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The Effect of Motivational Factors on Spectators' Participation in Horse Racing Betting

Ali Chori*¹, Nasser Bai², Hamidreza Ghezelsefloo³

1. Department of Humanities and Sport Science, Gonbad Kavous University, Gonbad Kavous, Iran; Alichorli@yahoo.com (Corresponding Author)
2. Department of Sports Management, Azadshahr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Azadshahr, Iran; Nasser_bay@yahoo.com
3. Department of Humanities and Sport Science, Gonbad Kavous University, Gonbad Kavous, Iran; H_ghezel@yahoo.com

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Abstract

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This research was conducted with the aim of studying the effect of motivational factors on the participation of spectators in betting on horse races. The research adopts an applied and correlational approach, employing a survey methodology for data collection. The statistical population of this research includes all the spectators of the Gonbad Kavous course horse races who have betting experience. A sample of 384 spectators meeting the specified criteria was selected using the available sampling method. Six questionnaires were used to collect research data, which are: Experiences of Excitement, Sense of Competition, Betting Skill, Peer Pressure, Getting Income and Willingness to Betting. The validity of the questionnaires was ensured by expert opinions in sports management, while their reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, yielding values of 0.85, 0.79, 0.89, 0.76, 0.77, and 0.84 for each questionnaire respectively. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze the collected data by utilizing SPSS 25 and Smart PLS 3 software. The results of the research showed that the effect of experiences of excitement on willingness to betting was positive and significant. Also, the results showed that the effect of sense of competition on willingness to betting was positive and significant. It was also found that betting skill has a positive and significant effect on the willingness for betting. The results of the research also showed that the effect of peer pressure on willingness for betting was positive and significant. Finally, the results of the research showed that the effect of getting income on willingness for betting is positive and significant. According to the results, it can be concluded that various motivational factors have an effect on the betting behavior of horse racing spectators. Therefore, it is suggested to consider laws to deal with this phenomenon properly.

Keywords:

Betting Skill, Gonbad Kavous, Horse Racing, Peer Pressure, Spectators.

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Introduction

Sports' betting is the act of wagering on the final outcome or various aspects of national or international sports events. It has gained unprecedented popularity in both developed and developing countries. Many developed countries have experienced remarkable growth in the attractiveness, accessibility, and acceptance of sports betting. Moreover, governments that have legalized sports betting generate significant revenue from the taxes associated with it (Okoti, 2019). In recent years, sports betting have witnessed a substantial increase and stands out as one of the few forms of gambling that has experienced such growth. The number of individuals engaging in sports betting has steadily risen. This improves the position of sports betting to one of the most profitable sectors in the sports industry. Numerous initiatives have been implemented to foster its development (Nweze et al., 2020). Mao and colleagues (2015) assert that the relationship between sports and betting is progressively intensifying, making sports betting one of the most popular endeavors in the field of sports.

Sports events, due to the unpredictability of the results, the widespread appeal of the sports field, and its unique dynamics, have created an attractive environment and conditions for betting (Ayadandeleh et al., 2020). It is worth noting that Australia alone experienced a 16.3 percent annual growth in sports betting between 2017 and 2018, surpassing previous records. The Australian National Gambling Statistics report indicates a 5% increase in total gambling losses, amounting to \$24.89 billion during the same period (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2020). In Europe, online betting revenue increased from 20 billion euros in 2017 to 22.2 billion euros in 2018, representing an 11 percent increase. Sports betting accounted for 42.5 percent of total online betting in Europe, generating an annual income of 9.4 billion euros, highlighting its popularity. Among European countries, Britain has the largest sports betting industry, with an annual income of 2.2 billion euros in 2019 (Spadafora & Martinez, 2021). Currently, sports events offer numerous opportunities for betting, and sports betting have gradually become integrated into the global sports culture over the past decade. Consequently, numerous legal and illegal sports betting centers have emerged, attracting enthusiasts from various social groups (Deanz et al., 2016). The widespread acceptance and popularity of sports betting transcend borders and encompass both developed and developing countries. In response, different developed countries have witnessed the emergence of new forms of sports betting, resulting from the implementation of specific regulatory frameworks by governments. Additionally, states that have legalized gambling benefit significantly from substantial tax revenues (Lole et al., 2019). The expansion of sports betting has led to the creation of new financial markets in sports and has captured the attention of numerous sports and non-sports organizations seeking to capitalize on its advantages (Parke & Parke, 2019). Given the prevalence of sports betting, researchers are actively striving to identify and elucidate the factors that drive individuals to participate in and accept this form of gambling (Johnston & Regan, 2020). Sports events, which offer a wider range of betting options compared to other forms of gambling, are often favored by individuals seeking to test their luck (Thomas et al., 2012).

