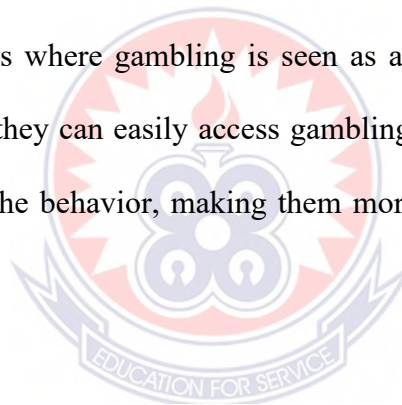
Empirical research provides strong evidence that gambling advertisements have a significant influence on the attitudes and behaviors of children and adolescents. Repeated exposure to gambling advertisements can normalize gambling, encouraging positive attitudes and early participation in gambling activities. For basic school students in James town, the social and economic context may intensify the appeal of gambling, making them particularly susceptible to the influence of gambling advertisements. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions and strict regulations to mitigate the impact of gambling advertisements on young people.

### **2.8 Theoretical Framework**

The theory underpinning this study is the Social Learning Theory which states that individuals, particularly children, learn behaviors by observing others in their environment, including those they see in media (Bandura, 1977). According to Bandura, the exposure to models, whether real-life figures or characters in media, leads to the internalization of behaviors that may later be replicated. In the context of gambling advertisements, young students who are frequently exposed to ads that portray gambling in a positive light may begin to associate gambling with success,

excitement, and financial reward. Social Learning Theory suggests that students may imitate these behaviors if they perceive the rewards as attainable or desirable (Bandura, 1977).

Additionally, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is relevant to understanding how gambling advertisements can influence attitudes and behaviors. The TPB, proposed by Ajzen (1991), states that the behaviour of people are largely influenced by their attitudes, norms and perception on how these behaviours are controlled. With this, repeated exposure to gambling advertisements may shape students' attitudes toward gambling, making them perceive their behaviour as normal, fun and should therefore be acceptable in society. Furthermore, presence of these ads in the environment may create subjective norms where gambling is seen as a normal part of life. Finally, if students perceive that they can easily access gambling activities, they may develop a sense of control over the behavior, making them more likely to engage in it (Ajzen, 1991).



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter explains the research approach used to study how gambling ads affect basic school students in James Town, outlining the methods and procedures employed. This chapter also outlines the research methods used to meet the study's objectives, covering research design, sampling approach, data collection, and analysis tools. The chapter also addresses ethical considerations to protect respondents from potential harm, stress, or manipulation.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

The study used a qualitative method and employed a case study design to investigate the impact of gambling advertisements on basic school students in James Town. The use of a case study design is suitable as it enables a thorough examination of a particular community and population (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Exploring the attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of students is made easier with the qualitative approach, as it allows for the collection of detailed, descriptive data that can effectively capture how these advertisements influence social and behavioral outcomes. This approach is especially valuable for understanding social phenomena that quantitative methods may not fully capture (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This study used an explanatory case study design, which is best suited for investigating a phenomenon or issue in depth within their real-life context (Creswell, 2013). The case study design allows for a comprehensive study of the social influence

of gambling advertisement on schools in James town, providing in depth information on a small number of students in basics schools.

The target population comprised 70 students from (JHS 1–3) at the Sempe West Basic School in James town, Accra. From this population, a purposive sample of 10 students was selected for the interview out of which 6 students were selected for the focus group interviews to gather in-depth qualitative data.

The study selected 10 students from a Public basic school in James Town, who were between the ages of 12 and 16, who are considered vulnerable. The Sempe West Basic School in James town was purposively selected as a result of its location within a densely populated area, an urban community that is economically deprived. Residents especially, children are also exposed to gambling advertisements through billboards, betting centres as well as media promotions. Students who were between the ages of 12 and 16 were selected due to their developmental stage characterized by increased cognitive, emotional and social changes. Selecting 10 students for the students was based on the qualitative nature of the study. Qualitative research focus on using smaller number in order to have an in-depth understanding of the issue, hence a sample size of 10 participants was sufficient for the researcher to obtain detail data of how gambling ads influence the attitudes and behaviours of students at Sempe West Basic School in James town.

### **3.3 Sampling Strategy and size**

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants for this study and they were specifically snowball and critical case sampling. Snowball because some of the respondents helped in locating other students who are engaged in gambling and critical case because the respondents had unique stories based on which generalization

were made (Patton, 2015). The study focused on JHS students at Sempe West basic school in James Town, a community with specific socio-economic challenges that may increase the impact of gambling advertisements.

