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## **Sports Betting Has Gone Virtual: A Sociological Analysis of a New Form of Sports Betting Among Youths in Northern Nigeria**

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### Abstract

The paper examined the rise of virtual sports betting among football bettors in Northern Nigeria. The study aims to examine the level of penetration of virtual betting and identify the reasons for the development. The researcher adopted Instant Gratification Model to explain the shift from betting on real-time sports betting to virtual betting in the areas selected for the study. The study has adopted a cross-sectional study design, and data were elicited through mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative). Thirteen interviews were conducted: Six Key Informant Interviews (KII) and seven In-Depth Interviews (IDI) with the sports bettors & operators of sports betting outlets. For the quantitative data, 927 structured questionnaires were administered, while 685 were retrieved from the respondents, indicating a 74% response rate. Qualitative data are presented in a prose style, while quantitative data are presented in a tabular form, of frequency tables and cross-tabulation based on the study's objectives. The study found that most virtual sports bettors were youth and uneducated. It also found that the availability of virtual sports betting 24 hours, unlike actual sporting events, has been identified as one factor that motivates football bettors or gamblers to shift their attention to virtual betting. Furthermore, it found that there are other virtual sporting events like Dog Race and Basketball that attract the bettors' attention to virtual betting. Additionally, the time to finish a virtual football match of fewer than three minutes is also one of the reasons that sports bettors patronize virtual betting because they do not need to wait for 90 minutes to know their fate as in an accurate football match.

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## Introduction

The increasing acceptability of virtual sports betting or technological development has augmented gambling. It has been shifting the attention of the gamblers or bettors from real-time sporting events to virtual which the players are not living organisms. Most sports bettors in the 21st century is not only restricted to placing a bet on real-time or in-play sports events, matches or games. With the aid of computer and internet technology, bookmakers have developed computer-generated sports which provide betting opportunities for the bettors or gamblers, designed based on the real sporting event. Unlike other forms of sports betting, in which the participants in the sports events are human beings, in virtual sports, they are not; they are inanimate players or objects (Alexander Research Center, 2020).

Alexander Research Centre (2020) conceives virtual sports as computer-generated sports in which the progression and outcome are determined by an algorithm that employs Random Number Generators (RNG). The ability of each competitor or team of competitors to predict the parameters of the algorithms depends on their abilities to calculate the odds and permutations of winning the match (for example, teams are not equally standardized, which is the case in real-life sports as well). As a result of the unpredictability aspect, it isn't easy to forecast the outcome of the match or event. These virtual sports are built based on the data of actual sports matches, allowing bettors or gamblers to place bets as they do anywhere, anytime on real sports (Betradar, 2021). With these developments in simulation and virtual sports, a Virtual Football Euro Cup 2021 was organized. There are other virtual sports competitions such as Virtual Tennis In-Play, Virtual Basketball, Virtual Baseball In-Play, Virtual Dogs, and Virtual Horse Racing for betting customers. Virtual Sports betting is available at significant sportsbooks for horse and greyhound racing, tennis, and football. Virtual sports are being utilized as a stopgap for sportsbooks and gamblers, but their popularity is unlikely to last once real-world sports return (Tipi Group, 2020).

