



Football betting among the youths in Lira municipality: Will livelihoods improve?

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Abstract

Football betting is a complex and polarising issue in several urban centres in Uganda. This study explores the practice through a situation analysis of Lira Municipality, where a longitudinal study, incorporating three participatory methods (participant observation, interviews and storytelling) among twenty-eight participants was undertaken. Emerging themes were grouped into pathways of youth livelihood, football betting as a source of livelihood, the *raison d'être* for football betting, approaches used in football betting, and manoeuvring insubordination. It is noted that even if football betting is one of the *ways* of life that a number of youths have followed for some time; to others, pleasure, entertainment and a temporary livelihood strategy from which they will eventually “move on” are the key drivers. Since the government of Uganda decided to accredit a number of sports betting companies offering the service, the study reveals that the practice of football betting is expected to endure in future notwithstanding fresh bet-stars are conscripted or other sources of income be set up. While many the youths view football betting as a shameful activity that they would prefer to avoid if they had alternatives, a number of them consider football betting as a central part of their livelihood through which they can fulfil the expectations of their families and share responsibilities as members of the household. The study concludes that recognising those that perceive football betting as a provisional stage and those that perceive it as a livelihood path are important as the interventions to improve the youth livelihoods.

Keywords: Lira; Football Betting; Livelihoods; Poverty; Youth Bet-Stars

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Cite this article as: Mwesigwa, D. (2018), “Football betting among the youths in Lira municipality: Will livelihoods improve?”, *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, Vol. 7 No. 4, pp. 1299-1316.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, there have been rising curiosity in studying the source of youth livelihood in various global and continental frameworks. For example, Giovanni et al. (2017) considered financial crises on youth unemployment in the OECD countries; Bangura (2016) examined the youth livelihoods in Sierra Leone; Artner (2013) reviewed youth unemployment in the European Union; Fergusson and Yeates (2013) reconsidered the discourses on youth unemployment; and Egwavo (2010) appraised the incidence of poverty and strategic youth livelihoods in Africa. These selected studies contribute to recuperating the socioeconomic welfare of the youths as well as enlarging present-day consideration of the global youths. Studies recognise the youths as key partners in the sustainable development of Africa that ought to be treasured and fostered (George and Uyaga, 2014:44).

Topical studies focussing on football betting as a growing practice of the youths put emphasis on aspects such as regulation of the betting industry, how bettors and betting are represented (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2017:8), efficacy of the football betting market (Lyóscá and V́rost, 2017:15), or football betting services available in a country (Hoye, 2014). Those studies have not produced satisfactory awareness of the composite systems in which football betting environments are and or have been transformed into one of the sources of livelihood for countless youths. Amongst the principles applied to classify different categories of youths and to differentiate them from non-youths are based on their stance towards government policy (Agweda et al., 2017:172), level of involvement in belligerent activities (Iheriohanma, 2017:79), incidence of addiction to drugs and other incoherent exploits (Chasser, 2016:450) or extent of discrimination from available socio-economic and political spaces (Mitchell et al., 2008:3).

In their study, Akanle and Fageyimbo (2016:3) advocate for a paradigm shift giving prominence to studies on youths away from 'conservative' endeavours that aim to character-assassinate the youths. Instead, as expressed by Torimiro and Kolawole (2017:84), move towards analysing different exaggerations and implications linked to the youths as well as policy concerns in their present environments. However, from cross-cultural points of view, sources of livelihood and football betting among the youths deviate from what it means to be a youth in the modern age. Consequently, acquaintance and reliance on provision tend to form the heart of both modern youths and what Karvonen et al. (2012:35) regard as 'late modern'. This model entails superimposing on the less-developing world using research, media and the contingent agenda of compassionate systems of government. By being present in the public sphere, the youth's spirit on football betting, as one of the sources of livelihood, contradicts many a view on sustainable development that should have been a basis of livelihood – measurable, innovative and sustainable existence (Banu and Fazu, 2017:4). Likewise, by engaging in football betting, the youths are assumed to be 'out-of-place' and violating basic standards considered 'normal' for youth entrepreneurship, in particular, the factors of production (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2017:7).