The sample includes students between the ages of 12 and 16, who are considered vulnerable to the influence of advertising due to their developmental stage (King et al., 2020). A sample size of 10 students from a public school in James Town was selected for the study. This was based on their exposure to gambling advertisements particularly students who frequently watch television, access social media, or attend public events. A sample size of 10 is also appropriate for a qualitative study of this nature, allowing for rich, detailed discussions and to also reflect students across JHS 1, 2 and 3. Semi-structured interview using open-ended questions recorded with a voice recorder.

### **3.4 Data Collection Technique**

To capture a wide range of perspectives, the researcher used interview specifically semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection technique. This technique allowed the researcher to gather detailed qualitative data from students on their attitudes towards gambling advertisements. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility in questioning, enabling the researcher to probe for more in-depth responses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

### **3.5 Data Collection methods**

A data collection method refers to the systematic approach or overall strategy used by a researcher to gather information relevant to a research problem, ensuring that the data collected are appropriate, accurate, and reliable for analysis and interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kothari, 2004). Data for the study was collected from

primary sources through interview and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). This method was chosen to allow participants to express their views and experiences through open ended questions which provided a deeper understanding of their attitudes toward gambling advertisements. Existing research from published journals and reports were used to supplement the data and provide context for the findings (Bryman, 2016).

### **3.5.1 Interview**

Students were purposively selected from Junior High School (JHS) 1, 2, and 3 at Sempe West Basic School in James Town to participate in the interview. The selection was intended to ensure that it was representative across the classes at the Junior High School level. The interviews were conducted as part of a broader investigation into the impact of gambling advertisements on students.

The interview process focused on exploring students' perceptions and experiences related to gambling advertisements specifically examining students' attitudes toward gambling, their gambling-related behaviors, and the extent to which exposure to gambling advertisements influenced these behaviors. The interviews also sought to assess the perceived effects of gambling advertisements on students' academic performance.

Also, the interviews explored the social implications of gambling advertisements among students, particularly their influence on peer interactions, relationships, and social norms within the school environment. Semi-structured interview questions were used to allow participants to express their views freely while ensuring that all key areas relevant to the study objectives were adequately covered. Each student interview was audio recorded and later analysed.

### **3.5.2 Focused Group Discussion**

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted as a qualitative data collection method to explore students' shared experiences and social interactions related to gambling advertisements. Each FGD consisted of six students, purposively selected to ensure each class was represented (JHS 1, JHS 2, and JHS 3). The researcher ensured that participants had similar characteristics in line with the objectives of the study. The criteria included enrolment in a public Basic school in James town, specifically Sempe West Basic School, aged between the defined aged of 12 to 16 years and prior exposure to gambling advertisements such as outdoor ads including bill boards, and gambling centres. Participants of the group were also selected from different classes at the Junior High School Department (JHS 1, 2 and 3). This composition was intended to promote balanced participation and to capture a range of perspectives across different age groups.

Prior to each session, a semi-structured focus group discussion guide was developed and reviewed to ensure alignment with the study objectives. The guide covered key thematic areas, including students' recall of and exposure to gambling advertisements, their perceptions of gambling as shaped by these advertisements, peer influence and social interactions associated with gambling-related content, and any perceived or actual behavioural changes linked to exposure to gambling advertisements. The semi-structured format allowed the moderator to follow the guide while encouraging open discussion and asking for further clarification when necessary.

The FGDs were moderated by the researcher, who facilitated the discussions by introducing the purpose of the session, establishing ground rules, and encouraging equal participation among group members. Students were prompted to share their

views freely while respecting the opinions of others. The moderator ensured that the discussion remained focused on the key themes while allowing participants to interact naturally, thereby capturing group dynamics and collective meanings.

The Focus group sessions were conducted in a safe environment within the school to ensure participants' comfort in order to elicit their responses. Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the process. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from participants and assured them of the confidentiality of the information provided. With participants' permission, the discussions were audio-recorded to ensure the information was recorded. In addition, field notes were taken to document non-verbal cues, group interactions, and notable expressions that could not be fully captured through audio recordings alone.

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

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected through interviews. Thematic analysis involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first step used in the analysis was for me to familiarize with the data, all the audio recorded were transcribed. The researcher read through the transcripts to understand the responses provided by the participants. Initial observations were made while reading through the responses from the interview. Next, the data was coded and grouped into broader themes that captured the key aspects of participants' responses. Explicit as well as underlying themes were considered in the coding process noting down themes from the narratives provided by respondents during the interview.

