

Motivational Factors Affecting University Students' Participation in Sports Betting

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Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the motivations for gambling among university students who participate in sports betting. The sample of the research consists of 137 students (mean age 22 ± 54) studying at Ardahan University. The data collection tools used in the study included a personal information form and the "Gambling Motivation Scale" developed by Chantal et al., and adapted to Turkish by Karlı, comprising 28 items assessing motivations for gambling. Statistical analysis of the data was carried out using computer software. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that the data were normally distributed. Arithmetic mean (\bar{x}), frequency (f), Independent Samples t-test for pairwise comparisons, and one-way ANOVA test for comparisons of means across more than two groups were applied to analyze the data. The research findings revealed significant differences in gambling motivation levels among university students based on variables such as the degree of addiction, frequency of betting, and the duration of betting participation.

Keywords

Betting, gambling games, gambling addiction, sports betting, virtual betting

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Introduction

Assumptions related to events with uncertain outcomes, such as sports matches or public polls, are termed as betting when conducted in a manner that generates revenue for an organization (Yanmaz & Kadaifci, 2020). Parimutuel betting refers to betting games that involve predicting the outcomes of organized sports competitions, both domestic and international, where winnings are distributed among participants who correctly predict results based on pre-set reward percentages (Spor Toto Teşkilat Başkanlığı, 2009).

Sports, having become a financially valuable sector, is now a substantial component of the rapidly growing betting market. Sports events, drawing public attention due to their unpredictability, have propelled the betting industry to involve substantial financial stakes. This has attracted many individuals to participate in betting, whether they are engaged in sports or not, driven by reasons such as financial gain or the thrill of betting (Özsoy et al., 2014). Today, betting and chance games form one of the most lucrative sectors of the sports industry, with football betting being one of the most notable trends (Yaşar, 2010). Sports betting has a long history within gambling activities, tracing back to ancient times. Evidence of sports betting dates back over two millennia to the athletic contests of the Greeks. This practice spread to ancient Rome, where it eventually became legal and accepted, particularly in gladiatorial games. Despite the decline of such games, betting as a form of gambling endured and continued to spread across other territories (Milton, 2017).

In Turkey, sports-based betting games have a history of about half a century. Betting commenced with the 7258 Law on the Organization of Parimutuel Betting for Football Competitions' enacted in 1959, which introduced Spor Toto. Over time, games like Spor Loto evolved to become more engaging for bettors, with betting stakes growing substantially (Özsoy et al., 2014). Several economic, social, and psychological factors influence individuals' inclinations towards sports betting. Elements such as learning processes, behavior, perceptions, beliefs, social class, culture, and influence from peers and family all contribute to betting behavior (Ulu, 2011). The sports betting industry, which involves predicting the outcomes of sports events, has become a subset of the entertainment sector (Karlı, 2008).

Furthermore, motivations like enjoyment, skill demonstration, competition, socialization, and the desire for recognition significantly affect betting behavior and satisfaction (Şimşek, 2012). Individuals seek immediate financial gain as a means of escaping difficulties or achieving a more comfortable life, viewing betting as a tool to fulfill such desires (Çelik, 2016).

As it is understood from the information in the literature, understanding the motivations underlying various betting behaviours that are increasing today and determining the motivations for betting have an important place in preventing gambling behaviour. In this study, locus of control is considered as an individual personality trait. Betting behaviour is defined as a person's misconception about self-control and a disorder in the thought of being able to change the outcome. For this reason, it is thought that this study will contribute to the literature to understand the underlying causes of betting behaviour by investigating the relationship between betting motivation and various variables.

Despite the rapid growth of betting as a market within the sports industry, a limited number of studies have been identified in the literature. This study aims to contribute as a pioneering work on motivations for sports betting.

Method

Study Group

The population of the study consisted of male university students enrolled at Ardahan University. The sample group included 137 male students aged between 19 and 24 (mean age 22 ± 54) who regularly engaged in betting activities. The sample was determined using a purposive sampling method based on easy accessibility (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008). Data collection was carried out through face-to-face surveys by the researcher. Additionally, relevant authorities and responsible individuals were informed about the purpose and nature of the study. The sample group, who voluntarily participated, was briefed on the study's aim, and no personal identification information was collected, ensuring adherence to confidentiality principles.

Research Model

This study, conducted to investigate the motivations of university students for sports betting, utilized a cross-sectional survey method based on quantitative data. The survey model is a research approach that allows for data collection or description to test hypotheses or answer questions regarding past or current conditions of the study topic (Karasar, 1999).

Data Collection

The data collection tools used in this study included a personal information form and the “Gambling Motivation Scale”.

Personal Information Form

The personal information form used in the study contained questions regarding participants’ gender, type of faculty, and attitudes toward betting. It also included demographic questions and multiple-response questions such as interest level in sports events, types of sports bet on, and reasons for participating in betting.