According to Malual and Mazur (2017) the sources of livelihood for youths in Uganda, is limited but growing. Consequently, mainstream studies put the youths within the perspective of marginalised communities rather than presenting them as an exclusive bloc whose source of livelihood inside society needs probing. In the perspective of susceptible groups, few studies have investigated how the youths take up unconditional

livelihood schemes that are 'external' to the conventional sources of livelihood due to financial uncertainty (De Wet, 2017:7) such as illegal actions (Oriol-Granada et al., 2015:215) and football betting as sources of livelihood (Akanle and Fageyimbo, 2016:15). These studies reveal that, in spite of the risks; such as arrest by the security officials and humiliation from the general public, engagement in such forms of livelihood allows a number of youths to obtain basic necessities for themselves and for their households (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017:iii). While involvement in livelihood activities considered to be marginal compels the youths to contravene ethical, permissible and societal boundaries (Van Der Waal, 2017:230), it facilitates their resilience through every day hardships (Lwasaki, 2014:340), and the livelihood acquired enhances their socioeconomic survival (De Wet, 2017:8).

Available literature reveals that sequences of football betting demonstrate diverse forms of exchange of economic resources between the "affluent" and the "underprivileged" in both Western Europe and USA. Football betting derives from a socio-cultural nuance of the relationship between the "source" and the "beneficiary" (see Akanle and Fageyimbo, 2016). Studies suggest that engaging in football betting draws finances in a number of ways: one particular study reveals that European football betting earned high Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita during the year ending 2015: Italy earned U\$35.273Million, Spain earned U\$34.882Million, and France earned U\$40.083million (Oxford economics, 2017:12). In addition, European football betting generated approximately 216.261 jobs, U\$22.365million to GDP, a betting income of U\$11.234million and betting income tax contribution of U\$1.123million in the United States (*Ibid*, 2017:35-7). Accordingly, sport betting in the USA alone is expected to sustain U\$4billion of direct employment revenue in form of wages, salaries, benefits and tips; as well as U\$7billion of indirect employment revenue, representing U\$11billion of overall employment revenue.

The contribution from direct employment, in terms of sports betting activities, is likely to attain approximately 100,000 jobs in Uganda. In addition, 130,000 of both indirect and induced jobs are expected to be sustained, leading to an overall employment contribution of 200,000 jobs. While football betting is expected to contribute UGX2billion to GDP, the financial contribution, combining central – and local government taxes are expected to grow to UGX3.4 billion. This corresponds to UGX4.3billion of direct economic contribution, UGX1.4billion of acquisition taxes as well as UGX1.2billion of personal revenue tax paid by bettors, all of which accounting for a net increase comparative to the conditional exclusive of official football betting, and UGX1.6billion of indirect contribution. As a result, tax contribution of UGX5.4billion can be split between local gain of UGX2.4billion and central gain of UGX3.7billion.

2. The problem

Approximately a decade now, the government of Uganda embarked on licensing a number of sports betting companies that came up to offer the service. By the end of 2017, the companies had spread like bushfire to nearly every urban centre in the country. As a result, betting halls open at daybreak and close late in the night thus presenting wide opportunities to each bet-star to visit them anytime they wish. Given the view that a number of youths in Uganda are not engaged in gainful employment, sport betting became a relaxation and a

source of livelihood. The betting companies further responded by expanding the number of platforms aimed to make betting more accessible to different youths. Therefore, sport betting is destined to grow into one of the major sources of government revenue as well a source of livelihood for a number of urban youths in Uganda. Nevertheless, a number of officials in government talk ill on the subject of sports betting branding it as non-constructive form of gambling that cannot transform the livelihoods of the youths.

This study attempts to contribute to knowledge on the issue of sports betting as a “burgeoning” source of livelihood amongst a cohort of youths in Lira Municipality, and examines different ways in which football betting is “contributing” to the livelihood of a number of youths in the town. In particular, five themes became visible during the study:

- a) The pathways to youth livelihood
- b) Football betting as one of the sources of youth livelihood
- c) The *raison d'être* for football betting
- d) Approaches used in football betting, and
- e) Manoeuvring insubordination.

The article discusses views of football betting from the participants themselves and how their interest in betting is shaped. Finally, the policy implications of the study are outlined so as to draw attention to a number of suggestions for action.