Following an inductive thematic analysis of the interview, eight major themes emerged from the data reflecting participants' perceptions, experiences, and

behavioural responses to gambling advertisement. The themes were categorized according to their relevance to the research objectives which is exposure to gambling advertisements, perceived social influence regarding gambling, and the influence of these advertisements on students' academic performance, attitudes and behaviors (Cohen et al., 2008). I identified the various themes, organized and coded them manually for the analysis (Gibbs, 2018). The final stage of analysis involved interpreting the themes in the context of the existing literature on gambling advertisements and their social influence on young people. This process helped me to draw connections between the empirical findings and the broader theoretical frameworks discussed earlier in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Direct quotations of respondents were incorporated in the analysis to help substantiate the data interpreted as well as enhance the credibility of the study.

### **3.7 Ethical Consideration**

Ethical considerations are paramount in research involving minors. In this study, parental or guardian consent was obtained for all student participants, while the students also agreed to participate in the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences. This is the process through which participants are fully briefed about the purpose of the study, the data collection method, potential risks, and their rights as participant. Participants must voluntarily agree to participate without coercion.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. Pseudonyms were used in place of real names to protect participants' identities. I also

explained in a statement on how information about their responses will be used, stored, and disposed of after at the end of the research (Silverman, 2015).

Again, I was cautious and ensured that the research activities do not cause people to believe that their participation in this study would lead to financial reward and that the research was purely academic exercise. The beneficiaries were assured of the confidentiality of the information received. Care was taken to avoid any emotional or psychological distress during interviews and discussions.

Participants will be informed of their rights to withdraw at any point, including during or after data collection. If a participant decides to withdraw, their data will not be used, and any data collected up until that point will be destroyed unless the participant consents otherwise.

The researcher must ensure that the study does not harm participants emotionally, socially, or physically. This includes creating a respectful and supportive environment when discussing sensitive topics such as gender inequality or personal challenges in education (Creswell, 2013).

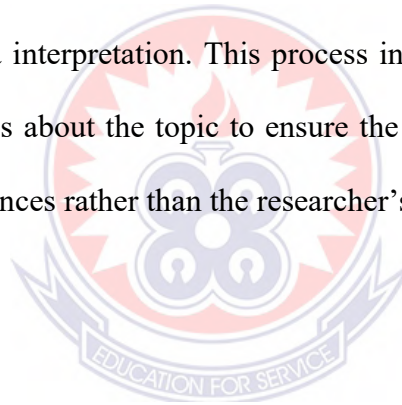
### **Trustworthiness**

Ensuring trustworthiness involves demonstrating that accuracy, consistency, and validity of the implemented to ensure the trustworthiness of this study.

After data collection, the researcher conducted member checking, where participants were given the opportunity to review the interview or focus group transcripts to confirm that their responses have been accurately captured and interpreted. To ensure a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences, the researcher spent sufficient time engaging with participants and collected data and allowed for the emergence of detailed insights (Sanders, 2020).

While the study was focused on students in a particular community in Accra, it provided detailed contextual descriptions that will allow readers to assess whether the findings may be applicable in other communities. The researcher described the schools and community's demographic characteristics to help other researchers or policy makers to draw comparisons with their own contexts. The researcher maintained a detailed audit trail throughout the study. This includes documenting all research decisions, data collection procedure, and data analysis processes. A peer reviewer was involved to assess the consistency and accuracy of the study's methods and findings.

The researcher used bracketing to acknowledge and minimize personal biases that may influence the data interpretation. This process involves reflecting on ones' own beliefs and perspectives about the topic to ensure the data and findings are based on the participant' experiences rather than the researcher's assumptions.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the entire results and discussions from the study in sections. Findings of this study have been grouped into three main sections. The study sought to answer the following research questions. The first section examines the level of exposure to gambling advertisements among basic school students in James Town. The second section explores the social influence of gambling advertisements on students' attitudes and behaviors and the third section assesses the potential impact of gambling advertisements on the academic performance and social relationships of basic school students in James town. In all, 10 study respondents were interviewed, from JHS 1 to 3.

#### 4.1 Background Information of Participants

This section provides an overview of the students who took part in the study, including their class and sex, as shown in the table.

**Table 1: Background Information of Participants**

<b>Class</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Total</b>
JHS 1	0	4	4
JHS 2	1	2	3
JHS3	0	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

**Source:** Field data, 2025

## 4.2 Level of Exposure of Students to gambling adverts

**Table 2: Theme and codes of level of exposure of students to gambling advertisement**

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	
Prevalence level	High Prevalence	TV Social media	
	Low Prevalence	Radio Billboard	
Frequency		Daily Weekly Occasional Specific times	
		Perceived presence in the Community	High Presence Low presence
			Low presence
Gambling advertised	Sports betting	Betting centres Transport routes Lorry stations Sports broadcasts	
	Lotteries	Online Betting platforms	

**Source:** Field Data, 2025

On prevalence level of exposure of students to gambling advertisement, one of the concerns that emerged was the high prevalence level of exposure to gambling advertisements as well as the low prevalence level. Majority of the students mentioned that they watched more of gambling advertisement on television during commercial breaks when watching football matches and movies and on social media.

