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Relationship Between Online Gambling And Sneaking Tendencies Among Boarding Senior Secondary School Students In Kyuso Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract: ***This study investigated the influence of online gambling on the growing trend of sneaking behaviour among secondary school students. In the investigation, the researcher mainly aimed to establish the relationship between online gambling and sneaking tendencies among boarding senior secondary school students, in Kyuso sub-county, Kenya. The study employed a mixed-methods research design aiming to generate data-driven findings, and give insights to education stakeholders, school administrations, and policy makers in addressing the socio-educational challenges posed by online gambling. The research, guided by the Social Learning Theory and the Rational Addiction Theory, targeted all students in all the nine boarding senior secondary schools in Kyuso sub-county. Using stratified random sampling to identify student-respondents in co-educational schools, simple random sampling in single-gender schools and purposive sampling for teachers, a sample of 360 students and 18 teachers was selected. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptives and inferential statistics and hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment correlation. The findings indicated that online gambling and sneaking tendencies were positive and significant correlates, r (337) =.547, p =.000. The findings were discussed, conclusions drawn and recommendations for policy and practice as well as for further research were given.***

Keywords: Online Gambling, Sneaking Tendencies, Boarding Senior Secondary Schools

I. INTRODUCTION

Prevalence of online betting has been on the rise in Kenya, particularly among youth. This can be attributed to widespread availability of smartphones and mobile money platforms (Abdille, 2024). The addictive nature of betting and its illusion of effortless access to wealth have lured many young people into harmful behaviours (Jones & Johnson 2024). In most boarding schools in Kyuso Sub-county, Kenya, administrators have reported increased incidents of students sneaking out or smuggling phones into schools aiming to engage in betting activities. This trend not only threatens student welfare but also disrupts the academic environment and causes low academic achievement thus undermining the goals of secondary education (Nderitu et al., 2024). This study, therefore, sought to find out the correlation between sneaking and online gambling in Kyuso Sub-county, since very few studies across the world had been done to explore the association between the two variables.

Adeleke and Odeyemi (2021) posit that, among other forms of delinquency, students sneak mobile phones into schools. Elsewhere, research has shown that, despite different policies and restrictions put in place to minimize academic distractions caused by students' use of cell phones in schools, students have come up with sneaky ways of ensuring they have their phones all the time (Prothero, 2024).

Other studies have proven that electronic gaming and online betting are significantly related to students' sneaking

tendencies (Ayala-Rojas et al., 2023; Riley et al., 2021; Sywelem & Alotaibi, 2024). Online betting, which is highly addictive and compulsive, has made many adolescents so used to phones that they suffer from nomophobia (Buctot et al., 2020). Such students will do everything possible to ensure they have their phones in school.

According to Collins English Dictionary (2025) sneaking implies walking somewhere furtively to avoid being noticed. As per the same source, to sneak may also suggest to stealthily smuggle an illegal item into an unauthorized place. This study therefore conceptualized sneaking tendencies as the propensity by students to engage in unlawful secretive behaviour.

Globally, research has shown that sneaking is a significant correlate of online gambling alongside other elements of indiscipline. A study carried out in Australia indicated that school-going adolescents were so addicted to online gambling that some did it even at school. This means that the students had to sneak into a safe place to carry out gambling which is illegal (Hing et al., 2024). These findings are corroborated by investigations carried out in Spain and Sweden which found out that school going adolescents were addicted to illegal online gambling. This suggests that they had to sneak to hidden places to be able to achieve it (Montiel et al., 2021; Spangberg et al., 2023). This suggests that internet gambling is likely to be one of the reasons for this problematic smartphone addiction, given that it is connected to the possibility of financial gain (Al-Manum et al., 2023; Buctot et al., 2020

In Africa, an investigation conducted in Nigeria by Adeleke & Odeyemi (2021) found out that, among other forms of delinquency, students were sneaking mobile phones into school. Adeleke and Odeyemi further established that students overindulged in phone use where sports betting was one of the key addictions. Similar findings were posted in an investigation done in Ghana (Paintsil, 2023).

In Kenya, Okoti (2020) carried out an investigation in Mumias East Sub County, which established that students were so addicted to betting that some could not complete their school assignments. Another study done in Elgon Sub County revealed that students were sneaking out of school and some were possessing phones in school. This suggests that some of the phones could have been used for betting (Tikoko & Kimame, 2022). Machoka (2020) did an investigation in Nairobi, Kenya, which found out that students had been so addicted to gambling that they skived lessons to engage in betting.