In Great Britain alone, between April 2019 to March 2020, sports gamblers have spent £5.68bn gambling on both real and virtual sports betting online. This is an increase from £2.24bn was spent from April 2014 to March 2015 (The Behavioural Insight Team, 2021). It has been established that children and teenagers have had far greater access to mobile phones and tablet devices in recent years, allowing them to play games for hours at home. These games, which typically rely on luck or require little ability, can hold a child's interest for long periods. Although virtual sports have existed since 1961, betting on them has never gained widespread acceptance from 2015 to 2020. A lack of trust in officiating in real sporting events explains the rise in virtual betting and gambling. However, some gamblers believe that the outcome of a virtual match or race is less likely to be trusted. During the COVID-19 epidemic lockdown, virtual sports witnessed a boom in popularity due in part to the success of the Virtual Grand National, which drew 4.8 million spectators and raised £2.6 million for National Health Survey charities in the United Kingdom (Tipi Group, 2020). In 2020, the Supreme Court in the United States declared that fantasy (virtual) sports gambling is legal in the country. This gives major bookmakers in the world bet365 the opportunity to expand their markets in fantasy or virtual sports betting in Africa and Asia-Pacific. Das (2021) states that some countries that are penetrating fantasy or virtual sports gambling companies need a legal framework to regulate their operations, similar to the Nevada Model regulation of fantasy sports gambling. This is because a segment of the population (youth) is attracted to gambling advertisements and is becoming addicted to different forms of sports betting, particularly virtual sports betting (Guillou-Landreat *et al.*, 2021). The study objectives are to examine the level of penetration of virtual betting and identify the reasons for the development. Similarly, the study attempts to answer the following questions: what is the level of virtual sports betting penetration? What is the category of people who are into virtual sports betting? The literature is reviewed based on the objectives of the study: virtual betting and the categories of people involved in virtual sports betting.

Sirola *et al.* (2021) examined the impact of technology on the development of gambling. The rise of virtual gambling in the world has created a virtual community that attracts the attention of gamblers and bettors from real-time sports events and gambling opportunities. This has blurred the lines of restriction of illegal gambling in countries where there are

cases of illegal gambling or betting companies and underage betting. The work of Sirola *et al.* has explained how virtual gambling or betting is gaining popularity among customers (bettors/gamblers). However, the study has not explained the categories of people in virtual gambling or betting. Similarly, the researchers sourced their data from Web of Science, PsycINFO, EBSCOhost, and Social Science Premium Collection without physical interaction of the gamblers or bettors, which is one of the limitations of the method adopted in the data collection. Therefore, this study has elicited data from the sports bettors during the fieldwork at some of the sampled sports betting outlets in Kano, Kaduna, and the Nasarawa States on the rise of virtual sports betting.

Gonzalez-Bueso *et al.* (2021) found that in Spain, most virtual betting was on sports games, card games, gambling machines, casino games, lottery games, scratch tickets, and bingo. Technological advancement has aided the sports betting companies in developing fantasy sports or virtual games, gaining acceptability among sports bettors and gamblers. Even though it is not an empirical study, it has identified the virtual sports that most bettors or gamblers place bets on across Europe. Additionally, the study concluded that most people tend to develop disordered gambling behaviour because of how much money they spend on virtual betting in a short time. However, the researchers have not explained why such sports have attracted customers' attention (Bettors/Gamblers).

A cross-sectional study among Finnish gamblers shows that many have shifted their attention to virtual betting. The study revealed that Horse racing is a major sporting event that people in Finland place a bet on it (Palomäki *et al.*, 2021). The researchers sampled 1,634 bettors who are between the ages of 16-34 years old. The study has established that virtual betting is on the rise and has the possibility of replacing real sports because of its increasing popularity and acceptability among regular bettors who were their young age. The result of the study is reliable because it has sampled large respondents who are regular bettors; hence it warrants a conclusion. However, the study has not explained the factor that accounts for the increasing popularity of virtual betting in Finland and among the young Finnish bettors.

Lischer, Steffen, Schwarz & Mathys (2021), in their study on the rise of virtual betting during the COVID-19 lockdown among the Swiss gambler, found that the suspension of all sports and restriction of people during the peak of the virus has compelled the majority of the sports bettors to place a bet on virtual sports online. The longitudinal study focused on casino bettors, and a total of 110 questionnaires were administered three times in 2020 before, during, and after the lockdown. The study concluded that virtual sports availability during the lockdown enabled the bettors to place bets despite the restriction. The study shows that since virtual players are not human beings and the matches are not weekly or on a specific day, the bettors can place them at any time they wish. Additionally, the COVID-19 lockdown has contributed to the popularity of virtual betting among sports bettors and gamblers due to the worldwide stoppage of all sporting events.