However, in many countries, including Iran, sports betting is still considered an illegal activity (Soltan Hosseini et al., 2019). Lestra and colleagues (2016) found in their research that the excessive allure of sports betting and its potential benefits have led individuals from different age groups to participate in such activities. However, numerous studies on sports betting have demonstrated that individuals' involvement in such actions can have various physical and psychological consequences for them (Espadafor & Martinez, 2021). Due to the negative financial, physical, and psychological impacts of betting, many studies have attempted to identify the motivational factors influencing this behavior (Hing et al., 2015). The existing research in this area has revealed that factors such as peer pressure, financial gain, excitement, socializing, being with friends, greed, adventure, and risk contribute to people's engagement in sports betting (Keshkar et al., 2020; Ayandele et al., 2020; Killick & Griffith, 2021). Betting, as emphasized by Weerackoon (2015), involves potential risks and benefits for the health, well-being, and crime-related behaviors of individuals, families, and communities. A sport betting, as a concept, gives rise to various phenomena such as significant financial gains, entertainment, excitement, and the realization of dreams. Consequently, it has attracted a significant number of enthusiasts, and many individuals consider it more than just a hobby but a profession (Polat & Yildiz, 2021).

Betting in sports environments is a topic that has received a lot of attention in recent years. Nowadays, betting is an important part of sports and is not limited to a specific sport. Different groups, such as athletes, coaches, spectators, and even managers and staff of sports clubs, can be involved in it. In many sports disciplines, such as horse racing, betting is done in various ways. Sports betting can generate significant revenue for sports teams, leagues, and organizations. As more people engage in sports betting, the demand for sports events and related merchandise increases, leading to increased ticket sales, sponsorships, and merchandise sales. Also, Betting on sports can increase fan engagement. When fans have a financial stake in a game or event, they are more likely to be emotionally invested in the outcome, leading to higher engagement levels, including increased social media interactions, TV viewership, and attendance at games and events.

In Iran, in some sports competitions such as horse racing, the term prediction is used instead of betting, and this work is being implemented legally. With the legalization of this work, the desire of spectators to do this work has increased and people with different motivations participate in it. Since betting in sports can have many negative consequences, both material and immaterial, for different groups, such as sports spectators, and can lead to a loss of interest in sports and increased corruption in sports environments in the long run, it is necessary to have specific rules about it in sports environments. In order to do so, the authorities must first understand what motivates people to bet in sports environments. Horse racing competitions, which are held every year in different seasons in the city of Gonbad-e Kavous, attract a large number of audiences, and betting in these competitions has become one of the most important behaviors of coaches, spectators, and even horse owners. It is necessary for the authorities to investigate the reasons for participating in such behaviors and take appropriate actions. Considering that this subject has not been thoroughly investigated and studied in horse racing competitions, the purpose of this research is to study the effect of motivational factors on spectators' participation in horse racing betting.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted with the purpose of descriptive correlation analysis and data collection was done through a survey. The research was carried out among spectators of horse racing competitions in Gonbad Kavous who had prior experience in betting on these competitions. The size of the statistical population of this study was unknown. For this purpose, the sample size was estimated to be 384 people based on Cochran's formula. The selection of the research sample was done purposefully and the research questionnaires were only given to spectators who had betting experience. Six standard questionnaires were utilized to collect data for this research. The questionnaires and their respective variables are as follows:

Experiences of Excitement: The level of experiences of excitement among participants was measured using the questionnaire developed by [Moghani \(2018\)](#). This questionnaire also comprised 5 items, and its Cronbach's alpha was reported as 0.83.