Given the findings of the studies discussed, it was reasonable to believe that there is a significant relationship between sneaking tendencies and online gambling among secondary school students. This study therefore aimed at establishing whether there was a statistically significant correlation between sneaking and online gambling, particularly in Kyuso Sub-county, Kenya.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Cases of students sneaking in and out of boarding secondary schools in Kyuso Sub-county, Kenya, have been on the rise, with emerging evidence pointing to online betting as a major motivating factor. The addictive allure of potential monetary rewards, combined with peer influence, has made online betting an attractive activity among students in Kyuso Sub-county. This behaviour has far-reaching consequences on academic performance, student safety, and overall school discipline. Without a clear understanding of how online betting contributes to sneaking behaviour, school administrators and educational policy makers are ill-equipped to design effective preventive measures, lack of which may put students' summative academic achievement at risk.

As administrative reports indicate, no school in Kyuso Sub-county allows students to have phones in school. Nevertheless, students have been repeatedly caught with phones in schools where they are outlawed. This is despite the fact that thorough searches are conducted at the school gates when students are reporting back. This means that students have sneaky ways of getting their phones into school (Mwenesi, 2024).

Therefore, the main question is why students are bent on sneaking out of schools and smuggling phones into school compounds, regardless of the risk it poses to their academic performance and completion of schooling. Inquiries into this matter have given rise to the information that a number of students have been reported to squander money meant for school fees or shopping on online betting (Gachie 2025; Olukya, 2024) which, in a school setting, can only be done using a smartphone. In other schools, teachers and school administrators have reported that some cases of theft, habitual borrowing and insatiable begging for money from parents, guardians and relatives by students, while in school, are attributed to online gambling which is extremely addictive and compulsive (Victor et al., 2024). Given that limited research has been done on these variables, the current study was meant to find out if a study done in Kyuso Sub-county would establish any statistically significant relationship between online betting and sneaking tendencies among boarding senior secondary school students in Kyuso Sub-county, Kenya.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

This study was guided by the following specific objective:

- ✓ To establish whether there is a relationship between online gambling and sneaking tendencies among students in boarding senior secondary schools in Kyuso Sub-county, Kenya

STUDY HYPOTHESIS

This study was guided by the following hypothesis:

H_{01}. There is no statistically significant relationship between online gambling and sneaking tendencies among boarding senior secondary school students in Kyuso Sub-county, Kenya.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was based on two main theories namely the Social Learning Theory (Bandura 1977) and the Rational Addiction Theory (Gary Beker & Kevin Murphy, 1988).

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SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY (BANDURA, 1977)

The Social Learning Theory (SLT) was developed by Albert Bandura in 1977. According to this theory, people learn behaviours, attitudes and values by observing what others do, a process Bandura called modelling. Modelling involves people, especially adolescents learning behaviours like gambling and sneaking from those who surround them such as media personalities, parents, teachers or peers.

Another key element of the SLT is reinforcement. When an individual begins engaging in a certain learned behaviour, they may be motivated more by encouraging outcomes of the behaviour or acknowledgement from those who are old in the behaviour. For instance, if an adolescent engages in betting and manages to win some finances or is cheered up by peers, they feel motivated to sink deeper into the behaviour. The same case applies to one who engages in a risky activity like sneaking and escapes being caught and punished. The thrill of successful sneaking and congratulatory compliments by peers make them feel even more motivated to go back to the behaviour. SLT also considers environmental influence as another key component of learning. When the social, economic or technological surroundings provide the requisite threshold for the beginning of a certain behaviour, like the availability of smartphones, easy access to the internet, the presence of gambling venues, it makes it easier for those around to start learning the behaviour.

SLT also discusses vicarious learning. When an individual sees others engaging in an apparently enjoyable activity and appearing to gain benefits without immediate negative consequences, they are likely to get encouraged to emulate such a behaviour. For example, if students observe their peers engaging in betting and winning money, or sneaking out of school and going to enjoy life outside school without being caught, they are likely to emulate such behaviours.

In this study, Social Learning Theory is relevant in the discussion of how the surrounding community contributes to online gambling and sneaking among secondary school students. This is because, to a very large extent, deviant behaviours like underage online gambling and sneaking tendencies like smuggling phones into school as well as sneaking out of school are behaviours which are socially learned from peers, relatives or members of the immediate community.