3. The pathways of livelihood

In this article, livelihood is understood as the means by which communities get along and earn their living (see Neilson and Shonk, 2014:272; Jagger, 2012:72). While other descriptions consider livelihoods in terms of tangible assets, socio-economic activities and individual or group entitlements, during the 2000 - 2010 decade, the use of “livelihoods” to broader social research designated “the means in which communities build up resources to improve their chances of existence” (Baffoe and Matsuda, 2017:717) or “people’s potential to accomplish a particular target by means of accessible provisions” (Abraham and Martin, 2016:388). As a result, contemporary studies (such as Hill, 2017:217) call for “livelihoods” to be treated as one of the elements within the socio-cultural field provided that “the means by which communities obtain a living” are not cut off from their sexual characteristics. This reveals that the field of economic action is but a sub-set of a whole series of interconnected arenas through which community life responds to livelihood strategies. Since this article investigated football betting as a livelihood strategy among a cohort of youths, it is necessary to draw an academic difference between “response strategies” and “livelihood strategies”. Studies indicate that the term response does not suggest that such actions are always successful neither that they do have a price nor entail carrying out a prepared plan. In particular, Shimbowski (2016:422) reveals that to “respond” entails surrendering certain values, and may occur at the expense of other individuals or groups within households and or communities. While response strategies are unstructured approaches instead of harmonised durable actions (Charu and Sukhminder, 2017:59), they sometimes involve making changes so as to ease vulnerability (Deng, 2010:385).

Livelihood strategies are applied within the framework of durable activities, in which individuals and or groups cope with and recover from tension so as to enhance their potential (Okorie and Williams, 2017:228). While several youths in this study engage in temporal football betting to “respond” to lack of reliable income, majority perceive football betting both as a source of livelihood and as a “livelihood strategy”. As a consequence, this brings to the fore “full-time” betting which involves actors that use it as a source of livelihood and “part-time” betting in which actors seldom practice it. The empirical section reveals that these differences are influenced by the level of youths’ involvement, that is, the amount of time they spend at betting centres and the amount of livelihood they obtain from betting compared to other economic activities.

The observed material for this article demonstrates how the youths negotiate their socio-economic lives through betting activities they are involved in, both in their own right and as an essential element. Consequently, four field visits were conducted between September 2017 and February 2018 supplemented by a brief follow-up visit in March 2018 aimed to document stability and change in the livelihood strategies of the selected cohort. A range of participatory methods were used to obtain the views, aid their participation in the research and enhance the relationship between the researcher and the participants. According to Ni Laoire (2015:473), participatory methods enable participants to share diverse issues and personal stories. These included participant observation, casual interviews and story-telling at four betting centres in Lira town. One of the key subjects in the study was the interpretation of youths’ livelihood pathways in the budding economic sector of the municipality. Applied to the lives of such youths whose rhetoric is presented here and following the livelihood pathways involved finding out how the youth’s livelihoods followed particular trends, how these trends changed or remained unchanged, as well as how changes between groups overlap to sway their engagement (see Zhang et al., 2016:161). This reveals a longitudinal approach to figure out key directions albeit over a period (Reilly and Newton, 2011:303) so as to respond to the question of why certain sets are essential and how these practices are interlaced with durable socio-economic environments.

4. Football betting as a livelihood path

In Lira, football betting is considered to be one of the unconstructive social practices or a socioeconomic digression; the consequence of which can be alleviated by creating awareness among the bet-stars. Football betting relates to the practice of gambling, sustained by the economic system as well as public policy; it is widespread in a number of urban centres in Uganda, Lira inclusive. However, this condition differs from illegitimate gambling in which law enforcement agencies will prefer criminal charges against the perpetrators. Consequently, many the youths reveal that they do not only watch football through what Akindes (2011:218) calls “football transnational television” but recognise it as one of the sources of livelihood. They do so by placing a fee on impending matches so they would be able to earn a higher value as soon as the outcomes of that match meet the bet. While leading perspectives look at football betting as “a non-economic industry” or “crisis of civilisation” practiced by citizens with economic difficulties (Bodin and Robène, 2014:2081); it is an essential way of life for scores of youths (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2017:7). In Lira Municipality, young people are engaged

in one – or a blend of the diverse “strings of football betting” either as a source of livelihood or to supplement unstable forms of livelihood from other activities such as motorcycling and roadside food sale.

An essential aspect in football betting and its continuity is the socio-demographic status of the participants seeing that football betting, rather than working for money, is regarded to be money-making and has to be prioritised. A study by Bruce and Johnson (2006:210) reveal monetary aspects, brain challenge, social relations and pleasure as key drivers for betting. On the whole cohort, using quota sampling technique, none of the betting centres was found to be inactive with no clients. Nonetheless, a fraction of the bet-stars (approximately thirty-eight percent) revealed that they take part in football betting not for profit but as a part of relaxation. The sustenance of football betting in post-war Lira cannot be detached from the socio-economic transformation happening in the region. Over the first half of the decade ending 2020, northern Uganda has experienced fast politico-economic transformation.