Sense of Competition: The evaluation of the sense of competition of the studied sample was used to participate in betting from the 4-question questionnaire of [Ghezelseflou \(2020\)](#). This questionnaire has good reliability (0.87).

Betting Skill: The questionnaire developed by [Hing et al. \(2014\)](#) was used to measure the variable of betting skill. This questionnaire consisted of 3 items, and its alpha coefficient was reported as 0.74 by [Hing et al. \(2014\)](#).

Peer Pressure: The variable of peer pressure was measured using the questionnaire developed by [Delfabbro and Thrupp \(2003\)](#). This questionnaire contained 3 items, and its reliability was reported as 0.84 by [Delfabbro and Thrupp \(2003\)](#).

Getting Income: The questionnaire of [Barati et al. \(2018\)](#) was used to evaluate the income variable. This questionnaire consisted of 5 items, and its reliability was reported as 0.87 by [Barati et al. \(2018\)](#).

Willingness to Betting: The questionnaire developed by [Hing et al. \(2009\)](#) was employed to measure the variable of willingness to betting. This questionnaire consisted of 6 items, and its alpha coefficient was reported as 0.88 by [Hing et al. \(2009\)](#).

All five questionnaires used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "I completely disagree" (1) to "I completely agree" (5). To ensure the content validity of the questionnaires, the opinions and suggestions of experts in sports management with a PhD degree were taken into account. Additionally, a preliminary study was conducted to assess the reliability of the questionnaires. Thirty experts in the field of horse racing completed the preliminary questionnaires, and after analyzing the data using Cronbach's alpha test, reliability coefficients of 0.85, 0.79, 0.89, 0.76, 0.77, and 0.84 were calculated for the variables of experiences of excitement, sense of competition, betting skill, peer pressure, getting income and willingness to betting respectively. These coefficients indicate the satisfactory quality of the research tool. After completing the phase of measuring validity and reliability, the research questionnaires were made available to the research sample, and a total of 384 questionnaires were collected and analyzed. The analysis of the collected data in this research was conducted in two sections: descriptive and inferential. In the descriptive section, demographic variables of the sample under study and the research variables were described using frequency, percentage of frequency, mean, and standard deviation. In the inferential section, structural equation modeling and Sobel test were employed. To accomplish this, SPSS software version 23 and Smart PLS version 3 were utilized.

Findings

Table 1- Description of the individual characteristics of the research sample

Variables	Component	Number	Percent
Age	Under 20	19	4.9
	21-30	170	44.4
	31-40	89	23.1
	41 and above	106	27.6
Education	Diploma	143	37.3
	Associate	31	8.1
	BC	113	29.4
	MA	97	25.2
Betting History	1-10	71	18.4
	11-20	235	61.4
	21 and above	78	20.2

In the descriptive part, the results of the descriptive section showed that the highest percentage of the respondents' age is assigned to the research questionnaires related to the age group of 21 to 30 years (44.4%). Also, the results indicated that most of the research sample had education below diploma (37.3 percent). Regarding the history of betting, the highest percentage was related to the group of 11 to 20 years old (61.4%).

Table 2- Descriptive analysis of variables

Variables	Average	Standard deviation
Experiences of Excitement	3.56	0.76
Sense of Competition	3.36	0.77
Betting Skill	3.52	0.88
Peer Pressure	3.46	0.89
Getting Income	3.61	0.72
Willingness to Betting	3.44	0.70

Also the descriptive analysis of the data showed that the six variables of experiences of excitement, sense of competition, betting skill, peer pressure, getting income, willingness to betting have averages of 3.56, 3.36, 3.52, 3.46, 3.61 and 3.44 respectively (Table 2).