Gambling Motivation Scale

In the study, the “Betting Motivation Scale”, which was developed by Chantal, Vallerand and Vallieres (1994) and adapted to Turkish by Karlı (2008), was used to evaluate the motivations for betting. The scale consists of six dimensions and 28 items that evaluate the motivation and amotivation actions that answer the question “Why do they participate in betting?” The subscales of the main scale are limited to three subscales: “intrinsic motivation”, “extrinsic motivation” and “amotivation”. As the scores obtained from the scale increase, it is interpreted that the individuals’ betting motivation levels increase.

Data Analysis

SPSS 21 statistical software was used for data analysis. Descriptive analyses were conducted on the demographic variables of the participants. To determine whether the data showed normal distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied first. Percentage and frequency values, independent t-tests, and one-way ANOVA analyses were used for data analysis.

Findings

Table 1. The distribution of the research sample group according to demographic characteristics

Variables	Category	N	%
University Department	Faculty of Sport Sciences	45	32,8
	Other Faculties	92	67,2
Type of Betting	Only Football	74	54,0
	Multiple Types	63	46,0
Motivation for Betting	To Earn Money	31	22,6
	Excitement	27	19,7
	Habit	11	8,0
	To Pay Debts	15	10,9
	Multiple Reasons	53	38,7
	Do you consider yourself addicted to betting?	Yes	95
	No	42	30,7
Do you believe in match-fixing in sports betting?	Yes	100	73,0
	No	37	27,0
Frequency of Betting	Rarely	20	14,6
	Occasionally	64	46,7
	Regularly	53	38,7

As shown in Table 1, 45 students (32.8%) in the study group are from the Faculty of Sport Sciences, while 92 students (67.2%) are from other faculties. Of the students, 74 (54%) engage only in football betting, whereas 63 (46%) participate in both football and other types of betting. Additionally, 95 students (69.3%) perceive themselves as betting addicts, while 42 (30.7%) do not consider themselves addicted. A total of 53 students (38.7%) report betting regularly, while 20 (14.6%) state that they rarely bet. Finally, 100 students (73%) believe that match-fixing occurs in sports betting, whereas 37 students (27%) do not believe that match-fixing takes place in sports betting.

Table 2. T-test results for comparing university students' scale scores by level of betting addiction

Dimensions	Addiction Level	N	X	SS	T	P
Intrinsic Motivation	Yes	95	3,47	,916	2,646	,009
	No	42	3,02	,888		
Extrinsic Motivation	Yes	95	3,16	,801	2,843	,005
	No	42	2,75	,709		
Amotivation	Yes	95	3,34	,785	3,075	,003
	No	42	2,89	,790		

In Table 2, the results of the test conducted to determine whether the average scores on the Betting Motivation Scale show a significant difference according to students' levels of betting addiction indicate that there is a significant difference between betting addiction and intrinsic motivation scores ($t = 2.646$; $p < 0.05$). Similarly, a significant difference is observed between betting addiction and extrinsic motivation scores ($t = 2.843$; $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, there is a significant difference between betting addiction and amotivation scores ($t = 3.075$; $p < 0.05$).

Table 3. Anova test results for university students' frequency of betting

		Sum of Squares	df	MSE	F	Sig.	Dif
Intrinsic Motivation	Between Groups	19,116	2	9,558 ,731	13,069	,000	1>3 2>3
	Within Groups	97,995	134				
	Total	117,111	136				
Extrinsic Motivation	Between Groups	14,422	2	7,211 ,533	13,525	,000	1>3 2>3
	Within Groups	71,440	134				
	Total	85,862	136				
Amotivation	Between Groups	4,506	2	2,253 ,634	3,551	,031	1>3
	Within Groups	85,023	134				
	Total	89,529	136				

*1 = regular bettors, 2 = occasional bettors, 3 = rare bettors

As shown in Table 3, there is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of intrinsic motivation according to the frequency of students' betting activities ($F(3, 134) = 13.069, p < 0.05$). According to the results of the post-hoc analysis, the intrinsic motivation related to betting games among students is statistically significant in favor of those who bet regularly and those who bet occasionally. There is also a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of extrinsic motivation according to the frequency of students' betting activities ($F(3, 134) = 13.525, p < 0.05$). The post-hoc analysis results show that extrinsic motivation related to betting games among students is statistically significant in favor of those who bet regularly and those who bet occasionally. Finally, there is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of amotivation according to the frequency of students' betting activities ($F(3, 134) = 3.551, p < 0.05$). According to the post-hoc analysis, amotivation in betting games is statistically significant in favor of the group that bets regularly.