RATIONAL ADDICTION THEORY (BECKER & MURPHY, 1988)

This theory basically posits that individuals are fully rational when engaging in the consumption of an addictive substance or compulsive activity like taking drugs, drinking or gambling. The Rational Addiction Theory (RAT) argues that the individual is fully aware that what they are about to begin doing is addictive and will have consequences in future, an element termed as forward-looking behaviour. For example, in our case, before a student begins engaging in sports betting, they know the activity is addictive and has long-term effects and costs such as financial losses, or the danger of being caught sneaking or betting, and punished or expelled from school. Even so, the student weighs the possible consequences against the pleasure of gambling. The individual, thus, consciously chooses the pleasure of gambling over the safety and well-being of not doing it. The individual mostly chooses the immediate gratification and consciously disregards the likely repercussions.

Another key element of the RAT is addiction reinforcement. This means that the more one indulges in an addictive activity or substance, the greater the future desire for more consumption. This happens due to the accumulated effect of the past consumption of an addictive commodity. In our case, increased involvement in the betting behaviour increases the craving for it to extents of having to risk sneaking out of school or class to carry out betting. In this manner, the intensity of addiction increases with increased daily betting experiences because the students desire to achieve the maximum gains and pleasure in future like winning a mega-jackpot.

The Rational Addiction Theory is an appropriate choice for the present study since it discusses addictive behaviours which involve conscious planning by individuals to engage in an activity like gambling which is highly addictive and whose degree of addiction intensifies with time and more repeated exposure to problematic levels. As per the theory, the desire to achieve more elation, financial gain or the pursuit of recovery of gambling financial losses is likely to make students develop sneaking tendencies in a bid to ensure that they are able to gamble at all cost even if it means risking their continued education. That is probably why students risk smuggling phones into school and boycotting school or some class hours to maximise gambling opportunities.

III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

ONLINE GAMBLING AND SNEAKING TENDENCIES

Across the world, empirical evidence has shown that online gambling among school-going youth is closely related to school avoidance tendencies like truancy and sneaking. Freund et al. (2022) conducted a cross-sectional study in Australia to find out the prevalence and correlates of gambling among Australian high school students. The target population was all students aged 12 – 17 years from Victoria and Queensland states. The study used stratified random sampling to arrive at a sample of 6377 students. Questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect data. Regression analysis was carried out on the data and the findings of the study indicated that students with problem gambling skived classes, others missed school while still others totally dropped out of school. This suggests that they sneaked to hidden locations to be able to carry out gambling activities. Although the study has used strong methodology in data collection and analysis, it bears a limitation in the sense that Australia, being a developed country, could have a socioeconomic and technological context that considerably differs from that of a Kenyan rural setting like Kyuso sub-county.

A similar investigation was performed in the U.S.A by Kurilla et al. (2022). The survey targeted college students in the Mid-Atlantic Region. Using convenience sampling, a

sample of 390 students, 216 females and 174 males averaging at 20.72 years of age, was realised. A correlational research design was employed where data was collected using flyers and analysed by use of descriptive and correlational statistics. The outcomes of the study showed that casino gaming and online gambling resulted in alcohol and drug use which in turn affected class attendance among gambling students by making them avoid lessons. Psychologically speaking, though sneaking has not been explicitly operationalised as a behavioural construct, these findings imply that gambling students are likely to secretly disengage from academic responsibilities which would involve sneaky practices. The study, nevertheless, uses convenience sampling which means the researcher collected data from whoever was available. This may make the sample scarcely representative of the whole population.

At the regional level, research has still indicated the likelihood of a significant correlation between online gambling and sneaking tendencies. Adeleke and Odeyemi (2021) carried out a descriptive survey in order to establish home and school factors leading students to indiscipline in Bwari Area Council of Abuja, Nigeria. The survey targeted all secondary school students in the study area. A sample of 250 students was obtained by way of simple random sampling. Data was collected using questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics. The inquiry revealed that students were sneaking mobile phones into schools and that gambling was one of the elements of indiscipline. These findings suggest a possibility that students were smuggling phones into school, probably, for the purpose of gambling among other reasons. However, the study uses only descriptive statistics which may not give detailed explanation of social phenomena, which would have been aided by use of qualitative methods alongside quantitative techniques.