Table 3- Data distribution analysis

Variables	Z Value	Sig
Experiences of Excitement	3.525	0.001
Sense of Competition	2.864	0.001
Betting Skill	3.883	0.001
Peer Pressure	4.179	0.001
Getting Income	3.771	0.001
Willingness to Betting	2.469	0.001

The results of the Kolmogorov Smirnov test indicated that the distribution of research data is not normal (Table 3).

Table 4- Indicators of research reliability

Constructs	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted	Cronbach's Alpha
Experiences of Excitement	0.868	0.570	0.812
Sense of Competition	0.874	0.636	0.807
Betting Skill	0.948	0.860	0.918
Peer Pressure	0.961	0.891	0.939
Getting Income	0.864	0.561	0.804
Willingness to Betting	0.885	0.565	0.843

The Fornell & Larcker (1981) triple criteria were considered for internal consistency or reliability of constructs. Investigating the factor load of the observed variables as the first criterion showed that the factor loads and t values obtained for the observed variables were significant at the level of 0.01 (Fig. 2).

The second criterion for assessing the reliability of constructs is the Dillon - Goldstein coefficient or composite reliability (internal consistency index of the model of measurement) of structures, which should be more than 0.7. The values obtained for this index also showed an acceptable reliability of the structures (Table 3). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is the third criterion for assessing the internal consistency of the constructs, which is presented in Table 4. For this criterion, values higher than 0.5 for this criterion are acceptable. According to the results of Table 4, the constructs and their indicators have acceptable reliability for use in research.

Table 5- Results of the diagnostic validity of the research structures

Row	Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Experiences of Excitement	0.755					
2	Sense of Competition	0.767	0.798				
3	Betting Skill	0.740	0.794	0.927			
4	Peer Pressure	0.673	0.715	0.851	0.944		
5	Getting Income	0.694	0.675	0.560	0.461	0.749	
6	Willingness to Betting	0.715	0.725	0.684	0.567	0.693	0.752

According to the results of Table 5, it can be stated that the average root of the extracted variance of the research structures is more than the correlation between the structures. Therefore, the constructs had good diagnostic validity.

Table 6- Results of Construct Cross Validated Community of research structures

Constructs	SSO	SSE	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Experiences of Excitement	1920	1230.475	0.359
Sense of Competition	1536	930.775	0.394
Betting Skill	1152	430.749	0.626
Peer Pressure	1152	377.933	0.672
Getting Income	1920	1254.702	0.347
Willingness to Betting	2304	1397.007	0.394

The Construct Cross Validated Communality presented in Table 6 showed that predictive power of the research structural model is appropriate.

Table 7- Direct and indirect effects in the model

Effects in the model	β	t	Sig
Effect of experiences of excitement on willingness to betting	0.135	3.788	0.000
Effect of sense of competition on willingness to betting	0.551	15.349	0.000
Effect of betting skill on willingness to betting	0.162	3.836	0.000
Effect of peer pressure on willingness to betting	0.122	3.145	0.002
Effect of getting income on willingness to betting	0.080	3.108	0.002

The results of the research showed that the effect of experiences of excitement on willingness to betting was positive and significant ($\beta=0.135$, $t=3.788$). Also, the results showed that the effect of sense of competition on willingness to betting was positive and significant ($\beta=0.551$, $t=15.349$). It was also found that betting skill has a positive and significant effect on the willingness to betting ($\beta=0.162$, $t=3.836$). The results of the research also showed that the effect of peer pressure on willingness to betting was positive and significant ($\beta=0.122$, $t=3.145$). Finally, the results of the research showed that the effect of getting income on willingness to betting is positive and significant ($\beta=0.080$, $t=3.108$) (Table 7 and Figures 1 and 2).