Aragay *et al.* (2021) examined the effects of addiction to online betting among youth in Spain. The study sampled patients who visited a Clinic in the Department of Mental Health Consorci Sanitari de Terrassa, Terrassa. The researchers sampled 873 patients for the study and found 32 (3.7%) were online sports bettors and 841 (96.3%) were virtual slot machine gamblers. The mean age was  $45 \pm 13$  years, and 94.3% were men. The majority of the addicted gamblers who had university education place bets on virtual games and slot machines. This is because almost all the traditional types of betting have developed virtual alternatives targeting youth and adolescents. The work of Aragay *et al.* shows the relationship between excessive exposure to online betting, virtual betting, and health disorder among youth and adolescent bettors.

Brock & Johnson (2021) examined the increasing what they called "gambification" of digital games by sport betting bookmakers in the world. The study found that almost all real-life sporting events have a replica in virtual sports which gamblers are wagering on. Therefore, esports bettors are shifting from real-time sports to video games in betting shops and online. This implies that sports bettors no longer play video games for leisure but for

money.

Similarly, Ströbel, Stieler & Stegmann (2021) believed that the digital transformation in sports had affected sports betting worldwide. Sports bettors are now moving to computer-generated games to place bets more than actual sporting events. Educated and young gamblers are becoming addicted to virtual or fantasy sports betting in developed and developing economies which is detrimental to the gambling business in real-time sporting events. This study in Nigeria has focused on the disruption of the real-time betting business caused by virtual sports betting. However, Ströbel, Stieler & Stegmann have identified what accounts for the rise of virtual sports betting among young, educated gamblers: digital development.

Stark & Robinson (2021) assessed the positive impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on the development of virtual sports betting in the world. As sports and other activities were shut down during the lockdown, gamblers or bettors had no option but to turn to fantasy or virtual sports to place a bet. The researchers found that COVID-19 has entirely changed the interface or landscape of gambling. It has exposed gamblers to gambling on inanimate games generated by computers using an advanced algorithm to determine the winner of the match or race, depending on the sport. With these developments, most sports betting companies have started adding new options of virtual sports betting, games, and race which appeal to the bettors and gamblers. These are some prudent business strategies to recover the financial losses incurred during the COVID-19 lockdown. There are plans in some countries, such as Brazil, to legalize virtual sports betting, while in the USA, it was legalized in 2020, specifically in Nevada.

An empirical study was conducted by Dib *et al.* (2021) on excessive virtual betting and gambling among young adolescents in Lebanese schools. The researchers elicited data for five months, January to May 2019. A total of 1810 samples of adolescents from 14-17 years old were randomly selected from 16 Secondary Schools (Mohafazat) in Lebanon. The study found that the majority of adolescents are addicted to internet use, virtual gaming, betting, and other social and health disorders. This study has identified people's age and educational level in virtual gambling/betting in Lebanon. Similarly, another related factor identified in the study is that internet connectivity has also aided their exposure to different forms of betting. However, the study could not elicit data on the type of sports that most of the adolescents' bettors often place bets or gamble on. Therefore, this study in some selected states in Northern Nigeria has identified many of the sports betting customers patronized.

Matama, Mbago & Ngoboka (2021) studied the rise of virtual betting in Uganda. The researcher adopted a cross-sectional and descriptive study design to elicit nationwide data. The study found that most sports bettors, particularly football bettors, are turning to virtual sports betting because of the need for instant gratification. Therefore, instant gratification behaviour has been the major factor driving gamblers away from placing a bet on real-time sporting events in the country because it takes time to finish a live football match at least ninety minutes. At the same time, in virtual, it is three minutes. This indicates that virtual sports provide instant gratification where a better does not have to wait for hours before knowing the outcome of a match or race as it is obtainable in real sports or games. Similarly, the work of Matama, Mbago & Ngoboka has focused on the monetary reward that motivates people to engage in virtual gambling/betting. The study has not explained whether it is easier to place a bet on virtual than on real sports or not. Also, the study has not explained whether it is cheaper to place a bet on virtual than on real-time matches or games.