One student said:

*... when I am watching a football match and sometimes movies on TV, they show adverts on betting before the match begins and when they go on break, they will it again, they will show it again. Sometimes if I am downloading something on my mother's phone, the adverts on betting will come for you to be interested.*

**Christopher Bortey, JHS 2 student, Personal interview, James town, April, 2025**

Other students said they heard only few gambling adverts on radio and sometimes saw gambling adverts on billboards. On frequency of exposure of the students to gambling adverts, some of the students said they saw gambling adverts daily. Others said they saw them throughout the week while others said occasionally in the community or on social media platforms on their parents' phones. Others also mentioned that they watched some of the adverts on gambling at some specific times. On perceived presence of gambling adverts in the community, some students said gambling adverts were high at the betting centres and transports routes and low at the lorry stations in the community. Majority of respondents mentioned adverts on sports betting and lotteries to be common especially during sports broadcast especially during football matches and online betting platforms. This supports the assertion by (Critchlow et al., 2019; Rossi & Naim, 2022) that young people are more exposed to gambling advertising than ever before and are inundated with gambling messages in their everyday lives, especially advertisement on sports betting. It further supports a study by Griffiths and Parke (2005) in a study on the prevalence of online gambling adverts and found that as internet access became more widespread, children and adolescents were increasingly exposed to gambling advertisements online, especially through social media and gaming platforms. This is how one of the students expressed his experience:

*...They show lots of these adverts on TV and other places on the phone. When I was using a phone, most of the time when you visit any website or whatsApp, you will see those adverts will come on line, somebody will play and win and be happy and make you also think that you can win too. They make it look as if it is easy to win, but that's not how it is.*

**Daniel Quartey, JHS 3 student, Personal interview, James town, April, 2025**

Another student said:

*... Anytime I go to the betting centre, I see lots of adverts all talking about betting, when we are betting the TV screen even shows adverts telling us something about the people who have won and are happy. They started with small amount of money and have won something bigger especially when there are big teams playing matches. Some people will even win some bets at the centre and you will see that they are happy because that I will also want to win a bet and be happy too.*

**Godwin Bonsra, JHS 1 student, Personal interview, James town, April, 2025**

#### **4.3 Influence of Gambling Advertisements on Students' Attitudes and Behaviour**

**Table 3: Theme and Codes on the Influence of Gambling Advertisements on Students' Attitudes and Behaviour**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Code</b>
Cognitive reaction	Positive reaction	Exciting, Curious, Fun, Financial gain
	Negative reaction	Uninterested, Confused
Influence	Direct adverts	Addiction, Feature sports betting, Highlights winning stories by others
	Peers	Conversation on winning teams in football matches, Conversation on personal wins on bets

**Source:** Field Data, 2025

**Edwin Provencal, JHS 1 student, Personal interview, Jamestown, April, 2025**

#### 4.4 Potential impact of gambling advertisements on the academic performance of students

**Table 4: Theme and codes on the potential impact of gambling advertisements on the academic performance of students**

Theme	Sub-theme	Code
Academic work		Poor school attendance
	Poor academic performance	Consistently late to school
		Distractions in class
		Prioritises gambling

**Source:** Field Data, 2025

According to a study by (Derevensky et al., 2010; Pitt et al., 2017), early engagement in gambling-related activities can lead to poor academic performance, strained social relationships, and increased likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors. Other students may develop distorted perceptions of success, equating financial stability with luck and chance rather than hard work and education. The students mentioned poor school attendance and distractions due to gambling. They explained how gambling has become a priority especially sports betting for most of them. This is how a student expressed his experience:

*...Some of the boys do not take part in class activities because they don't learn. They sometimes leave the class and go to a betting centre, spend some time there and back to the school. They don't learn. They are unable to answer questions asked by the by the teachers in class.*

**Lutterodtt Yayira, JHS 2 student, Personal Interview, James town, April 2025**

Some of the respondent also mentioned that due to the interest in gambling, they are consistently late to school, others have also become inattentive in class. This view is supported by a study by (McMullan & Miller, 2008; Sklar & Derevensky, 2011; Milner & Nuske, 2012; Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2018). That states how glamorous a gambler's life is, how normal and frequent it is to gamble. According to a study by (DeJong, 2002; Earle, 2000), Movies and TV shows have a major impact on shaping people's ideas, values, and behaviors. One of the student said:

*... When I was betting, I didn't sit in class oo... When the teacher is teaching, I want to find out what is happening at the betting centre. Small time I will go out and come back, I will pass through the gate and go to the soccer bet or the premium bet and check the paper whether I have won. That's what I think affects us because we don't sit in class regularly. My friends too but now I don't want to do it again.*

**Cosmos Andani, Agbesi, JHS 3 student, Personal Interview, James town, April, 2025**

#### **4.5 Impact of Gambling advertisement on social relationships of students**

**Table 5: Theme and codes on the impact of gambling advertisements on social relationships of students**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Code</b>
Social impact	Changes in social dynamics	Disagreement among peers Competition Strained family relationship Strained friendship

Some students mentioned that they sometimes borrow money from their friends to gamble and these sometimes lead to conflicts among them. Some respondents also said that gambling advertisements create competition among friends, especially when someone wins. They compete among themselves because they would also want to bet

and win. The students also mentioned how these gambling activities sometimes lead to strained relationship as a result of the disagreement among them. This behaviour is supported by a study by Gupta and Derevensky (2001), which revealed that early exposure to gambling advertisements was a strong predictor of future gambling problems, suggesting that these advertisements could have long-term behavioral consequences.

This is what a student said:

*...Sometimes it doesn't help us, when I see my friends who have won some bets, I also want to go to a betting centre to check whether my team has won so that I also get some money. Other friends will also go and check theirs whether they have also won. Sometimes we disturb at the centre and come to school and argue among ourselves. One of my friends even fought with another friend when he was teasing him that his team has won a match. It was serious ooo....*

**James Tetteh, JHS 1 student, Personal interview, James town, April, 2025**

This is what another student said:

*...Sometimes we fight with our friends, because we discuss who has won and who has lost his game and when we don't agree, sometimes we fight. I once fought with one of my friends in class because we disagreed on a bet. I insulted him and he also insulted me and we didn't speak for some time.*

**Michael Ibrahim Yartey JHS 3 student, Personal interview, James town, April, 2025**

This is affirmed in a study by (Rossi & Naim, 2022; Derevensky et al., 2010; Abarbanel et al., 2017) that revealed that increasing presence of gambling advertisements across various media platforms influence, particularly on younger audiences such as basic school students given its financial loss, and social harm to gambling ads is associated with increased gambling frequency and problem gambling,

further highlighting its impact on behavior (Clemens et al., 2017; Gavriel-Fried et al., 2010; Hanss et al., 2015).

Many of the students also mentioned that gambling has a strain on family relationship.

This is how one of the student expressed how it has affected his relationship with the mother:

*...I was staying with my mother from nursery to JHS 2 but now I am with my father because I used some money my mother asked me to go and pay for charcoal she has bought from someone to bet. When I did it the first time I won and decided to continue but lost and didn't know how to go home. I went to my sister who stays close to our house and told her, she took me home but my mother beat me and asked me to go and stay with my father and that is where I am now.*

#### **4.6 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Analysis**

To complement the results obtained from the individual interviews in order to enhance the depth of the qualitative findings, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted involving six students drawn purposively from JHS 1, JHS 2, and JHS 3 from the Sempe West Basic School in James Town. The FGD enabled the researcher to explore shared experiences, collective interpretations, and group dynamics surrounding students' exposure to gambling advertisements and their consequent behaviours. The analysis is presented using the same thematic framework that emerged from the interview data to ensure coherence and analytical consistency.

##### **4.6.1 Level of Exposure of Students to Gambling Advertisements**

###### **High Prevalence Across Multiple Media Platforms**

Participants in the FGD consistently indicated that gambling advertisements are highly prevalent, particularly on television, social media, and within betting centres in the community. The students noted that football- broadcasts, especially major league

matches, were frequently preceded, interrupted, or ended with gambling advertisement that promotes gambling.

A student remarked: *"Anytime we watch a football match, the betting advertisements appear before the game, during half-time, and even after half time. It is almost impossible to avoid them."*

(FGD Participant, JHS 3, James town, April 2025)

Similarly, a JHS 1 student also mentioned the numerous gambling advertisement that are observed on mobile devices any time they use one especially when using it to learn. One of them said:

*"When I use my uncle's phone to watch cartoons, betting adverts appear on it, it keeps coming up, any site I open, I can see somebody talking about betting and sometimes how happy they are."*

(FGD Participant JHS1, James town April, 2025)

#### **4.6.2 Community-Level Exposure**

Apart from traditional media, participants mentioned that betting centres also serve as places where people watch these adverts of continuously. According to the students large screens are displayed around these centres showing gambling adverts that expose students to success stories of people who staked bets and won to reinforce their interest in gambling. A participant explained:

*"Whenever you pass by a betting centre, you see the screen showing people who have won some money and are happy. You will see these people on big screens very happy It makes you feel like you can win too."*

**(FGD Participant JHS 2, James town, April, 2025)**

This supports earlier findings that students encounter gambling advertisements across both media and community spaces, thereby intensifying their exposure.