Following the disbandment of Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) rebels of Joseph Kony at the end of 2006, and in reaction to the Northern Uganda Recovery Program (NURP), the region espoused a policy which aimed to enhance economic recovery (see for example Riley et al., 2017:82; Drost et al., 2014:127). Subsequent to this, “Northern Uganda Recovery Program” meant attaining socio-economic revival at both community level and household level so as to facilitate economic recovery (Baffoe-Bonnie, 2011:830). This not only rendered a number of citizens, that were returning from Internally Displaced persons’ (IDP) Camps, to the informal sector but also increased the cost of living as basic needs such as food, healthcare, cloth and education were had to obtain (Anying and Gausset, 2017:355). Besides, inequality in terms of intra-regional trade, which a good number of citizens relied upon for revenue prior to the two-decade war, was shattered. As a consequence, the number of Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs) expanded though such NGOs (such as World Vision and Action Aid) operated in Lira town from where they connected to the periphery.

With a population of approximately 408,000 whereby 116,000 are aged between twenty and thirty-nine and annual growth rate of 4.2 per cent (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017:6), Lira stands as a heart of the dynamics that have transformed the region from a war ravaged economy into an economic hub of development in mid-north. While the overall economy of Uganda has experienced sustained growth over the past two decades; and while multidimensional poverty has been reducing; there has not been adequate inclusion of the underprivileged (largely in northern Uganda), hence underscoring problems of disproportion and discrimination both within and between regions (Levine et al., 2014:380). Expanding poverty and inequity are also epitomised by national development strategies that jeopardised livelihoods of the poor and led to increase in the poverty line to approximately twelve per cent over the past decade with Northern Uganda being the most affected (Golooba-Mutebi and Hickey, 2010:1018). Household scarcity in the region is more widespread than general poverty at national level (Mukasa, 2017:360). For example, a number of youth development programmes such as Youth Livelihood and Yes Empowerment Scheme have not been given adequate attention at both national and local government levels. It is in this framework of poverty that the youths are mirrored in ways that they go about everyday lives on the betting centres, with particular prominence on what, how and why they bet as well as what they think about their association to the activity.

5. The *raison d'être* for football betting

The observed subjects demonstrate that poverty is a key factor for the youths to be engaged into sourcing their livelihood on the betting centres (Bruce and Johnson, 2006:210). The need to obtain uncharacteristic return on small investment as well as group excitement, group interaction and leisure time have been mentioned as major factors for the youths being engaged in football betting (Forrest and Simmons, 2009:124). Other captivating motives included by approximately half of the participants (48 percent) revealed that a number of youths were living on their own having either lost both parents during the insurgency or the major bread winner or as a result of divorced parents as illustrated on table 1 below.

Table 1. showing the distribution of reasons for football betting (n=28)

Factor	Percent
The need to obtain uncharacteristic return on small investment	56
Group interaction	12
Shortage of regular household income	10
Leisure and fun making	11
Seeking alternative livelihood path	06
The search for supplementary source of revenue	05
Overall	100

Source: primary data, December 2017

5.1. The need to obtain uncharacteristic return on small investment

As a result, a number of youths at the betting centres revealed that having faced economic hardship as exemplified by one of the participants:

My biological parents passed prematurely on during the LRA insurgency in our region, and when we left the IDP camp, there was nothing I could live on. My friends and I make a decision to start our own life around construction sites and sometimes helping to carry peoples' luggage in the bus park albeit at a small fee. When football betting started, we were told about how it is one of the easy means of making quick and effortless money compared to what we were doing at that time; we did bet for a while but nowadays it is fulltime source of our livelihood. (Participant 04)

The participant, in the excerpt, was observed at one football betting centre every weekend for two months. He revealed that he lived with three siblings in one of the abandoned shanty houses located in the outskirts of Lira Municipality. While the participant was the eldest of the four, all his siblings engaged in football betting on the betting centres as narrated below:

I and my friends bet for money; we bet because we are not as privileged as other children who are lucky to be what they are, otherwise we would have been grateful for being engaged in other sustainable economic activities but unfortunately, we lack start-up capital. Every time we have to meet the most essential necessities such as food and cloth, we simply go betting despite the fact that it's not automatic that every time a bet will go our way – implying that a number of times we lose the bet yet we should carry on. (Participant 04)