In Poland, Lelonek-Kuleta & Bartczuk (2021) have conducted a study on the rise of e-sport and virtual in the country. The researchers elicited information from 438 randomly selected gamblers and bettors across the country for study. The study revealed that the instantaneous nature of virtual betting enticed most bettors; that is, a match does not last more than three minutes to finish (it is called pay-to-win payment in Poland). Also, the study found that most young people who place a bet on virtual are also addicted to internet betting and gaming. Similarly, virtual betting is common for gamblers with a gambling disorder; therefore, engagement in virtual is considered one of their coping strategies with gambling addiction.

Lelonek-Kuleta & Bartczuk has indicated that engaging in virtual betting is common among people exposed to other forms of gambling and betting. It further shows that it is common among people with knowledge and experience of internet betting. However, the study has not explained the advantage the bettors are deriving from virtual that is not obtainable in real-time betting. This study in Nigeria has elicited data from respondents who stated reasons that motivated them to concentrate on virtual betting than real-time betting.

González-Vallés, Barquero-Cabrero, Caldevilla-Domínguez & Barrientos-Báez (2021) conducted a cross-sectional on what motivates University students to virtual and online sports betting in Madrid, Spain. The researchers sampled all public Universities in Madrid and administered 1032 questionnaires to young students about sports betting on real-time and virtual games. The researchers used factor analysis and analysed the data elicited from the regular bettors in public universities in Madrid. It has been found that the majority of sports bettors were influenced to start placing a bet on virtual sports by tipsters. This shows that the tipsters give them hope of winning bets on virtual sports than on real-time sporting events. The study indicated that most of the bettors who are into virtual betting have a history of being addicted to sports betting on live sports before they migrated to virtual. However, the study has not stated other motivating factor that influences young University students into virtual betting apart from the influence of tipsters. Similarly, the study has not explained why the students at public universities alone were selected for the study and were prone to virtual betting. Nonetheless, the study has revealed the category of people who are into virtual betting and their level of education.

Chinyama (2021) in a study conducted in Malawi on adolescents' engagement in sports betting. The researcher found that the country's significant population of sports bettors has turned to virtual betting because of the drive to get money quickly. The researcher adopted ethnographic approaches where observations and interviews were conducted in the sports betting kiosks in some selected areas in the country and found that poverty was among the factors that drive sports bettors to virtual betting. This is because the majority of the bettors cannot wait for the weekly football matches in Europe or other parts of the world, while virtual betting provides opportunities for round-the-clock sporting events to place a bet. Additionally, the study has explained that the bookmakers' advertisement or promotion of virtual betting has also contributed to the shift to virtual betting by the adolescents' sports bettors. The work of Chinyama has not only identified the category of people who are into virtual betting but also identified other contributing factors that led to the spread of virtual sports betting in the country. However, the ethnographic study has not sampled prominent participants to generalize the findings. Still, the findings are reliable because they were based on the bettors' views and actions, not the perception of non-bettors.

Shi, Colder, Potenza & Turner (2021) conducted a systematic review of the literature and found that internet gambling has made some youth vulnerable to different forms of betting and hence addicted to gambling and betting. The study revealed that a large population of these youths is now converging on virtual video gaming to place a bet. The study shows that there is difficulty in imposing age restrictions on virtual betting because of the availability of the internet, where the bettors do not necessarily need to be physically present in the betting outlets or kiosks. Despite Shi, Colder, Potenza & Turner is not empirical research. It has identified some variables that contributed to the proliferation of virtual betting among youth that as exposure to internet betting before joining virtual betting was among the primary drivers.