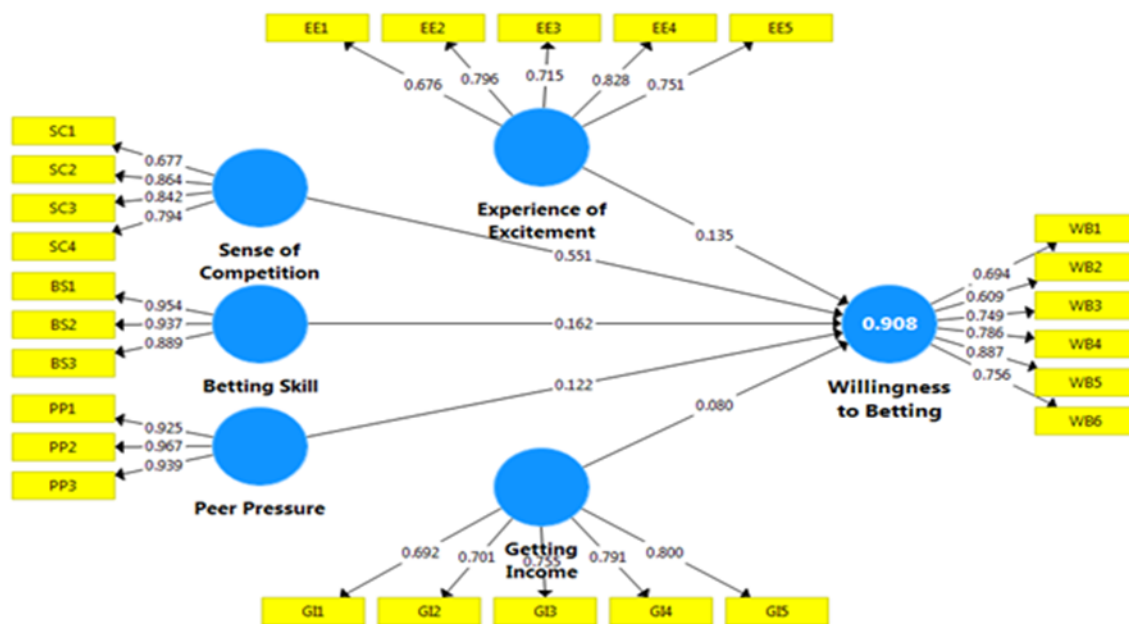


Figure 1. The tested model in the standard estimation mode

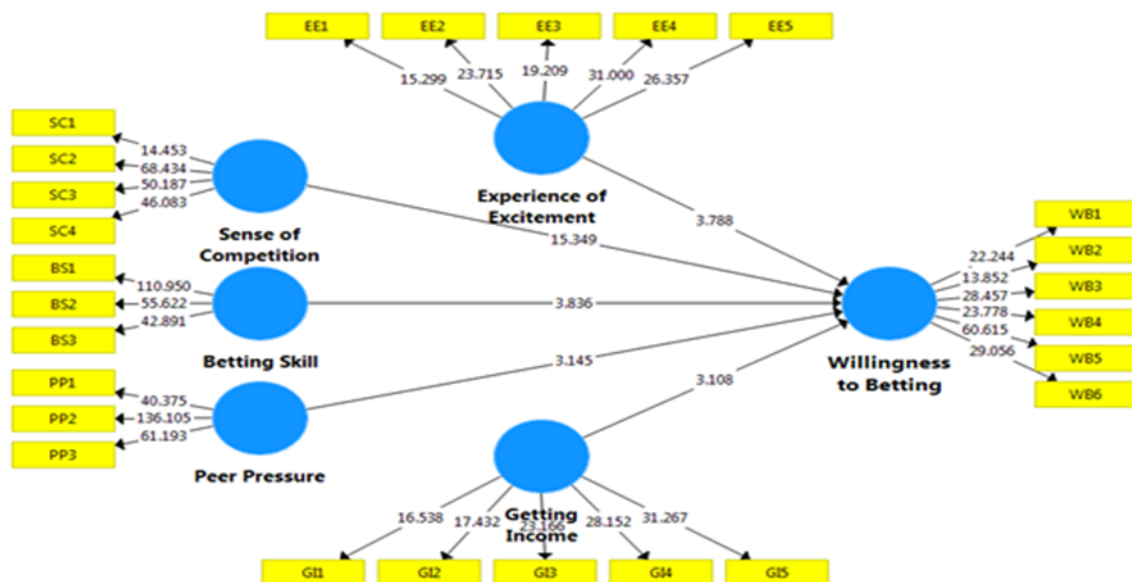


Figure 2. The tested model of the research in the case of significance

Discussion

The main purpose of this research was to study the effect of motivational factors on the participation of spectators in horse racing betting. The results of the research showed that the experience of excitement has a positive and significant effect on the willingness to participate in the betting of horse racing spectators that these findings are consistent with the results of studies conducted by [Soltan Hosseini et al. \(2019\)](#), [Lavoujo et al. \(2020\)](#), and [Killick and Griffiths \(2021\)](#). In recent years, the sports industry has experienced unprecedented growth and development in terms of both quality and quantity. The widespread inclination of individuals towards sports demonstrates the unique capabilities of sports in fulfilling the diverse needs of people in society. One of the most crucial needs of human beings is excitement, and sports can provide an environment for experiencing a range of emotions due to its inherent nature and distinctive features. Betting is a significant aspect of sports that generates high levels of excitement. A considerable part of the thrill in betting arises from the nature of winning and losing in sports competitions. Stress, pressure, and anxiety induced by betting act as driving factors for people to engage in this activity. Conversely, excitement motivates individuals to exhibit more confidence and adopt unconventional approaches to betting. In competitions such as horse racing, the excitement for individuals participating in betting surpasses that of other sports disciplines. This is because there are numerous factors influencing the outcome, making the prediction process more challenging. In such competitions, individuals participating in betting are constantly apprehensive and concerned about the success or failure of the horse they support from the beginning to the end of the competition. Furthermore, since multiple races take place in a single day, the excitement of individuals involved in betting is significantly higher compared to other competitions or sporting events, making these competitions more appealing.