Occasionally, expectations that were not fulfilled following disbandment of the IDP camps are one of the aspects that embody some of the youths living conditions. In a narrative of one of the participants about his involvement in football betting, he explained that:

I came to Lira town from Alebtong district; here, I sometimes lend a hand in cleaning the betting centre even if I find it not easy bearing in mind the take-home pay I obtain cannot take care of all our basic needs, as a family. We lack what one can call a home; so we decided to reside in one of the abandoned and condemned quarters next to Teso bar. My siblings and I bet, and this helps out to put food on the table. Nonetheless, I have interest in my education, since i was in school before the insurgency erupted but stopped in primary four and the money earned per day is so little that life is very uncertain. Nonetheless, if we don't pay for our meals, we are likely to die. (Participant X01)

5.2. Group interaction

A participant revealed that group interaction (especially the two factors of group solidity and group communication) is one of the essential motives for a number of youths engaging in football betting. Approximately every one of the youths that took part in the study (eighty-seven percent) revealed that they were initiated into football betting by a colleague given that a good number of them were not willing to place any penny in gambling. While a small number of use as low as UGX1000 to place a bet on several matches, a budding number has started placing more money on a single bet in particular the so called big games such as the Manchester derby, El Classico, and the North London derby. A close review of the findings indicates that about fifty percent of the participants placed more than UGX5000 on big matches hoping for greater returns. This condition, when coupled with group interaction, leads the youths to engage in football betting. Also, a number of youths in this study (thirty-four per cent) were either novices or less informed as regards football betting. Despite the belief that a good number of youths that frequent the betting centres in Lira Municipality are either slum dwellers or the unemployed; majority of them (sixty-two percent) are engaged in some form of income generating activity such as motorcycling and or road side food vending as proved by a participant:

My friends and I are not just occupied by football betting but we carry out other income generating errands; I ride a motorcycle while three of my colleagues own market stalls in the main market. We got to know about football betting through a friend who intimated that on a lucky day he earned approximately UGX100 000 having invested less than UGX10 000. We looked at it as an opening of not only earning speedy money but also earning with little or no effort. (Participant X12)

5.3. Scarcity of regular household income

The consequence of what the youths do to obtain family livelihoods reveals absence of regular income. Football betting becomes a key alternative for the youths who are in charge of their personal wellbeing and that of

others within the households. Further, given that a number of parents cannot meet all the school requirements, students turn to sports betting during holidays and weekends:

I don't have as much as money necessary to meet all the necessary requirements for school such as exercise books, pens and uniform. The uniform and exercise books that I have been using were a contribution to me by a close family companion. Even then, I have never worn any sports ware since I cannot have the funds for them. Yet, I don't want to keep on disrupting my school time. Given that my parents cannot find more money to meet all our school requirements, I do a little sport betting on weekends and during school vacation so as to be able to meet some of my basic needs. (Participant X05)

Reminiscent of the case of participant X05, for many boys the reason for being involved in football betting is scarcity at the household level. In such circumstances, football betting guarantees their essential needs are met, and it further enhances their capacity to contribute to the livelihood of the household. As a result, by betting and supporting their households, the youth betters achieve a social and helpful role in everyday living. Moreover, a number of participants in the study revealed the moral obligation of reducing reliance on the parents, and the value of sharing the financial gain from football betting with their family upon returning home:

I do not like going back home without some money to make available; it is an embarrassment. For me to only sit and wait for our aging and weak parent to provide for us is ethically deplorable. Besides, to keep requesting my mother for some 'small' money in the morning as school lunch makes me uncomfortable. So I go out to find other source of livelihood and earn money, through football betting. (Participant X08)

5.4. Seeking alternative livelihood path

The above patterns explain how youths' engagement in seeking alternative livelihood paths plays an essential part in enhancing household livelihoods. While a number of youths do not always visit the betting centres, they do in order to contribute to the livelihood needed to sustain the household. The parents praise and appreciate the contribution made by their sons, which consequently brings about a sense of belonging and solidarity in the household. Unlike fulltime bettors who appear to be disconnected from their households or have a relaxed exploit of their time, many a youths in this study came to the Lira Municipality with the purpose of taking advantage of its livelihood-generating possibilities such as sports betting. As a result, instead of spending their income, such youths go back home and contribute towards the welfare of their households. However, not all the youths bet all the time hence revealing the volatility of sports betting as an activity:

My brother and I don't bet every day. Our father meets the family's livelihood needs. He gets a good amount of money as his salary but ends up spending it out with his friends at the drinking joint. He comes home very drunk almost daily, and sometimes he never returns home at all. He infrequently gives my mother money, even to pay for house rental fee. Our mother has some little source of income. She makes local brew called 'Kong-Lango' which she sells on weekends. Looking

at our mum, she looks so much stressed that we go out and do some business - sports betting as a way of relieving her though not so much. She blesses us seeing that we are doing this to lend a hand both to her and ourselves. (Participant X04)

Likewise, a different participant explains how his cyclic practice in football betting started three years back:

I first came to Lira town with one of my acquaintances and met up with a number of other youths from my sub county. Whereas I am a student, after school, I inform my mother that I am going to play football but I end up hanging out with my buddies to bet here. I like football betting seeing that brings a lot of fun than keeping at home. However, whenever my sister tells our mother that I am doing football betting, she punishes me a lot. (Participant X06)

The above excerpts demonstrate that the involvement of youths in football betting is described by both the need to maintain daily income and to affirm the choice on an individual by “going out to mingle and enjoy with colleagues”, as expressed by Participant X06. By spending time in the town, a number of youths appear to have the benefit of each other’s presence and “become excited”. Related to that, several youths akin to participant X06 are attracted to football betting as a way of reducing boredom at home and because of the pressure from their friends that come with new issues and tales from the town. However, the youths appear to benefit from diverse packages obtainable in the town. It was observed that the youths have right of entry to different sports betting centres depending on their individual needs. In cases when they do not have much money on them, they collect the little that there is so as to make a bet. But when they have the lowest amount enough to make bet, they have a tendency to go to different betting centres and make a number of bets so as to circumvent having “all eggs in one basket”.

5.5. Searching for supplementary sources of income

Mixing football betting with other casual sources of livelihood is a widespread livelihood strategy for several youths. The youths that were reached during the study earn their livelihoods from engaging in a variety of money-making activities including casual work and road side food vending. In order to enhance the household livelihood, a number of female youths have a tendency of engaging in multiple sexual activities with older and or well-to-do men. This raises their threat of infection with sexually transmitted diseases such as Human immuno-deficiency virus. Several households were reported to endure with severe economic difficulties, in particular as households lack steady sources of income given that football betting is not reliable. Consequently, the youths get involved in various livelihood-generating activities to contribute to household livelihoods by attending to taxis, washing cars, and or hawking items such as fried ground nuts and second-hand clothes. Nonetheless, during the months preceding this study, the expected and real amount of livelihood such households obtain from betting centres has suffered strain as demonstrated by the following extract from one of the interviews:

Sometimes these police officers in our town do arrest a number of youths on the pretext of ‘idle and disorderly’. They pick them from the betting centres and none of the arrested will be released

without paying a non-refundable fee ranging between UGX50, 000 and UGX80, 000. This amount demanded by the Police is not only inappropriate but pushes back the youths to the very conditions they are struggling to run past. (Participant X08)

The interview with Participant X08 reveals that there are uncertainties over whether football betting is an officially permitted activity or football betting is synonymous to idleness since few youths have access to the enabling law and as a result the police exploit that vacuum.

6. Approaches used in football betting

One of the primary approaches in football betting, according to Participants, is to be brave and persistent. Being persistent is not only the key to success but also an indication that the youths do not take “Losing” as a curse:

If I bet today and I do not win anything, I cannot keep lamenting over that loss instead I keep trying over and over again. If I still do not win, I consult from my friends about the trends of particular football clubs during previous seasons. By the way, consultation has helped me a great deal seeing that a number of bettors conduct research before placing their bet; by requesting them to guide me about the probability of a particular team winning or losing or even ending in a draw, I am better placed to reduce chances of losing a bet. Some of my friends have been betting for more than three years so I try to tap into their expertise given the fact that I am still an amateur in the business of football betting. That way, I persuade colleagues to guide me but if I do not win anything, I may change my tactic of betting, and perhaps bet for individual matches separately rather than combining several matches into a single bet. (Participant X07)

In lira, the youths engage in a number of strands of football betting. These include “single-handed betting” in which one can choose to bet alone and receive the resources alone rather than making a complex bet. Others, however, perform “cluster football betting”. Some bettors also prefer “online betting”, while others use their cell phone to send “short-message-service football betting”. In all these contexts, “cell phone football betting”, in which they are able to check for updates at places of their comfort and obtain their win through the “mobile-money-service”. This is due to the fact that the potential for football betting varies considerably according to a range of complex push-pull factors that tend to keep the bettors “on the lookout” as explained:

A number of European football clubs that were previously under dogs have graduated to a level where the former “big-four” or “big-six” have sometimes been left with bruises, for example, Leicester city, Burnley, or Southampton in European premier league (EPL), has been tricky. The so called big-four or big-six dominated the EPL stage for a longer time but now things have changed and they are likely to change forever. As a consequence, it has become very difficult to predict the outcome of any match which is why one needs to be very careful by conducting some form of research before placing your bet. (Participant X01)

Similarly, a different participant revealed that rich football clubs in Europe such as Real Madrid and Barcelona (Spain), Bayern Munich (Germany), Paris saint Germaine (France), Manchester united; Chelsea and Manchester city (England) will set much money to a preferred rising star with intention to have him in their club. He mentioned examples like Manchester united which bought Pogba at approximately ninety million pounds from Juventus football club; Paris saint Germaine bought Neymar Junior at approximately 400 million pounds from Barcelona football club and Barcelona bought Philippe Cortino approximately 110 million pounds from Liverpool football club.

The participants in the interview revealed that not all the youths have a comparable approach when betting. A number of them have the humility to enquire from other people for help; that's why new bettors desire to relate with them so as to gain knowledge of the dynamics involved. They also pointed out that cluster betting is not only a combined endeavour necessitating commitment of every individual member, but also an action in which it is not easy to become accepted by all members of the group because of the sentiment that the lowest amount of money necessary to place a bet is little enough to be afforded by everyone. New bet-stars are expected to find out from the established one, who is either older in age or more experienced in football betting, so as to learn the styles and routines of the activity. The inexperienced ones often bet with their friends, unlike the experienced ones who bet without help:

"I started betting with my some friends of mine for about two years now. But as I grew up, I started to go betting on my own and yes, I continue to enjoy the game" (Participant).

A somewhat more trendy approach which seems to create a centre of attention is on-line or e-football betting which is done through the internet. The youths can either sit down in the internet cafe or make use of their smart phone to place their bets. Using the internet makes betting user-friendly to the bet-stars who do not have to individually visit the betting hall to place their bet or go back to receive their money, if they have won the bet. This approach has become popular including the elite who otherwise fear being associated with betting activities and betting centres due to the negative perception associated with betting as an activity of the "less educated" youths. Using the internet, betting youths describe the dynamics of their everyday lives and their enthusiasm to engage in football betting with no difficulty while earning whichever livelihood. In their account, while a number of youths compare "ideal-for-some time" with esteem to what betting does not provide, they also describe how betting provides them with spaces for livelihoods which other small-scale businesses require.

What the previous debate underscores is that bet-stars use multiple approaches depending on different contexts. These range from those in which they recount their problems to those involving representing themselves as elites so as to gain some livelihood, which often accompanied by group football betting. The seemingly chaotic world of youth bet-stars and their involvement in football betting tends to have its own net source of livelihoods and hierarchies. During my successive periods of field source of livelihood, the youth demonstrated, defined and redefined, in various ways, how those of them who came closer to me for the first time were the "legitimate group" source of livelihood. As a result, this group remained very much intact while it was in contact with me, and the other youths who joined the study later on were either prevented from participating freely in some of the activities or had to obtain specific permission to do so. In such contexts, the

youths might seem to be involved in conflicts over scarce resources, in this instance, over my attention as their common friend.

However, they were also seen as frequently giving each other information about potential livelihood possibilities, as much as they competed to secure the best out of them. They cooperated and helped each other in various ways, saving and sharing material and emotional resources, exchanging skills, supporting each other, and defending their group, all of which activities were based on friendship, personal proximity and group affinity. The finding contradicts (Schlecht et al 2013:235) study of youths in northern Uganda that their livelihoods are characterised by conflict and post-war conditions rather than interdependence. In this study, the complex lives of the youths demonstrated that they had a considerable interdependent group dynamic through which they converted their impoverishment into viable youth livelihood strategies.

