

# BETTING BEHAVIOUR AS FREE TIME USAGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN BELGRADE

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## INTRODUCTION

“Young people are a group which is most affected by poverty and the world’s economy crisis” [1], says the Serbian Strategic-programming framework of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities. Young people represent a vulnerable target group, by many criteria. The same document says that young people in Serbia are poorly educated and have difficulties in finding a job. In the EU almost 98% of sample finishes high school, and in Serbia only around two thirds. In the year 2007 there were 43,7% unemployed people between the age of 15 and 24. Average waiting time for a job is 4 years. Consequences of this condition are easily predictable. The youth are at risk in finding

## Summary

Among the various forms of filling the leisure of young people in Belgrade, the betting behaviour takes a significant place. That was the reason for research on a sample of 150 of high school students (80 young man, 70 young woman) aged between 15 and 19. The participants filled in a questionnaire containing 48 statements which explicitly and simply describes the forms of betting behaviour, beliefs and feelings of the participants and others towards betting behaviour. The answers include five options, from completely false to completely true. Results point out that betting behaviour is significantly present as a form of entertainment among young men, as well as among young women. Some of the young people, i.e. every tenth person exhibits patterns of addictive behaviour of betting to a concerning degree. Parents’ relationship towards betting is connected to betting behaviour of their children, unless the addictive behaviour occurred.

*Key words: betting office, addictive behaviour, young people, Belgrade*

themselves in grey economy, immigration, crime, and so forth.

Research “Lifestyle of the youth in Serbia” [2] points out a number of problems that young people show when it comes to the usage of free time. It is shown that one of the biggest problems is boredom (35%), while within the most common risk behaviours there are drinking, smoking and sleeping rhythm disorders. Thirty-two percent of high school students get drunk on regular basis, 30% smokes, and 19% has a sleeping rhythm disorder. Nineteen percent of high school students got familiar with risks on the Internet by receiving sexual offers from strangers. Three percent of them have answered

red those offers, and three boys got into trouble due to that sort of communication.

A research about the usage of psychoactive substances [3] find out that 14,2% of primary and high school students have tried psychoactive substances. The most commonly used psychoactive substance for the first contact is marijuana (10,8%), mostly at the age of 15.

A research about pornography and youth in Belgrade [4] shows another form of free time usage. Authors of the research pointed out four typical groups of young people. 9% of the young included in the research form a group of young people with sexually deviant behaviour, 38% form a group of pornography enjoyers, 15% form a group of young people who enjoy pornography although are against it, while the rest form a group of youngsters who simply do not consume pornography.

One of our researches [5] showed a bond between unemployment and tendency to risk behaviour. 78% of unemployed young people are predisposed to risk, unlike the employed young people, where the number is 40%. 27% of employed and 30% of unemployed young people play games of chance. All of the unemployed young people who play games of chance are predisposed to risk, unlike the employed young people, where risk is present in 40% of all cases.

None of the local researches have dealt with the betting behaviour of the

youth. Betting behaviour is one of the entertainment forms young people use to fill their free time and it is close to risk behaviour, such as gambling, because they try to multiply a certain amount of money in an easy way. In the conducted research, our goal was to determine how widespread betting behaviour is among high school students in Belgrade, what motives high school students give for such behaviour, what is the relation that parents and peers have towards betting and what forms of betting behaviour exist.

## METHOD

One hundred and fifty high school students (80 boys and 70 girls) aged between 15 and 19 participated in this research. The participants filled in a questionnaire containing 48 statements, created especially for this research. Every participant was told that the research is directed towards discovering specific forms of behaviour connected to betting and relations towards that sort of activity.

The statements in the questionnaire are formulated in a way which explicitly and simply describes the forms of betting behaviour, beliefs and feelings of the participants and others towards betting behaviour. The answers include five options, from completely false to completely true. All participants have entered the final analysis.

**Table 1. Spreading out of betting behaviour**

<b>Table 1. Spreading out of betting behaviour</b>		
	young man	young woman
visit betting office in spare time	71% <sup>1</sup>	13% <sup>1</sup>
visit betting office nearby their living place	69% <sup>1</sup>	21% <sup>1</sup>
visit betting office frequently	63% <sup>1</sup>	6% <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> the percentage includes answers mostly true and completely true

## RESULTS

The data show (Table 1) a high percentage of young men who go to betting offices in their free time. Also, the percentage of girls going to betting offices is significant. Betting offices nearby the living place are visited more frequently, so betting office can be considered as a gathering place for young people.