The results of the research showed that the sense of competition has a positive and significant effect on the spectators' willingness to bet on horse races, which is in line with the results of [Ayandele et al's \(2021\)](#) research. The sense of competition can significantly influence an individual's willingness to engage in betting. Research has shown that competition can lead to increased risk-taking behavior, which can manifest in various forms of betting. Studies have demonstrated that competition can lead to increased risk-taking behavior. For instance, a study on the effect of competition on risk taking in contests found that individuals are more likely to take risks when competing against others, as they perceive a higher chance of winning and a higher potential reward. On the other hand, competition can also lead to a heightened sense of pressure and intensity, which may cause some individuals to become overly invested in betting activities. This can increase the likelihood of irresponsible gambling behavior, such as chasing losses and betting beyond one's means.

The findings of this study indicate that betting skill have a significant impact on the willingness to participate in betting among the spectators of horse racing competitions that this finding align with the results of the studies conducted by [Mao et al. \(2015\)](#) and [Ayandele et al. \(2021\)](#). According to [Mao et al. \(2015\)](#), it is essential for individuals to acquire betting knowledge before engaging in such activities. In recent years, sports betting, which was previously conducted covertly in many countries, has emerged from the shadows and become a legal and integral part of the sports industry. The laws and attitudes towards sports betting have rapidly changed, creating an environment conducive to the development of a legal sports betting industry. This industry has witnessed a significant financial exchange, amounting to billions of dollars. The presence of individuals with diverse perspectives and ideas has contributed to the growth of this emerging industry, leading many countries to establish legal centers for sports betting. With the expansion of the sports betting industry, it is crucial for individuals to approach it with knowledge and awareness, acquiring the necessary understanding. Researchers, such as [Ayandele et al. \(2021\)](#), argue that as sports betting continues to grow, the associated knowledge also expands. Therefore, individuals need to familiarize themselves with the fundamentals and possess an appropriate level of knowledge to engage in sports betting. Having knowledge and skill in sports betting enables individuals to make informed decisions, placing bets based on their financial capabilities and understanding. Furthermore, understanding the risks involved in betting allows individuals to avoid excessive and high-risk sports betting.