7. Maneuvering insubordination

Football betting is complex with respect to the ways in which youths perceive and associate themselves with the activity. Youth bet-stars employ a range of strategies to negotiate and resist their insubordinate position as bet-stars. For example, I observed that some youths frequently isolated themselves in response to perceived and real hostility by avoiding any direct face-to-face confrontation with people while football betting. Instead, they simply sat, individually or in groups, at football betting halls, and displayed notes about the kind of support they were seeking from the public. Such a practice may be accompanied by the use of slangs that will enable them to speak to one another in a “secret language”. During search of livelihood, I documented the complex ways in which betting youths communicated in slangs that were difficult for an ordinary person to understand. For example, they refer to a bet receipt as *papara* (literally, a paper); *poto* is a win; *lolo* meaning to lose the bet. Such uses of slangs are important ways of adaptation to unforeseen risks and the addictive effects of football betting. As Forrest and Simmons (2009:123) argue in their study of sentiments in betting market on Spanish football, adopting competitive behaviour by profit maximising bookmakers in a market is considered “normal” by the public who can choose between several operators. In this way, the youths not only develop resistance to their exclusion but also counteract the negative perception of the dominant culture that views them as social pariahs infesting public spaces.

8. Discussion

The descriptive accounts of the youths in this study offer lessons into daily lives of betting youths and how they steer the bumpy landscape of in quest of livelihoods in Lira town. They underscore how inter-reliant livelihood strategies of family units form and are formed by the engagement of young people in football betting. The youths have diverse abilities and apply various approaches in football betting; these range from visiting the sport betting centres to online betting. While for a few football betting is a livelihood strategy that they have pursued for a while, for others it is considered as leisure time and a short-term survival tactic from which they will in the end progress. Besides, a number of youths look at football betting as a non-reliable activity that

they would desire to shun if options were available, while others perceive it as an essential component of their lives, an activity on which they obtain effortless livelihoods.

The life of the youths that gamble on the betting centres forever brings multifaceted questions in community. It suggests a visible turn down in the honest financial system, a malfunction of communal values, and an attrition of optimism. In Lira, particularly, the philosophy youth betting liberally suggests a delicate expression on local economic development that is not reliable in a fast growing global economy. One of the excerpts maintains that the community considers football betting as ruining the economic character of potential leaders in the Ugandan society. It is common talk that such youths buttress an impression of Uganda as a country of vulnerability. These talks demonstrate budding households whose ultimate reflection for a while echoes a middle-income style of the youths within and outside the household. Additionally, the activity of football betting disagrees with the principles of a developmental state as well as community progress; the existence of youths on the betting centres being perceived as a symptom of failed growth cannot be underestimated. As mentioned, the youth bet-stars are perceived as engaging in dishonest activities that daunt modest beginnings and are likely to endanger the activities of those entrenched consistent businesses within Lira municipality.

The substance in this article demonstrates that economic spaces of the youths are not obvious by a distinct margin from conventional society. Whilst there appears to be a promising socio-economic separation between the affluent and the underprivileged in present day Lira (Malual and Mazur, 2017), socio-demographic dynamics have embodied sustainable livelihood strategies among a number of post-LRA war youths in the Municipality. As a consequence, the youths have set up ways of bargaining their situation through daily interface with football betting. The study reveals that while the duty for appropriate nurture of youths (and the absence of it) is in part ascribed to household – and community – level dynamics, the legal regime, composition and array of services and economic supplies (Renzaho et al., 2017:15), the two decades of LRA war and the economic circumstances form the sort of livelihoods they and their families take part into. Football betting, as a livelihood strategy, changes as youths experience changes in their common locations alongside their bodily and intellectual development. It is necessary to recognise both those who perceive football betting as a provisional stage in their lives and those who perceive it as a lifestyle, ultimately moving to a comparable shift in their livelihoods.

9. Policy implication

This article has revealed that football betting is not a permanent quandary in the lives of the youths but faces a joust that is centred on level of income as well as accessibility of livelihood and varying skill at the betting centres. The practice of football betting is expected to endure in future albeit fresh bet-stars are conscripted or other sources of income are set up. While the *raison d'être* for football betting amongst the youths in Lira are structural, the ethic conversation in communities is inclined to fault such youths as idlers. Consequently, policies to tackle football betting as a seeming repugnance are informed by emotional guess that the youths are becoming worthless and hazardous. Such a view is not useful, both in logic and from the policy outlook.

Even if many the youth bet-stars in the cohort are feigned as idlers, interventions should not accept these views as givens. A fundamental question to tackle is how these attributed characteristics surfaced and the means in which structural forces of redundancy among the youths keep on influencing their livelihood paths.

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