

## **GAMBLING: THE SOCIAL-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF SPORTS BETTING ON UGANDAN YOUTH; THE CASE OF MBALE YOUTH**

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Worldwide, there is a tremendous increase in the level of gambling activity for example *approximately 70% of Australians participated in some form of gambling in 2009* (Australian Productivity Commission Report on Gambling 2010) and that two out of every three Americans place a bet every year (Jones, 2004). According to Basham and White (2002) "heightened public awareness and participation in gambling has sparked considerable debate about its economic viability and its overall effect on society". This may explain why some countries are now legalizing gambling with an objective of balancing budget deficits and creating a safe betting gambling environment.

From a social point of view, Schwabish (2002) asserts that opponents of gambling point to a series of negative spillover effects, which include increases in crime, health disorders, addiction, family problems among others. Gambling, and more specifically, excessive gambling, is associated with a number of poor physiological and psychosocial outcomes (Shaffer, LaPlante, et al., 2004). However some scholars disagree suggesting that consumers are the best judges of their own welfare and that evidence from leading industrialized democracies indicates that most people who gamble do so willingly and rationally, and to them it is as a form of entertainment. Moran (1998) states, "*It would be unreasonable to curtail the enjoyment that the vast majority obtain from the activity [gambling] because of a tiny minority*".

NORC (1999) estimates that 33.8% of gamblers reported that they were in poor or fair health and it has been found that in places where gambling exists, there is crime, corrupts public officials, destroys families and addiction (Basham and White, 2002). Of particular concern is the high though steady prevalence of gambling among youth (Korn, 2000).