In a study carried out in the United Kingdom on gambling during COVID-19, Emond, Nairn, Collard & Hollén (2021) elicited quantitative data from 2,632 young adults across the Kingdom. The study found that due to restrictions on movement and social gathering at the height of the pandemic, the Government has suspended all sports in compliance with the measures to curb its spread by the health agencies. As a result of the closure or lockdown, gamblers resorted to virtual sports to place a bet. Most gamblers of bettors moved to online poker, bingo, and casino games to place a bet in the United Kingdom. The study concluded that there was an increase in the frequency of virtual betting or gambling during the lockdown, whereas offline gambling activities decreased. The study shows that sports

betting companies or bookmakers are giving gamblers or bettors to place a bet whenever the real sports are unavailable in a circumstance like COVID-19 lockdown, mid-season, or end of the season break.

Theoretical Framework: Austrian Psychologist Walter Mischel popularized Delayed Gratification and Instant Gratification (1930-2018). In this study, Instant Gratification Model is adopted. This is because the model states that the urge to feel pleasure or fulfilment of desire without delay or deferral is known as instant gratification. It is, in essence, when you want it and want it now. This theory has its roots in the work of the psychoanalytic theory, Sigmund Freud. He explained the role of ego in balancing the id's instant or immediate pleasure-driven desires of the id with the morality-driven choices of the superego (David & Jack, 1989). Virtual sports betting is a form of instant gratification where the bettors' bets on races or matches take less than three minutes to know the contest's winner. That is, the desire for immediate results of the bet and money has been one of the factors driving gamblers and bettors to shift their interest to virtual sports betting in Nigeria.

## **Method**

A cross-sectional study was conducted in Kaduna, Kano, and the Nasarawa States in Northern Nigeria. Both quantitative and qualitative data were elicited from football bettors in the selected States through questionnaires, Key Informant, and In-Depth Interviews. Specifically, the researcher conducted thirteen interviews, Six Key Informant Interviews (KII) and seven In-Depth Interviews (IDI) with the sports bettors & operators of sports betting outlets. Similarly, 927 structured questionnaires were administered, while 685 were retrieved from the respondents, indicating a 74% response rate. The researcher presented descriptive analysis in a prose style. In contrast, quantitative data were presented in a tabular form, frequency tables, and cross-tabulation based on the study's objectives.

## Result and Discussion

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	435	64.3
Female	250	36.4
Total	685	100
<b>Age</b>		
15-20	193	28.4
25-30	246	36.2
35-40	173	25.5
40 and above	67	9.9
Total	679	100
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	323	48.6
Married	209	31.5
Divorced	132	19.9
Total	664	100
<b>Employment</b>		
Private Business	210	31.2
Fulltime Employment	170	25.2
Temporary Employment	150	22.3
Currently Unemployed	144	21.4
Total	674	100
<b>Educational Level</b>		
No Formal Education	30	4.4
Primary	94	13.9
Secondary	274	40.4
Tertiary	279	41.2
Total	677	100

There is a difference between the total numbers of respondents in each demographic characteristic because some respondents did not select all the options in the questionnaire. Composite Table 1 showed that most of the respondents found at the football betting outlets were males, which constituted 64.3%. However, a sizable number of women, married and single, who were into football in the States surveyed, constituting 35.7%. This signifies the influx of women into football betting, which men in traditional offline gambling overwhelmingly dominated. Similarly, a significant proportion of them is in their youthful years between the ages of 25-30 (36.2%). Some adolescents are also involved in football betting between the ages of 15-20 (28.4%) in the states surveyed. Additionally, the majority of the adults like offline gambling; the findings show that respondents who were 35-40 years old constitute 25.5% and 40 years and above 9.9%. This is due to the relationship between football betting and watching football games adult unlike teenagers and adolescents, do not watch football matches regularly like young people. This explains their low involvement in football betting, which requires understanding football matches before placing a bet.

Table 2: Betting on Virtual Sports

Incidence	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Often	159	25.5
Very Often	247	39.6
Rarely	218	34.9
Total	624	100.0

Table 2 sought the response of football bettors on whether they patronize virtual betting. The results show that football bettors who bet on real-time matches also bet on virtual sporting events. This indicates that most bettors engage in mixed betting, which is virtual and real-time betting.