Table 4. Results of the ANOVA Test Based on University Students' Betting Duration

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Dif.
Intrinsic Motivation	Between Groups	21,668	2	10,834	15,211	,000	1>3 1>2
	Within Groups	95,443	134	,712			
	Total	117,111	136				
Extrinsic Motivation	Between Groups	13,111	2	6,556	12,075	,000	1>3 2>3
	Within Groups	72,750	134	,543			
	Total	85,862	136				
Amotivation	Between Groups	10,768	2	5,384	9,160	,000	1>3
	Within Groups	78,761	134	,588			
	Total	89,529	136				

*1 = less than one year, 2 = 1-2 years, 3 = 3 years or more

As shown in Table 4, there is a statistically significant difference in the average scores of intrinsic motivation based on the duration of betting among students ($F(3, 134) = 15.211, p < 0.05$). According to post-hoc analysis results, the intrinsic motivation for betting games is statistically significant in favor of groups with 3 years or more of betting experience compared to those with 1-2

years of experience. Additionally, there is a statistically significant difference in the average scores of extrinsic motivation based on the duration of betting among students ($F(3, 134) = 12.075, p < 0.05$). Post-hoc analysis results indicate that the extrinsic motivation for betting games is statistically significant in favor of groups with 3 years or more of betting experience compared to those with 1-2 years of experience. Furthermore, there is a statistically significant difference in the average scores of amotivation based on the duration of betting among students ($F(3, 134) = 9.160, p < 0.05$). Post-hoc analysis results show that the amotivation status for betting games is statistically significant in favor of the group with 3 years or more of betting experience.

Table 5. Results of the anova test based on university students' betting motivation

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Dif.
Intrinsic Motivation	Between Groups	29,229	4	7,307	10,976	,000	1>5
	Within Groups	87,882	132	,666			2>5
	Total	117,111	136				3>5
Extrinsic Motivation	Between Groups	4,088	4	1,022	1,650	,166	-
	Within Groups	81,773	132	,619			
	Total	85,862	136				
Amotivation	Between Groups	11,197	4	2,799	4,717	,001	2>5
	Within Groups	78,332	132	,593			3>5
	Total	89,529	136				

*1 = to make money, 2 = excitement, 3 = habit, 4 = to pay off debt, 5 = multiple reasons

As shown in Table 5, there is a statistically significant difference in the average scores of intrinsic motivation based on students' betting motivations ($F(3, 132) = 10.976, p < 0.05$). According to post-hoc analysis results, the intrinsic motivation for betting games is statistically significant in favor of the group that bets for multiple reasons. Additionally, there is a statistically significant difference in the average scores of amotivation based on students' betting motivations ($F(3, 132) = 3.551, p < 0.05$). Post-hoc analysis results indicate that the amotivation status for betting games is statistically significant in favor of the group of regular bettors. However, there is no statistically significant difference in the average scores of extrinsic motivation based on students' betting motivations ($F(3, 132) = 1.650, p > 0.05$).

Discussion and Results

An analysis of the research findings indicates that university students who engage in betting regularly, display a higher frequency of betting, and possess diverse motivational factors are characterized by elevated levels of gambling motivation.

These findings are in line with existing research in the literature. A study conducted by Gökce Yüce (2020) revealed that the motivations of individuals who bet on sports are related to factors such as “Making Money”, “Socializing” and “Increasing the Excitement of the Competition” and that these motivations increase the risk of sports betting addiction. In the same study, it was stated that “Entertainment” motivation decreased the risk of addiction. Similarly, in a study conducted by Karlı (2008), personality traits and financial risk-taking attitudes of university students who bet on sports were found to affect their motives for betting. This study suggests that individuals who are extroverted and open to new experiences are more likely to bet on sports and take financial risks.

A study conducted by Özsoy et al. (2014) on high school and university students revealed that there is a significant relationship between students' habits of watching sports media and their frequency of betting. In this study, it was determined that male students had higher rates of participation in betting games and that students with low-income families bet to make money. A study by Neighbors et al. (2002) showed that university students' motivations for betting are related to factors such as making money, entertainment, social interaction and thrill seeking.

These motivations stand out as important factors affecting students' betting behaviors and addiction risks. A study by Shen (2023) emphasized the influence of social norms and peer environment on betting behaviors.

Studies on digital game addiction also present similar findings. For example, Orak et al. (2021) found that the duration and frequency of digital game playing of university students were related to their addiction levels. This finding may also apply to betting behaviors, as individuals who bet longer and more frequently may be at higher risk of addiction. A review by Williams et al. (2012) emphasized that betting behaviors that are common among young adults may turn into problematic betting habits at an older age. This shows that university

students are a group at risk. Delfabbro and King's (2023) research showed that individuals who bet for longer periods of time had higher levels of addiction. These findings suggest that long-term participation makes the behavior habitual and can lead to loss of control over oneself. The accessibility of digital betting platforms and fast transaction opportunities have made betting behaviors of young individuals more frequent.

As a result, university students' motivation to bet shows significant relationships with variables such as addiction level, betting frequency and betting duration. Understanding these relationships is important to control students' betting behaviors and reduce the risks of possible addiction. Therefore, awareness-raising programs and support mechanisms for university students should be developed. In addition, it is important to regulate betting platforms and control their ease of access.

Author contributions

The author contributed to the manuscript's conceptualization, analyzed, editing, and finalization.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Ethical statement

This study was performed in line with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. Approval was granted by the Ethics Committee of University Ardahan (25.10.2024/No. E-67796128-819-2400036068).

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