A large number of high school students exchange experiences and talks about topics connected to the betting office (Table 2).

High school students evaluate their parents' and relatives' attitude towards betting behaviour differently (Table 3). A relatively high number of youngsters has a permission to bet in betting offices, and a slightly lower number of them hide their betting behaviour from their parents. Regarding the participants' gender, girls notice their family's nega-

tive attitude towards betting more than boys. It is interesting that young people who have permission from their parents to bet, inform their parents about their winning.

High school students state different reasons for their betting behaviour (Table 4). The most common reason is money, followed by fun, getting away from boredom and being with friends.

It was interesting to see how high school students view betting (Table 5). Winning money is, after all, the main motive for betting behaviour. It seems that self estimation of the young people is unrealistic because 43% state they frequently win at betting, 31% state they on average win more than they lose. The answers show that a large number of youngsters invest their win into betting again, and if they lose they bet again to gain it back. A desire to win a large amount of money is pre-

*Table 2. Peers and betting behaviour*

	young man	young woman
we comment winning in betting	78% <sup>1</sup>	27% <sup>1</sup>
I talk about betting with peers	76% <sup>1</sup>	34% <sup>1</sup>
exchange betting experiences with each others	49% <sup>1</sup>	19% <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> the percentage includes answers mostly true and completely true

*Table 3. Parents and betting behaviour*

	young man	young woman
I have permission from my family to bet at betting offices	38% <sup>1</sup>	20% <sup>1</sup>
I let my parents know about my wins	35% <sup>1</sup>	21% <sup>1</sup>
in my family betting is treated as a bad thing	33% <sup>1</sup>	49% <sup>1</sup>
I hide from my parent how often I visit betting offices	29% <sup>1</sup>	7% <sup>1</sup>
I hide betting tickets from my parents	29% <sup>1</sup>	4% <sup>1</sup>
even if I get money I hide it from my parents	23% <sup>1</sup>	9% <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> the percentage includes answers mostly true and completely true

sent among a high number of high school students.

Wins and loses on betting are followed by a certain emotional reaction of the betters (Table 6). In most cases happiness follows winning, and anger follows losing. Also, there exists a strong urge which pushes young people invest their last money in betting for the sake of winning possibility. There is also envy when betters are in presence of those who are winning.

## Factor analysis

Factor analysis of the principal components extracts four factors out of 37 items. The factors are „enjoying betting behaviour“, „passion for betting“, „parental approval of betting behaviour“ and „hiding the betting behaviour from parents“. They cover 61,905% of variance in the following order: 42,082%, 9,353%, 5,426% and 5,043%. The first factor is covered by statements such

<i>Table 4. Motives of betting behaviour</i>		
	young man	young woman
I go to betting offices because of the money	60% <sup>1</sup>	21% <sup>1</sup>
I go to betting offices for fun	48% <sup>1</sup>	14% <sup>1</sup>
I go to betting offices just to spend some free time	35% <sup>1</sup>	9% <sup>1</sup>
I go to betting offices because of friends	34% <sup>1</sup>	10% <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> the percentage includes answers mostly true and completely true

<i>Table 5. Self-evaluation of wins while betting</i>		
	young man	young woman
I often win at betting	43% <sup>1</sup>	10% <sup>1</sup>
I invest my win to betting again	43% <sup>1</sup>	3% <sup>1</sup>
I play for a huge win	38% <sup>1</sup>	9% <sup>1</sup>
I averagely win more than I loose at betting	31% <sup>1</sup>	11% <sup>1</sup>
I play just to gain back what I have invested	31% <sup>1</sup>	4% <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> the percentage includes answers mostly true and completely true