A corresponding exploration was performed in Ghana (Paintsil, 2023). Guided by Aristotle's Virtue Theory, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Bandura's Social Learning Theory, the study targeted 300 students from which a sample of 17 students was taken using purposive sampling technique. A qualitative research design had been used whereby data collection had been done using semi-structured interviews. The collected data was analysed qualitatively. The exploration revealed that there was overindulgence with phones and cases of class skiving by students. Although gambling has not been explicitly addressed in the study, these results pointed to the possibility of students using phones for gambling. Nevertheless, despite a strong theoretical basis, the investigation was more of a case study leading to a very small population and sample. This could weaken the representativeness of the population and sample for authoritative generalisation of the results.

In Kenya, the studies reviewed suggested a significant relationship between online betting and students' avoidance of academic duties. Machoka (2020) carried out research with a view to establishing the influence of problem gambling behaviour among students in selected universities in Nairobi County, Kenya. The research was based on Icek Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour. The inquiry targeted all students of three universities in Nairobi. Two-stage cluster sampling method had been employed to arrive at a sample of 164 students. Using a descriptive research design, data collection had been executed using questionnaires and analysis done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The study established that students were so addicted to gambling that they deliberately avoided lectures to go gambling. This is an indication that addiction to gambling may make students sneak away from class for purposes of betting. This study, however, was carried out on university students who are adults, not secondary school students.

The findings of the Nairobi study were corroborated by an investigation done in Kiambu County, Kenya (Kariithi, 2024). Based on the Ecological Systems Theory, the research targeted 227 principals, 3479 guidance and counselling heads, and 89,065 learners. Using simple random sampling, the researcher sampled 23 principals, 97 teachers and 398 learners. Correlational research design was utilised. Data was gathered using questionnaires, interviews and field observation schedules, and analysed by way of descriptive statistics. The investigation established that students were sneaking out of school and were using phones in school. It is thus reasonable to infer that some of the phones could have been used for online betting. It is nevertheless not possible to use the Kiambu county-based study to make conclusions on situations in Kyuso sub-county, Kitui County since it is guided by Ecological Systems Theory which overemphasizes on environmental influence and ignores elements of personal interest and initiative as well as addiction, which are key elements in the topic under study.

The studies reviewed across the global, regional and local contexts, on the relationship between gambling and sneaking, consistently agree to the assumption that there is a strong positive correlation between online gambling and school avoidance activities among adolescent students. However, the studies leave clear research gaps like a mismatch of socioeconomic and technological contexts where some studies have been taken from highly developed countries like USA and Australia in which technology-based school rules and school surveillance systems could differ markedly from the status-quo in the rural context of Kyuso Sub-county in a developing country like Kenya. Secondly, in most of the studies, even those carried out in Kenya, sneaking has not been clearly operationalised as a distinct construct as is the interest of the proposed study. Thirdly, a number of studies have displayed a developmental gap in that the studies were done on college and university students whom, in the Kenyan context, do not need to use secret to keep phones since they are allowed by law to have phones in college. Lastly, a number of studies have methodological gaps. For example, some have a challenge with generalisability due to use of convenience sampling and the case study approach.

In view of these research gaps, it is clear that the current study came in handy to operationalise the scarcely researched construct of sneaking tendencies among boarding senior secondary school students in relation to online gambling in a context-specific study that focuses on the rural Kyuso Sub-county, Kenya, to produce data-driven facts which will add to global academic literature.

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IV. METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study used mixed method research design. According to Gregar (2023) this is a design which employs both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. The researcher chose the mixed method approach because the study aimed to collect quantitative data through a questionnaire and qualitative data through interview guides. Data collected and analysed using these varied approaches would give multi-faceted and all-round reliable findings which would help fully understand the phenomenon, measure and generalise the findings. The results, therefore, have the advantage of methodological synergy that emanates from combining the advantages of mixed methods in relatively balanced measure.

PARTICIPANTS

The target population of this study was all the 3630 secondary school students, guidance & counselling teachers, and deputy principals of senior secondary schools with boarding facilities in Kyuso sub-county, and 50 teachers who held the specified offices.