#### **4.6.2 Influence of Gambling Advertisements on Attitudes and Behaviour**

Cognitive Responses: Excitement, Curiosity, and Aspirations of Quick Wealth

The FGD revealed that gambling advertisements evoke mixed reactions among students. While some participants described feelings of excitement and are curious, others said they were confused because of the messages they usually see about advertisement that talk about gambling. Many of them however acknowledged that the portrayal of gambling as a quick and easy means of making money can be influential. One participant stated:

*"The adverts make it look so easy. They show someone using small money to win big money, so you feel like you can also try, be lucky and win. Sometimes the adverts speak fast and I don't really understand everything, but I still feel that I have to try because of how happy the people say them and look."*

**(FGD Participant JHS 3, James town, April, 2025)**

#### **4.6.3 Behavioural Influences Reinforced by Peer Interaction**

Participants explained that peer conversations significantly reinforce the influence of gambling advertisements. Discussions concerning football predictions, betting outcomes, and personal or observed winnings contributed to peer pressure. A JHS 2 student stated:

*"When your friends win, they talk about it a lot. You feel that you need to also win so that all of you can be become one. There is pressure on you to also get some money and bet"*.

**(FGD Participant JHS 1, James town, April, 2025)**

#### **4.6.4 Impact of Gambling Advertisements on Academic Performance**

FGD participants acknowledged that their betting activities often interfered with their academic work. Students indicated that after placing bets especially before school

they experience difficulty concentrating in class as they constantly think about the results of ongoing or upcoming matches. A JHS 1 participant said:

*"If you place a bet before coming to school, it becomes hard to focus and learn. You keep thinking about whether your teams are winning I don't even concentrate until break time when we hear about the results."*

**(FGD Participant, JHS 2, James town, April, 2025)**

#### **4.6.5 Lateness and Absenteeism**

In addition to poor concentration, some of the participants admitted arriving late to school or absenting themselves to visit betting centres, particularly on days when some teams they support are playing matches or betting opportunities were available. These accounts affirm previous findings that gambling advertisements, by fostering gambling behaviour, indirectly contribute to declining academic performance among students. A JHS 3 student noted:

*"Sometimes we leave school and go to the betting centre to check the match. When the bet is important, you don't want to miss anything."*

**(FGD Participant, JHS 3, James town, April, 2025)**

#### **4.6.6 Impact of Gambling Advertisements on Social Relationships**

##### **Peer Conflicts and Heightened Competition**

Participants described gambling-related activities as a major source of conflict among friends. Students frequently compared their betting results, some students said they sometimes tease themselves when another friend loses a game and lose a bet. A JHS 2 participant noted:

*"If your friend wins and you lose, they sometimes tease you. Small disagreements can lead to big arguments and even fights. It occurs a lot of the time but go home and continue the next day with our bets"*

**(FGD Participant, JHS 3, James town, April, 2025)**

#### 4.6.7 Borrowing Money and Breakdown of Trust

Students also highlighted that borrowing money to bet was common among peers, often resulting in tension when loans were not repaid. Some students said there were a number of occasions where they borrowed from friends to bet at the betting centre but were unlucky to win. One participant recounted:

*"When someone borrows money to bet and refuses to pay back, the friendship spoils. Some people stop talking to each other completely. Others may ignore and maintain their friendship but others will continue to insist from their friends to pay back"*

**(FGD Participant, JHS 1, James town, April, 2025)**

#### 4.6.8 Strained Family Relationships

The FGD further revealed that gambling-related behaviours have the potential to disrupt family relationships. Participants described incidents where parents reacted strongly to the misuse of household money for gambling, leading to punishment or loss of trust. A JHS 2 participant explained:

*"When my mother found out I used her money to bet, she became very angry and stopped trusting me with money. I also take money from my brothers to bet but I don't tell them what I am going to use the money for. I keep promising to pay them whenever I get money but I don't pay"*

**(FGD Participant, JHS 2, James town, April, 2025)**

A total of five themes were identified from the focus group discussion. The themes were inductive and were consistent with the themes identified from the interview data in line with the research objectives. Overall, these insights affirm findings from the interviews, showing that gambling-related activities particularly when influenced by persuasive advertising can produce significant social consequences for students.