<i>Table 6. Emotional reactions while betting</i>		
	young man	young woman
I am happy when I win at betting	83% <sup>1</sup>	34% <sup>1</sup>
I get angry when I lose at betting	51% <sup>1</sup>	9% <sup>1</sup>
I give my last money on betting because I am sure I will win	24% <sup>1</sup>	7% <sup>1</sup>
I get stressed when I see others win	23% <sup>1</sup>	1% <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> the percentage includes answers mostly true and completely true

as “I am happy when I win at betting”, “I talk about betting with peers”, “I comment winning on betting” and similar. The second factor is covered by statements such as “I will sit in the betting office until I win”, “I invest my last money because I am sure I will win”, “I am able to spend my whole day in the betting office” and similar. The third factor is covered by statements such as “My parents comment on betting in my presence”, “I talk to my parents about betting”, “My parents visit the betting office” and similar. The fourth factor is covered by statements such as “I hide the time I spend at the betting office from my parents”, “I hide my betting tickets from my parents”, “In my family, betting is treated as a bad thing” and similar. Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for the factors mentioned above is as follows 0.960, 0.914, 0.737, 0.720. Inter-

correlation of the given factors shows significant correlation between the enjoying betting behaviour factor and all other factors, and between the passion for betting and hiding it from parents (Table 7).

### Typical forms of betting behaviour

Four groups of betting behaviour (Table 8) have been featured based on hierarchical cluster analysis and canonical discriminant analysis. Those are addiction on betting behaviour (1), betting behaviour as fun and need (2), betting as peer entertainment (3) and avoidance of betting behaviour (4).

Eleven percent of young people show addiction to betting behaviour. They especially show passionate betting behaviour, and then enjoyment in betting behaviour. Betting be-

<i>Table 7. Intercorrelation of principal components</i>				
	1	2	3	4
1. enjoying betting behaviour	1,000	,627 **	,244 **	,230 **
2. passion for betting		1,000	,028	,371 **
3. parental approval of betting behaviour			1,000	-,123
4. hiding betting behaviour from the parents				1,000

\*\* – correlation significant at level .01

<i>Table 8. Arithmetic means of dimensions based on clusters (sorted on second dimension) and percentage of high school students in clusters</i>					
	percentage of high school students	enjoyment in betting behaviour	passion for betting	parental approval of betting behaviour	hiding betting behaviour from the parents
1	11%	0,666	1,482	-0,427	-0,477
2	27%	0,605	0,738	-0,015	1,411
3	27%	0,745	-0,265	0,556	-0,663
4	35%	-1,232	-0,833	-0,271	-0,411

haviour as fun and need is present among 27% of young people. They show equally the enjoyment and passion for betting behaviour, as well as hiding betting behaviour from their parents. Betting behaviour as peer entertainment is present among 27% of young people. They show enjoyment at betting behaviour and parental approval of betting behaviour. Avoidance of betting behaviour is present among 35% of young people.

## DISCUSSION

The research data shows that betting is widely spread among young men. It can be seen as a new form of entertainment and socializing, and one of most common ways high school students spend free time in Belgrade. Girls also take a big part in this activity which shows weakening of borders between strictly male and strictly female forms of entertainment. Parental relation towards betting has shown itself as a significant factor in controlling betting behaviour. In families in which elder members visit betting offices, there is acceptance of such behaviour as normal, and it is freely spoken about betting. High school students from such families consider betting as a form of entertainment. The opposite situation is also present. In families that see betting behaviour as a vice, children usually avoid going to betting offices. Girls are better at understanding parental disapproval and restrictions. However, there is quite a number of high school students who hide their betting behaviour from their parents. With that population betting behaviour takes forms of addiction. Some researches of addict behaviour point out a crucial role of the father in creating the addiction [7]. When a father has a worm relationship with his children, the risk of creating addict behaviour is reduced. It seems that it is better if parents mo-

nitor their children's betting behaviour because passionate betting behaviour is related to parents' disapproval.

It is known that poverty and economy crises enforce tendencies towards risky forms of behaviour. In the introduction part we have introduced a series of researches that show that teenagers in Serbia have stronger tendencies towards risky forms of behaviour such as drinking, smoking, using psychoactive substances and similar. Alcohol and nicotine abuse is characteristic for the whole population in Serbia. It represents a crucial factor of health risk for the population. All these forms of behaviour are classified as addictive diseases. According to psychoanalysis theory, addictive diseases include certain forms of behaviour that are not connected to drug abuse. Physiological addiction is not necessary to diagnose the appearance of addiction [8]. That includes gambling as a form of behaviour that easily becomes a need of a person who practices it, the person starts feeling compulsion to repeat that action and starts feeling addiction to it. Forms of addiction that are not connected to using substances also include internet addiction as a new form of addiction. In any case, there are two types of addiction: character disorder and biological disorder [9]. Addictive character has stereotypical repetitive answers to helplessness through compulsive behaviour. Biological disorder is connected to ventral tegmental dopaminergic pathway disorders.