The sample size for student-respondents was calculated using Slovin's (1960) Formula to arrive at a sample of 360 students, 156 boys and 181 girls. Out of these, 337 students responded to the questionnaire, which was equivalent to 93.6%. Out of the 18 teacher- respondents, who were selected by purposive sampling, 17 were available for interview, nine males and eight females. 29.1% of the teachers had been drawn from girls' schools, 29.1% from boy's schools and 41.2% from co-educational schools.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The study employed questionnaires and interview guides as tools for collecting data. The full details of the research instruments are as given.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was used to collect data from the students on online gambling and sneaking tendencies using two scales, each for one variable. The Scale for gambling was adapted and modified from Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) developed by Ferris and Wynne (2001). The original PGSI scale is made up of nine items that measure behavioural symptoms and consequences associated with gambling over the past 12 months. Each of the nine items is rated on a four-point Likert Scale scored thus: 0 = Never, 1 = Sometimes, 2 = Most of the time, 3 = Almost always. The original scale, however, could not be adopted directly since it was originally designed for Canadian adults to test on legally permissible gambling behaviour. It therefore needed to be adapted to fit into the current study topic, which targeted school-going minors in a Kenyan rural setting. This took care of age appropriateness, cultural relevance, and contextual accuracy for boarding senior secondary school students in Kyuso Sub-county, Kenya. The number of items were increased from nine to 25 so as to capture online-specific behaviours, adolescent developmental characteristics, and school-based contextual factors that the original scale does not have. The adjustments were therefore made to reflect gambling behaviours common in Kenyan schools such as mobile phone betting, cross-fence betting efforts and in-school secretive gambling.

The scale for sneaking tendencies was adapted and modified from a Truancy Scale developed by Soetan, Ademikanra and Ekuasemi (2024). The scale has 18 items which are rated on a Five-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree and in which the point values are assigned thus: Strongly agree = 5, Agree = 4, Undecided = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly disagree = 1

The Highest Possible score is 5x18=90 while the lowest possible score is 1x18=18

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The interview guide was used to gather information from different teachers, namely guidance & counselling teachers and deputy principals. It contains six sections. Section A contains five items which focus on background information. Section B has four items which are about Online Gambling. Section C has four items based on sneaking tendencies. Section D combines gender differences and socioeconomic background and has two items. Sections E and F address the role of the surrounding community and remedies, and each has four items.

To confirm the reliability, a pilot study was done in one mixed boarding senior secondary school within Kyuso Sub County which was purposively selected. The selected school was excluded in the main study. During the piloting exercise, questionnaires were administered to 35 students who were equivalent to 10.38% of the main sample in line with the recommendation by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) that a pilot study sample should be at least 10% of the main sample. The deputy principal and the teacher in charge of guidance and counselling in the selected school were involved in the study for providing the qualitative insights. After analysis, the findings of the pilot study came to be consistent with the findings of the main study. The reliability of the instrumenst was ascertained by calculating Cronbach's Alpha using SPSS. The coefficient was 0.86. According to Cronbach (1951), if the coefficient of the Cronbach's alpha exceeds 0.7, the research tool is deemed reliable.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The researcher was granted permission to collect data from the Board of Postgraduate Studies (BPS) of South Eastern Kenya University and a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Further permission was sought from the Deputy County Commissioner and the Sub county Director of Education in charge of Kyuso Sub-county, the area of study. Principals of the selected senior secondary schools were contacted and dates for data collection arranged, both for the pilot study and the main study. Informed consent was sought from the participants and they were assured of confidentiality

of the research findings. Data collection was carried out with the assistance of class teachers from the various schools and classes involved in the exercise.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected by use of the questionnaire was analysed quantitatively. The quantitative data was keyed into the SPSS software (version 26) for analysis. Here, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was calculated to test for the correlation between online gambling and sneaking tendencies so as to show the direction and strength of the correlation. The qualitative data, collected through interviews, was then transcribed. This entailed converting audio recordings into written text. The transcribed data was then cleaned and taken through coding to identify preliminary themes. The identified themes were then developed, refined and transformed into clear theme statements which were then interpreted and aligned with the study objectives and hypotheses to provide the required answers. The findings were then merged with the quantitative findings, integrated and jointly interpreted to draw metainferences and integrated conclusions.

RESULTS

QUESTIONNAIRE RETURN RATE

A questionnaire was administered to collect data on online gambling and sneaking tendencies among the secondary school students enrolled in public boarding secondary schools located in Kyuso Sub County in Kitui County, Kenya. A total of 360 questionnaires were issued to be filled. After collection of the filled questionnaires, a total of 23 questionnaires were excluded from the analysis because some were incomplete in most of the sections while others were inappropriately filled. After the exclusions, a total of 337 questionnaires were cleared to be used in the final analysis. This translated to a return rate of 93.61%. The questionnaire return rate was deemed satisfactory because it complied with Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) recommendation that if the return rate exceeds 70%, the collected data suffices for analysis and drawing of inferences.