Synthesis of FGD and Interview Findings

The integration of FGD data with interview findings reveals a high level of consistency across key thematic areas:

1. There is High Exposure to Gambling Advertisements where students regularly encounter gambling promotions across multiple media and areas in the community.

#### 2. Positive and Negative Cognitive Reactions

Students show excitement, become curious and also confused indicating the persuasive yet complex nature of gambling messaging.

#### 3. Behavioural Influence through Advertising and Peer Pressure

Students' gambling behaviours are shaped by both promotional content and peer discussions.

#### 4. Significant Academic Disruptions

Gambling-related distractions, lateness, and absenteeism negatively affect students' academic performance.

5. Social Impact: Gambling related activities shown through adverts contribute to peer conflicts, which weakens friendships, and strained family relationships.

The FGD findings strengthens the validity of the overall analysis and confirm that gambling advertisements exert a profound social influence on basic school students in James Town, affecting their behaviour, academic engagement, and interpersonal relationships. The findings from the FGD therefore affirm interview conducted earlier that indicated that gambling advertisement shape students' gambling-related behaviours.

In line with the Objectives, the FGDs demonstrate that gambling advertisements shape students' attitudes and behaviours not only through their direct persuasive content (e.g. depictions of winners and financial rewards) but also through indirect

social channels, especially peer discussions and group influence. The findings suggest that while some students remain cautious or uninterested, many of them are drawn into gambling practices due to how the media consistently portrays them, highlighting a strong social dimension of the influence of gambling adverts.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDING, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the key findings of the work and draws conclusions based on findings. It also presents recommendations based on the findings and suggests possible areas which the study could not explore for future research. The general objective of the study was to investigate the social influence of Gambling advertisement on Basic schools, a case study of James town in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, specifically to examine the level of exposure to gambling advertisements among basic school students in James Town, second, to explore the social influence of gambling advertisements on students' attitudes and behaviors and finally to assess the potential impact of gambling advertisements on the academic performance and social relationships of basic school students.

The study used a qualitative approach and employed a case study design to investigate the impact of gambling advertisements on basic school students in James Town. The study selected 10 students from one Public basic school in James Town, who were between the ages of 12 and 16, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected through interviews by identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data.

#### **5.1 Summary of Major findings**

The main findings are summarized below.

Several important observations emerged from this study that shed light on the issue of the social influence of Gambling advertisement on Basic schools in James town in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana based on the objectives of the study.

First, the study revealed that students are frequently exposed to gambling advertisements in their environment, with sports betting being the most commonly advertised. These ads are encountered by students primarily through TV, social media, and radio in their daily lives, especially within the local community.

Secondly, it was established that gambling ads influence students' perceptions of gambling, portraying it as attractive, enjoyable, and potentially profitable. The topic of gambling aroused the curiosity of numerous students, and a few even displayed a keenness to give it a try. Additionally, peer pressure had an impact, as students observed the influence of gambling advertisements on their peers, sparking conversations about gambling.

Again, the study shows that gambling advertisements were causing distractions, diverting their attention from their studies. A few students believed that these ads were influencing a change in their priorities, leading them to see gambling as a faster way to gain wealth compared to education.

Also, the study revealed that exposure to gambling advertisements could negatively affect social relationships, causing conflicts and disaffection among family members due to financial mismanagement or a change in behavior.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The study's findings indicate that gambling advertisement has impact on young students in James Town. These advertisements not only influence how they view gambling but also lead to increased curiosity, potential engagement in gambling, and a change in their academic priorities.

The prevalence of gambling ads, especially sports betting, has become normal in the community, making it accessible and appealing to students. This poses risks to both their educational pursuits and their social well-being, as the ads often encourage behaviors that lead to academic distractions and strained relationships.

The study further talks about the importance of raising awareness about the negative impact of gambling ads, particularly on young students. This situation if not addressed through guidance and intervention, could have lasting effects on students' academic performance.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Authorities should develop stringent regulations on gambling advertisements need to be especially those aimed at or capable of influencing minors. Limiting gambling ads in mediums accessible to children, like daytime TV programs and popular social media platforms used by young people.
2. Schools and local authorities in James Town should implement educational programs to raise awareness about the risks associated with gambling. These programs should teach students to resist the appeal of gambling ads and understand the potential dangers of gambling.
3. Authorities in James town should have discussions on the amount of gambling ads their children are exposed to and have conversations about the possible dangers these ads will have on the children.
4. Local organizations can help establish secure, encouraging settings that provide different ways for kids to engage and have fun, which can decrease their attraction to gambling.

5. Schools need to offer counseling services for students who might be influenced by gambling advertisements. This support could include assistance for individuals already involved in gambling or for those whose academic performances have fallen.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for further studies**

Due to time constraints and data limitations, the studies focused on the social Influence of gambling advertisement on basic schools in James town. Further studies will be needed to assess the impact of gambling advertisements in the brand selection of gambling products.