The findings of this study indicate that peer pressure has a significant impact on the willingness to bet among spectators of horse racing competitions. These findings are consistent with the results of studies conducted by [Keshkar et al. \(2020\)](#), [Golzah et al. \(2019\)](#), [Lavoujo et al. \(2020\)](#), and [Ayandele et al. \(2021\)](#). Creating and developing social interactions among individuals is an important aspect of sports, and people fulfill a significant portion of their social needs in sports environments. Social interactions formed within sports, including interactions with friends and peers, play a crucial role in shaping individuals' behaviors. Being part of social groups formed in sports leads individuals to conform to the norms and behaviors of the group. Additionally, being part of such groups motivates individuals to imitate and replicate the behaviors of others. According to several researchers, such as [Ayandele et al. \(2021\)](#), participation in sports betting is influenced by individuals' communication and interaction with others, including friends. Being around friends who are actively involved in betting can unintentionally draw individuals into such activities. Moreover, individuals may be inclined to participate in betting due to witnessing the success of their friends and their desire for financial gain. Furthermore, based on Bandura's social learning theory, individuals may acquire knowledge about betting from their friends without any explicit encouragement or persuasion.

The findings of this study demonstrate that getting income have a positive and significant impact on the willingness of spectators to participate in betting. These findings align with the results of previous studies conducted by [Soltan Hosseini et al. \(2019\)](#), [Sajjadi Sabegh et al. \(2020\)](#), [Keshkar et al. \(2020\)](#), [Okoti et al. \(2019\)](#), [Lavoujo et al. \(2020\)](#), [Killick & Griffiths \(2021\)](#), and [Ayandele et al. \(2021\)](#). In recent years, betting has emerged as one of the most appealing activities and forms of entertainment for individuals involved in sports. This includes spectators at sports venues, television viewers, internet users, athletes, and even sports coaches. The community of participants in sports betting continues to grow each year, driven by the evolving nature of betting and its increasing allure. According to [Riley et al. \(2021\)](#), adolescents and young people constitute a significant portion of sports betting participants. [Lavoujo et al. \(2020\)](#) argue that modern sports cannot be imagined without betting, and a substantial portion of the sports industry's economic development relies on the financial turnover generated through betting. Various factors influence people's behavior when it comes to participating in sports betting, with economic and material benefits being the most significant. Undoubtedly, the prospect of obtaining financial resources in a straightforward manner acts as a strong motivational factor that drives individuals to engage in sports betting. Consequently, many people view sports betting as a means of generating income due to its low cost and potential for fast earnings. Some researchers, such as [Nweze et al. \(2020\)](#), suggest that a significant portion of sports betting participants are unemployed individuals who perceive it as a job opportunity that can lead to financial independence.

Conclusion

Therefore, based on the findings of the current research, considering the significance of horses and related activities to the historical and cultural values of the residents of this region, and the most important

behavioral characteristics of equestrian sports enthusiasts in Golestan Province, which include intrinsic motivations and connections with reference groups, primarily family and friends, it is suggested that, in collaboration with the responsible organizations in this sport and the managerial staff of the two equestrian centers in Golestan Province, a comprehensive profile of the behavioral and motivational characteristics of equestrian sports enthusiasts be prepared through a longitudinal study. This would not only provide appropriate guidance on individuals' behavioral characteristics but also prevent the cultural and social harms. Additionally, with proper planning, a portion of the generated income should be allocated to educational and cultural activities related to this industry.

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Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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