INTERVIEW RESPONSE RATE

In this study, interview guides were used to collect qualitative insights regarding online gambling and sneaking tendencies among secondary school students from deputy principals and the teachers appointed to be in charge of guidance and counselling programs in the selected schools. A total of 18 interviews were conducted in an organized face to face interaction. From the collected data, 17 interview guides corresponding to a return rate of 94.44% passed the set exclusion criteria. In line with Best and Khan (2006) suggestion that a good response rate for qualitative analysis should be over 70%, the interview response rate for this study was good.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Different aspects of demographic information were taken note of in this study.

GENDER OF THE RESPONDENTS

This sub section presents statistics regarding the gender of the participants. The sub section is further sub-divided to present data on the gender of the students and a sub section on gender of the teachers who participated in the study.

GENDER OF THE STUDENTS

Both male and female students participated in the exercise of completing the questionnaires for this study. From the scrutiny of the returned questionnaires, Table 1 shows how the response rate was per gender.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	156	46.3
Female	181	53.7
Total	337	100

Table 1: Response Rate per Gender of the Students

Based on the information given in Table 1, out of the total of 337 respondents, there were 156 male participants representing 46.3% of the total number and 181 female respondents representing 53.7% of the total sample. This was occasioned by having a larger number of girls being enrolled in the boarding senior secondary schools in Kyuso Sub County.

GENDER OF THE TEACHERS

The information regarding the gender of the teachers who were interviewed was sought to establish how the participants were distributed across the two genders. Table 4 gives the gender distribution.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	9	52.94
Female	8	47.06
Total	17	100

Table 2: Distribution of Teachers by Gender

As indicated in Table 2, the number of male teachers who were interviewed exceeded their female counterparts by one. Interviewing teachers of both genders was seen as prudent because it helped to get qualitative insights on online gambling and sneaking tendencies from the viewpoints of males as well as the females. This is because the opinions and the vigilance of the members of the different genders in observing students engagement in vices such as sneaking behaviours and involvement in gambling activities may also vary.

AGE OF THE STUDENT-RESPONDENTS

Since the age of a student may determine the students' engagement in online gambling and sneaking tendencies, this study sought to analyse the ages of the students who were

involved. These were grouped into three categories as follows; 1=below 15 years, 2=15-19 years and 3= 20 years and above. The distribution of the participants across the age categories was as displayed in figure l.

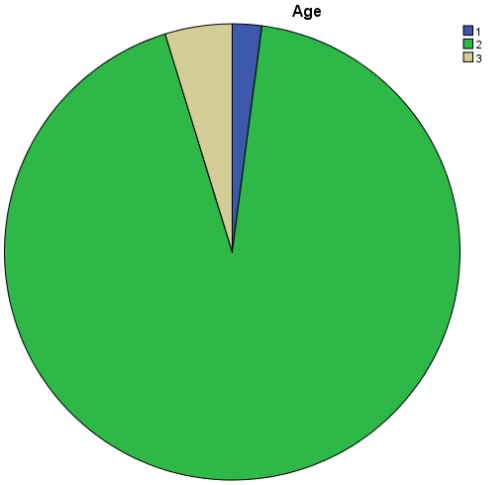

Figure 1: Pie chart showing Distribution of the Ages of Participants

As indicated in Figure 1, 2.1% of the respondents were below 15 years of age, 92.7 %, constituting the majority of the respondents were aged 15-19 years while 4.7 % of the respondents were at the age of 20 years and above. There was a small proportion of the respondents representing 0.03% that did not indicate their age.

As observed in the presented results regarding age, the majority of the participants were aged between 15 and 19. In this stage, the adolescents keep on exploring towards self-discovery and identity development. Such individuals have a likelihood of engaging in online gambling and sneaking as they strive to identify with and seek acceptance by their peers.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ONLINE GAMBLING AND SNEAKING TENDENCIES

The objective of this study was to determine whether a significant relationship exists between online gambling and sneaking tendencies among senior secondary school students enrolled in the boarding senior secondary schools within Kyuso Sub County. In the context of this study, online gambling was operationalized as risking money in placing bets on internet based games with the intention of winning higher amounts of money. Sneaking tendencies were operationalized as the tendency of secretly engaging in unlawful actions such as smuggling items including mobile phones into the school or eloping from the school to go to engage in unacceptable activities including online gambling. In efforts to achieve this objective, various analyses were done as described.