Qualitative results show that football bettors have started diversifying to virtual betting. The reason adduced from the bettors' responses is that virtual sports betting provides 24 hours opportunities to place a bet either at the betting outlets or using personal internet-connected devices. Also, it could be deduced from their narrations during In-Depth Interviews portrays that the probability or chances of winning a bet in virtual betting are not based on the experience of the bettor but the computer. This shows that even recondite bettors can win a considerable amount of money in virtual, and the experience of veteran bettors cannot make a significant impact. This further implies that the determination of the winner of a match by the advanced algorithm in the computers has been wooing football bettors due to the absence of human error and is obtainable in other sports in determining the winner of a sporting contest.

Table 3: Rate of Bets on Virtual Matches

Rate	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Frequently	123	19.5
Rarely	214	34.0
During season break	206	32.7
When there is no internet service	87	13.8
Total	630	100.0

Table 3 above shows that apart from in-play football matches, football bettors place a bet on virtual, also known as visual, among the local bettors in Northern Nigeria. A significant proportion of the respondents' resort to it when primary European football leagues end (34%). Similarly, 19.5% of the respondents believed that they frequently bet on virtual football matches, and 34.7% resort to virtual games when major European Leagues are on season break or at the end of the season. The season break in Italy, Spain, Germany, France, Russia, and the Netherlands is between Mid-December and early January of every year, a period of extreme cold weather in Europe. In a virtual (visual) bet, it is two football teams playing again each other, one selected by the bettor, and the computer would automatically select the other. The bettor's role in the bet is to select a team and players and wait for the match's outcome in less than ten minutes. This implies that even at the end of football season in different countries, the bettors have an alternative virtual sporting event where they place a bet.



Table 4: Time Spent in the Betting Shop

Time	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Day and Night	128	20.4
5hrs	229	36.5
10hrs	162	25.8
15hrs	109	17.4
Total	628	100

Table 4 shows that 36.5% of the respondents spent five hours in the betting shops playing visual games, selecting matches, printing coupons, and sometimes watching football matches, mostly in mega betting shops in major cities. The results further show that some respondents (20.4%) spend day and night at the betting shops, 25.8% spend 10hrs while 17.4% spend 15hrs at the betting outlets. This signifies that most bettors used to spend time during work, school, or leisure time in the betting shops. It also revealed the extent to which bettors were addicted to staying in the betting shops.

Some male participants aged staff of the Bet9ja Company in No-man's-land, Kano, Keffi, and Kaduna during KII narrated that most players usually come early in the morning. They will come to print the ticket or coupon but will sit for hours. They used to stay long here because our Generator has stable light. The Air Conditioners are working throughout the working hours. We have television sets for live football matches and results for virtual games. This keeps them in this place for a long time. Some of them are here until we close. They sit here to guide some bettors or explain results on the television.

Similarly, the sports bettors during IDI explained why they spend many hours in the betting shops. Most of those who spend hours in the shops have no smartphone or personal computer to bet without coming to betting shops. Also, some preferred to come to the shop to place and watch the virtual matches live as they unfold so that if they win, they can collect their money instantly. Virtual football is more attractive than real football games because of the nature of the players and the time it takes to finish a game. This encourages bettors to be placing bets many times within a short time. It takes only three minutes to finish a football match, ninety minutes in real football. This gives the bettors hope of winning money within a short time; hence place multiple bets in minutes.

Table 5: Virtual Sport with the Highest Bet

Incidence	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Dog Race	159	25.5
Football	247	39.6
Basketball	218	34.9
Total	624	100.0

Table 5 shows that most football bettors in virtual betting places bet on virtual betting (39.6%). This implies that most football bettors place bets on virtual football matches. Similarly, a significant proportion of football bettors place a bet on Dog Racing. This signifies that they are also interested in virtual Dog Racing apart from virtual football.