Betting behaviour is similar to gambling. Therefore, it is possible that betting behaviour develops into pathological behaviour which has addiction characteristics. In our research this point is confirmed by the very high linkage between enjoyment in betting behaviour and passion for betting. Besides, by cluster analysis we have set apart a group of young people who show addictive

betting behaviour. Researches confirm the influence of all three factors on creation and development of addictive disease: biological, individual, then social and environmental [6]. We have not questioned individual characteristics of the participants, but we can assume that all three factors have enforced the emergence of addictive betting behaviour at the sampled high school students group. It is especially significant when the environmental factor is determined, because it is possible to control it and direct it in the wanted direction. Our research showed that family environment is compatible with high school students' behaviour when there are no signs of addictive behaviour. There are two types of this compatibility: when both parents and children are showing a negative relation towards betting behaviour and when betting behaviour is considered as a form of entertainment for both parents and children. In both types we have cases of successful socialization. The children are acting in accordance with their parents' attitudes and behaviour.

The group of young people who see betting behaviour as fun and need hide their behaviour from their parents. This is a sign that they are aware that their behaviour exceeds borders of their parents' approval. This is a group that shows signs of failed socialization. With addict groups there is no consideration for parents. They don't hide their behaviour. We assume that this group is highly influenced by genetical and individual factors which usually influence creation of addictive behaviour forms.

The group of young people who see betting as a fun and need is probably influenced by a special mechanism which turns their behaviour from entertainment to passionate betting behaviour. That mechanism can probably be explained by patterns of reinforcement, characteristic for instrumental

behaviour [10]. If reinforcement is variable and discontinuous, it produces a high level of consistency in behaviour, meaning that the young will continue betting even if they have lost because they expect to win. This pattern of reinforcement leads to a behaviour which is permanent and resistant to extinction. The main reinforcing impetus at betting behaviour is gaining money. Our research confirmed that for young people gaining money is a main motive for betting behaviour, followed by entertainment and being with friends. A big number of young people think that by betting they will get money easily.

## CONCLUSION

There are reasons for treating betting behaviour as a form of addictive behaviour without drug abuse. Just like other forms of addictive behaviour without drug abuse, betting behaviour has different levels and forms of prominence: from sporadical to pathological. We have directed our research towards young people in Belgrade who attend high schools. This is the age in which peer culture influence is strong and peer forms of behaviour are easily assumed. Going to betting offices has become exactly such form of behaviour for young people in Belgrade. It is widely spread among boys, but also present among girls. Betting behaviour is a form of peer entertainment which is approved by a lot of parents (nearly a quarter in our research sample). Although it is a form of peer entertainment, the main reason for it is gaining money, and emotions connected to winning/losing affect persistence of such behaviour. Interestingly, it is not much known or written about betting behaviour, and it is even less researched. We believe that the results of our research can be a good enforcer for future researches in this area.

# KLADIONIČARSKO PONAŠANJE MLADIH U BEOGRADU

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## Kratak sažetak

Među raznim oblicima popunjavanja slobodnog vremena mladih ljudi u Beogradu kladenje zauzima značajno mesto. To je bio razlog za istraživanje na uzorku od 150 srednjoškolaca (80 mladića i 70 devojaka) uzrasta od 15 do 19 godina. Ispitanici su popunili upitnik od 48 stavki koje jasno i jednostavno opisuju oblike kladenja, te uverenja i osećanja ispitanika i drugih prema kladenju. Rezultati ukazuju da je kladenje značajno prisutna kao vid zabave među mladićima, kao i među devojka. Neki od mladića, odnosno svaki deseti, ispoljava obrasce zavisnog ponašanja od kladenja u značajnom stepenu. Roditeljski odnos prema kladenju je povezan sa kladenjem njihove dece, sem u slučaju zavisnog ponašanja.

*Ključne reči: kladionice, adiktivno ponašanje, mladi, Beograd*

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