DESCRIPTIVES FOR ONLINE GAMBLING

The scores which had been obtained in the questionnaires for online gambling scale were analysed in order to generate key descriptives for this scale which include mean, standard deviations, minimum and maximum scores. This analysis resulted to the data presented in Table 3.

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total Online Gambling Score	337	27	103	40.22	12.067

Table 3: Descriptives for online gambling

Table 3 indicates that the participants obtained a mean of 40.22 (S.D= 12.067) in the online gambling scale. Based on the criteria provided for interpreting scores for this scale, a mean of 40.22 indicates that the students engaged in problem gambling.

DESCRIPTIVES FOR SNEAKING TENDENCIES

The scores which had been obtained in the sneaking tendencies scale were also subjected to analysis in attempts to obtain the results presented in Table 4.

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total Sneaking Tendencies Score	337	17	74	24.87	10.48

Table 4: Descriptives for Sneaking Tendencies

Based on the interpretation criteria for this scale, a mean of 24.87, as indicated in Table 4, implies that on average, the students enrolled in boarding secondary schools in Kyuso Sub County, Kenya had low sneaking tendency.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Based on the specific objective of the study, a null hypothesis was advanced as follows:

H_{01}: There is no statistically significant relationship between online gambling and sneaking tendencies among students in boarding senior secondary schools in Kyuso Sub County, Kenya.

Pearson product moment correlation test was done with the aid of SPSS (Version 26) to test the null hypothesis. The results of the correlation were as presented in Table 5.

	Total Online Gambling Score	Total Sneaking Tendencies Score
Total Online Gambling Score	1	.547**
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.000
N	337	337
Total Sneaking Tendencies Score	.547**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	—
N	337	337

*Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Table 5: Relationship between Online Gambling and Sneaking Tendencies

From the statistics presented in Table 5, the results for the relationship between online gambling and sneaking tendencies were as follows; $r(337)=.547$, $p=.000$. These results indicate that there is a significant, positive, moderate relationship between online gambling and sneaking tendencies. The null hypothesis which had been advanced, therefore, was not supported. For this reason, the null hypothesis was rejected and it was held that online gambling and sneaking tendencies have a significant relationship and are positive correlates.

ISSN: 2394-4404

Interview Data Analysis

A total of 18 respondents who comprised of deputy principals and teachers in charge of guidance and counselling were interviewed to give their views on online gambling and sneaking tendencies among the boarding senior secondary school students in Kyuso Sub County, Kenya. From these, 17 interview guides were cleared for analysis. The interview questions were generated in line with the questionnaire items in the respective scales of the questionnaire.

DATA CODING

The qualitative data was taken through the coding process by the researcher in liaison with the lecturers in the Department of Educational Psychology in the School of Education, SEKU. This was done with the aid of Nvivo software.

For enhanced understanding, an excerpt of the responses was extracted and presented. A pseudonym was used to hide the actual identity of the respondent.

Mr. John: This was a male deputy principal working in a boys boarding senior secondary school. The teacher reported that the boys occasionally engaged in online gambling and preferred betting sites and aviator. The teacher highlighted mobile phones as the main device for online gambling. On interrogation on the factors that motivate the students to engage on online gambling, peer pressure and desire for financial gain were cited. Sneaking was reported to be minimal, especially to buy snacks while phones were smuggled mainly during the monthly outings and when students were going to hospital. The deputy principal noted that employing watchmen was the key security measure which had been put in place in the school. When prompted to suggest ways of curbing online gambling and sneaking tendencies, suspension of the culprits and having active guidance and counselling services were suggested.

Almost the same trend of responses, though with variations, cut across the various respondents as summarised in the section of major themes.