Similarly, qualitative data elicited during In-Depth Interviews show that virtual football is gaining popularity among football bettors because players' names and clubs are similar to real clubs and players. This shows that the similarity between real and virtual football players and clubs is among the factors that entice bettors on an actual sporting event to virtual betting. The findings further revealed that all sports betting companies offer virtual football betting worldwide. Bet365, Ladbrokes, William Hill, BetVictor, Skybet, Lottomatica, and Sisa are significant bookmakers that offer virtual sports betting worldwide. However, the most popular bookmaker among bettors in Nigeria is Bet365 and Skybet. Additionally, these bookmakers are foreign-based, with only operating agents in Nigeria. Bet365 and Skybet are British-based companies (Bookmakers) that also offer Dog Racing betting.

Table 6: Daily Spending on Virtual Betting

Amount (N)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
100	92	13.4
1000	111	16.2
5000	142	20.7
20,000	131	19.1
30,000	145	21.1
Total	621	90.5

Table 6 shows the amount of money sports bettors spend daily on virtual betting. The result revealed that a significant proportion of the virtual sports bettors could spend at least Thirty Thousand Naira a day on virtual sports betting. This implies that due to the nature of virtual betting, it takes less than three minutes to finish a game, and the games are continuous, non-stop; unlike in real sporting events, which have fixtures, the availability of virtual sporting day-and-night enables the bettors to place a bet frequently and therefore, spend a considerable amount of money stated by the respondents.

Qualitative findings during IDI sessions with some virtual sports bettors have described virtual betting as a captivating event that entices a bettor to bet as often as possible and translates to spending a tremendous amount of money daily. The bettors stated that in less than thirty minutes, one could spend up to One Hundred Thousand Naira because the games are fast, unlike in real-time football or other games betting. Most of the bettors believed that winning a bet in virtual than in a real game and, at the same time, it was easy to lose a substantial amount of money in virtual betting, but the percentage of losing money is higher than that of winning. Additionally, there is no limit in terms of the amount one can place a bet at a time; with One Hundred Naira, there is an option for such an amount.

It could be deduced from both quantitative and qualitative findings that sports bettors are spending a tremendous amount of money on virtual betting, which is greater than the win. Virtual sports bettors are developing an interest in virtual betting because of the different options it offers for the bettors in other sports apart from football. Virtual sports betting creates hope of winning in the bettors' minds because the length of time to finish a game or match is short and encourages them to bet more. This indicates that the bookmakers benefit more from the business than the bettors.

Table 7: Age and Virtual Betting Shop

	Frequency of Virtual Betting					Total
	Everyday	Once	Twice	Thrice	Weekly	
15-20	45	44	35	24	38	186
	34.1	40.8	39.4	30.9	40.8	186.0
	7.1%	6.9%	5.5%	3.8%	6.0%	29.2%
25-30	39	57	46	35	49	226
	41.4	49.6	47.8	37.5	49.6	226.0
	6.1%	8.9%	7.2%	5.5%	7.7%	35.4%
35-40	27	31	37	32	37	164
	30.1	36.0	34.7	27.2	36.0	164.0
	4.2%	4.9%	5.8%	5.0%	5.8%	25.7%
40 and above	6	8	17	15	16	62
	11.4	13.6	13.1	10.3	13.6	62.0
	0.9%	1.3%	2.7%	2.4%	2.5%	9.7%
Total	117	140	135	106	140	638
	117.0	140.0	135.0	106.0	140.0	638.0
	18.3%	21.9%	21.2%	16.6%	21.9%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.018a	12	.115
Likelihood Ratio	18.348	12	.106
N of Valid Cases	638		

Table 7 shows that most of the sports bettors who play virtual betting frequently (35.4%) their age is between 25-30 years old, some teenagers and adolescents play virtual betting frequently (29.2%) 15-20, 35.40 years old bettors constitute 25,7% whereas those who are 40 years and above are 9.7% of the respondents surveyed. This implies that teenagers frequently place a bet on virtual sports. This means there is a relationship between age and the number of times the virtual sports bettor places a bet since the p-value (0.115) of the chi-square is more significant than 5% (0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, which states that there is no relationship between age and the number of times the bettors place a bet; the age of the bettor significantly determines the number of times betting on virtual sports. Thus, football betting is dominated by the youthful population even though a substantial proportion of adults are regular visitors to betting shops.