Further research can also be conducted to examine the influence of gambling advertisements on sports betting among Senior High School students in the James town community.



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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX I**

#### **UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

#### **SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STUDIES**

This interview is to investigate the social influence of gambling advertisement on basic schools in James town in the Accra Metropolitan Area (AMA). It forms part of the conditions for the award of a Masters' degree I am pursuing. All information gathered would be used solely for academic purpose and the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents are assured.

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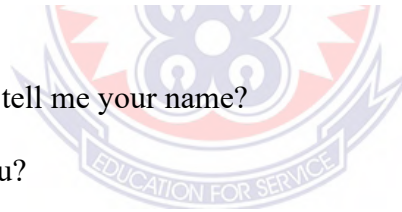
#### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

#### **The Social Influence of Gambling Advertisements on Basic School Students in**

#### **James Town**

##### **Section A: Bio data**

1. Can you please tell me your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What class are you in?
4. How long have you lived or schooled in James Town?



##### **Section B: Exposure to Gambling Advertisements**

Research Question 1: What are the levels of exposure to gambling advertisements among basic school students in James Town?

5. Describe any gambling advertisements you have watched recently?
6. Share with me some specific times or places where you notice more of these advertisements?
7. What are some of the discussions you have with your classmates on gambling adverts and gambling?

### **Section C: Social Influence on Attitudes and Behaviors**

Research Question 2: What are the social influences of gambling advertisements on students' attitudes and behaviors?

8. How do you feel when you watch or see a gambling advertisement?
9. Describe how your interest in gambling started?
10. Share with me some of the experiences of your friends who are engaged in any form of gambling?

### **Section D: Impact on Academic Performance and Social Relationships**

(Research Question 3: To what extent do gambling advertisements affect academic performance and social relationships of basic school students?)

1. How do you think gambling or interest in gambling affects how some students behave in school?
2. What are some of the changes you noticed in the way friends relate to each other because of gambling and other related discussions?
3. How does gambling or gambling-related distractions affect your studies in class?
4. How do your teachers or parents respond when students talk about gambling and engage in it?

## APPENDIX II

### B: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

#### Social Influence on Attitudes and Behaviors

Research Question 2: What are the social influences of gambling advertisements on students' attitudes and behaviors?

Good morning and thank you for agreeing to take part in this discussion. We are here to talk about gambling advertisements and how they may affect the way students think and behave. The purpose of this session is not to judge anyone's choices, but to understand your views, experiences, and feelings.

There is no right or wrong answers, what matters most is your honest opinion. Feel free to share your thoughts openly, even if they are different from others. Everything you say here will remain confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

Before we begin, here are a few simple ground rules:

- Only one person should speak at a time so we can all listen clearly.
- Let's respect each other's opinions, even if we disagree.
- You may choose not to answer any question you feel uncomfortable with.
- Please keep phones silent so we can focus

#### Theme 1: Cognitive Reactions

1. When you see gambling advertisements (for example during football matches), how do they make you feel?
2. What do you find exciting or fun about these adverts?
3. How does gambling adverts ever make you curious to try gambling or learn more about it?
4. What are the things you think you will use your money for in case you win a bet after seeing these adverts?

5. Tell me the times when you feel uninterested in gambling adverts?
6. How do you feel when you hear people are winning and others are losing their bets when watching these adverts?

### **Theme 2: Influence of Direct Advertisements**

7. What messages do gambling adverts usually try to show you?
8. How do adverts that feature sports betting make you more interested in trying?
9. How do adverts that show people winning (success stories) affect your own thinking about gambling?
10. How do you think watching gambling adverts can make someone want to gamble more often or even get addicted?

### **Theme 3: Peer Influence**

11. What do your friends or classmates talk about after watching gambling adverts?
12. How do conversations about winning teams during football matches influence your thoughts about gambling?
13. How do you feel when your friends share stories about their personal betting wins with you?
14. How do you feel encouraged or pressured to try gambling when your friends talk about their wins?
15. How does being part of a group discussion about gambling affect your own choices?

### **Section D: Impact on Academic Performance and Social Relationships**

(Research Question 3: To what extent do gambling advertisements affect academic performance and social relationships of basic school students?)

16. How does gambling or interest in gambling affects how some students behave in school?

17. What are some of the changes you observe about friends when relating with each other because of gambling and other discussions?

18. How do you think gambling or gambling-related distractions (like talking or thinking about it) affect students' learning or performance in school?

19. How do teachers or parents respond when students talk about gambling or show interest in it?