MAJOR THEMES

The researcher came up with two major themes based on the repeated responses among the interviewees.

a. NATURE AND DRIVERS OF ONLINE GAMBLING

This was a prominent theme in the findings whereby all the respondents acknowledged that online gambling was evident among the students enrolled in the boarding senior secondary schools in Kyuso Sub County, Kenya. 88.2% and 82.4% of the respondents identified sport betting and aviator respectively as two online gambling platforms which were frequently utilized by the students for placing bets. 100% of the respondents attested that online betting was done using mobile phones. Peer influence emerged as the common motivator for online gambling though other students engaged in online gambling for financial gain.

b. SNEAKING TENDENCIES

The respondents perceived sneaking as occurring occasionally rather than frequently. All the participants concurred that sneaking tendencies were an issue of disciplinary concern among the students in boarding senior secondary schools in Kyuso Sub County, Kenya. Some of the reasons which were cited for sneaking were purchasing food (76.5%), obtaining drugs (58.8%) and collecting or using mobile phones (52.9%). 94.1% of the respondents reported that students smuggled phones into the school vicinity to use them in online gambling among other uses. The mobile phones were concealed within books, hidden near the school fence to be collected later or received through the members of the surrounding community. The remedial measures to sneaking tendencies in schools include fencing, employing guards, installing CCTV cameras, carrying out random inspection and confiscating unauthorized items.

V. DISCUSSION

The data that was analysed in this study was collected using questionnaires and interview guides. The questionnaires were filled by 337 students (Boys =156, Girls =181) while the respondents of the interview were 17 constituting of eight deputy principals and nine teachers who were in charge of guidance and counselling departments in their respective schools.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ONLINE GAMBLING AND SNEAKING TENDENCIES

In response to the specific objective of the study, the data regarding the two variables was collected using questionnaires. The results of the data analysis revealed that r (337) =.547 P= .000 indicating that the two variables were significant positive correlates. This implies that an increase in the rates of engagement in online gambling contributes to a proportional increase in sneaking tendencies while a decline in engagement in online gambling results to a decrease in the sneaking tendencies. These findings were supported by the qualitative findings whereby 52.9% of the respondents reported that students in boarding senior secondary schools sneaked out of school to collect and use mobile phones. Since mobile phones were identified by 94.1% of the respondents as an enabler to gambling, it is indicative that one of the main uses of mobile phones among the students was involvement in online gambling. The findings of the current study were consistent to the findings of the reviewed studies which correlated online gambling and sneaking tendencies. For instance, a cross sectional study that was done in Australia by Freund et al. (2022) established that engagement in problem gambling was a factor that motivated students to skip classes and go to engage in gambling related activities. Similar findings had been reported by, Kurilla et al. (2022) out of their study done in U.S.A. This affirms that there is a significant association between online gambling and sneaking tendencies in both developed and developing countries.

Based on the qualitative findings of the current study, 82.4% of the respondents identified peer pressure as a factor that motivates students to engage in online gambling. This is in line with the explanations offered by the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) that individuals learn behaviour from others. The peers influence their fellow students to engage in online gambling which in turn predisposes them to sneaking tendencies. The findings also are supported by the tenets of Rational Addiction Theory (Becker & Murphy, 1988) that individuals engage in addictive behaviours while fully aware of the consequences. Whereas online gambling has both positive and negative consequences, many students engage in the activity in pursuit of the positive outcomes such as getting money. This desire drives them to sneak in order to access devices which facilitate online gambling.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

In line with the objectives of this study and the established findings, it is concluded that online gambling and sneaking tendencies are positive and significant correlates among boarding senior secondary school students in Kyuso Sub County, Kenya.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings and conclusions made in this study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- ✓ Boarding senior secondary school administrators should install CCTV cameras and mobile phone detection devices within the schools to ensure that there is adequate surveillance to deter smuggling and other covert delinquent behaviours among learners.
- ✓ School administrators should empower guidance and counseling departments in their schools in order to offer peer support and guidance and mitigate sneaking and gambling behaviours among students.
- ✓ The government should sensitize the communities surrounding the boarding senior secondary schools on how they can cooperate with school administrators to help avert online gambling activities as individuals or through community associations such as bodaboda riders associations.
- ✓ The government through, the ministry of education, should formulate and implement a clear policy on how online gambling, sneaking tendencies and other related indiscipline issues should be handled in order to ensure that a fair and firm method of dealing with the vices is available

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following recommendations for further research are given:

- ✓ Studies on the relationship between online gambling and sneaking tendencies can be done among learners of a different level of education such as middle level colleges or boarding junior secondary schools in order to generate findings that may explain the relationship among the variables in such populations.
- ✓ Future studies are recommended to focus on different categories of schools like day senior secondary schools in order to yield findings which can be used for comparison purposes.

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