IDI sessions with football bettors who are into virtual betting and adolescents show that they have developed a habit of placing bets on virtual sports or games at least three times a day. Most interviewees expressed excitement with the innovations in the game-generated games and how ten matches run simultaneously. Additionally, the findings further show that most adolescents or teenagers are jobless and less engaged with other occuppies; hence, they have the time and little money required to place a bet on virtual games. However, some elderly football bettors tend to fear virtual betting, which they call a mysterious game that consumes a vast amount of money within a short time.

Discussion of the Major Findings: The study established that virtual sports betting is prevalent among bettors who are relatively young and literate in the areas studied. This is because playing virtual football betting, combining, and selecting live football matches require some literacy. However, illiterate bettors also engaged in virtual betting with the help of the betting shop operators and friends who assisted them in combining, predicting matches, and interpreting the results at the end of the matches. Notably, the study discovered a shift from real-time football betting to virtual betting, encouraging bettors to place bets

daily and more than once daily. Virtual betting also called visual among most bettors, is a football match in which the computer plays on behalf of the bettors. This correlates with the findings of Lesieur & Klein (1987) in their study on gambling behaviour of high school students in New Jersey, the USA, who found that ninety-one percent of students had gambled at least once in their lifetime. The findings also stated that 86% of the students gambled in the previous year (1986) at least once a week.

The study also established a strong positive relationship between watching football games and participating in football betting. Football fans in most areas dominated football betting. However, a small proportion of football bettors had no interest in watching football matches yet were into football betting. Watching football frequently enables the bettors to understand each football club's strength and its players' capacity. The knowledge and understanding of football clubs, leagues, and players help to predict the correct outcome of a match or matches and hence win money, but it is not relevant in virtual betting. The findings of this study correlate with the finding of Lopez-Gonzalez, Griffiths & Estévez (2018), which examined the relationship between watching live 5football matches and the severity of betting in Spain. The study concludes that fans watching live sports events, both mediated and in stadia, have witnessed increased sports betting.

## Conclusion

Virtual sports betting is designed in the same format as natural sports completion in the world, giving sports bettors an avalanche of options to place a bet. In virtual football, each league fashioned in line with the top European Football Leagues has 16 teams; a season has 240 fixtures, 30 matches per day, and eight consecutive matches.

Other virtual sports betting that majority of the sports bettors in Nigeria place most the betting is Dog Race. Dog race offers 30 races in one hour on different distances, 360m, and 720m. There are tracks day and night in the Dog racing with three categories: forecast (it allows the bettors to bet on the final position of each race. The bettors are expected to select the Dog that will come first and second in the race), tricast (the bettors have the option of placing a bet on the Dog that will come first, second and can include the one that will come to the third position) and combination bets (a bettor must predict the three Dogs that will finish first, second and third regardless of the order).

The availability of betting options offered by bookmakers in different virtual sports betting has been the reason why the majority of the bettors who bet on real sporting events are migrating to virtual sports betting in Northern Nigeria. The virtual sports betting market is booming because of the amount of money the bettors spend within a short period, and the amount of money the bettors win is not commensurate with the loss. Similarly, one of the most significant advantages of virtual sports betting over real-time is that available at any time of the day; the bettors can either visit betting outlets to play or use the internet-connected device to place a bet. The bettors do not need to wait for a fixed date for the events as it is obtainable in actual sporting events. Additionally, it has been observed that there are dedicated television channels on satellite that show live games and results of virtual betting. Therefore, the desire for betting or gambling and the pleasure of winning money day and night portrays the suitability of the Instant Gratification Model adopted in this study. These forms of gambling or sports betting are among young people who are educated or studying in tertiary institutions of learning in Nigeria.

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