

# From Betting to Fixing: An Analytical Inquiry into How Player Gambling Behaviours Undermine Match Integrity in Goan Football

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## Abstract

This paper explores how gambling among football players in Goa gradually undermines ethical conduct and the integrity of matches. The spread of digital betting and informal wagering has exposed players at various competitive levels to new vulnerabilities. Using a mixed methods approach involving one hundred and ten survey participants and fifteen qualitative interviews, the study examines how financial strain, group influence, psychological factors, and institutional shortcomings create space for betting to escalate into match manipulation. Statistical findings reveal clear links between unstable income, frequent gambling, and acceptance of unethical actions. Thematic patterns also show that betting has become normalised, moral justification is common, and reporting structures are nearly absent. The study concludes with recommendations aimed at strengthening governance, education, and oversight in Goan football.

**Keywords:** sports integrity, football ethics, gambling behaviour, match manipulation, Goan football

## 1. Introduction

Football enjoys a strong cultural presence in Goa, shaping both community identity and

local pride. In recent years, however, the rapid growth of online betting and informal gambling has introduced concerns that quietly **undermine** the fairness of the game. Scholars around the world have shown that gambling can distort behaviour, especially when players possess information or influence that can directly shape outcomes (Forrest and Simmons, 2003; Hill, 2010). In India, expanding access to digital betting platforms has increased the number of athletes who encounter gambling, even in smaller leagues (Gupta, 2019).

Local football in Goa reflects these developments. Many players lack secure contracts and rely on modest match allowances or tournament earnings, making them particularly vulnerable to financial pressure. In this environment, betting is not simply a pastime but can become a coping mechanism, a team ritual, or a pathway to more serious violations. This study explores how gambling embeds itself in football culture, how it shapes ethical reasoning, and how gaps in governance create opportunities for manipulation.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Global Scholarship on Betting and Integrity

A considerable body of research highlights the relationship between sports gambling and compromised integrity. Players with insider access may be drawn to exploit betting markets for personal benefit (Forrest and Simmons, 2003). Hill (2010) documents how seemingly minor ethical breaches can gradually progress into organised fixing. Gorse and Chadwick (2011) further note that a notable share of athletes around the world have received offers to influence match outcomes.

## 2.2 The Indian Betting Environment

Despite legal restrictions, illegal betting remains widespread across India. Scholars such as Gupta (2019) and Majumdar (2016) estimate that the underground wagering economy handles vast amounts of money. Cricket has historically received most attention, but Nayar (2021) argues that football faces equal or greater vulnerability due to limited oversight. The absence of a specialised integrity system within national structures leaves state associations with few tools to respond to ethical breaches.

## 2.3 Football in Goa

According to the Goa Football Development Council (2022), more than two hundred clubs and twelve thousand registered players participate in the state's football ecosystem. However, many athletes work on informal arrangements and lack financial stability. Moriconi and De Cima (2020) argue that such economic fragility significantly increases the risk of corruption. Betting also occurs informally during village tournaments and lower tier leagues, making it appear socially acceptable.

## 2.4 Behavioral and Psychological Drivers

Gambling tendency is often linked to impulsive decision making, reward seeking behaviour, and cognitive biases (Lesieur and Rosenthal, 1991; Griffiths, 2018). Athletes

may also fall into the belief that they can predict outcomes more accurately than others, which reinforces gambling habits. Bandura's (1999) concept of moral disengagement explains how individuals justify actions that conflict with accepted ethical norms. These psychological explanations help illuminate gambling behaviour among Goan players.

## 3. Research Objectives

1. To identify how widespread gambling is among football players in Goa.
2. To examine the relationship between gambling patterns and openness to match manipulation.
3. To assess how gambling influences ethical decision making and match integrity.

## 4. Research Methodology

### 4.1 Research Strategy

The study uses a mixed methods design that combines numerical analysis with detailed narrative data to achieve a more complete understanding (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018).

### 4.2 Participants

A total of one hundred and ten individuals participated:

- Ninety players
- Ten coaches
- Ten others associated to the game

Most participants were male, which aligns with the demographics of football in Goa.

### 4.3 Data Gathering

Information was collected using:

- a structured questionnaire measuring gambling frequency, motivations, and ethical viewpoints
  - fifteen semi structured interviews that explored real experiences and opinions
- All respondents provided consent and anonymity was preserved.

#### 4.4 Data Interpretation

Survey results were examined using SPSS Version 28, with descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation applied to identify relationships. Interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006).

#### 4.5 Ethical Considerations

A pilot test produced a Cronbach alpha of zero point eight three, indicating good reliability. Ethical approval was received from the institutional committee.

#### 5.1 Prevalence of Gambling

Major findings include:

- Almost two thirds of respondents (63.6 percent) reported betting on football
- More than one quarter (27 percent) admitted to wagering on local matches
- Nearly half (49 percent) used online platforms
- Informal betting accounted for 30 percent of activity

Younger players showed the highest involvement.

#### 5.2 Correlation Results

Variable Pair	r	Interpretation
Gambling Frequency and Acceptance of Match Fixing	0.58	Moderate positive relationship
Income Instability and Gambling Frequency	0.63	Strong positive relationship
Ethical Awareness and Gambling Frequency	-0.46	Moderate negative relationship

These results show that unstable income and weaker ethical awareness are major contributors to frequent gambling.

#### 5.3 Themes from Interviews

Theme	Explanation	Example Statement
Normalisation	Betting is perceived as common and harmless	"Everyone bets a little. It is part of football life."
Economic Pressure	Limited income makes gambling appear useful	"If prize money delays, a small bet helps manage costs."
Peer Influence	Group behaviour encourages participation	"You are left out if you do not join in."
Moral Disengagement	Players justify harmful behaviour	"If it does not hurt anyone, it is not wrong."
Lack of Institutional Action	No clear system for reporting concerns	"Everyone knows it happens, but no one acts."

#### 6. Discussion

The results demonstrate that gambling in Goan football is shaped by personal vulnerability, cultural acceptance, and institutional gaps. Economic instability emerged as the strongest driver, with players turning to betting to manage financial pressures. Bandura's idea of moral disengagement explains why individuals rationalise unethical choices, including behaviours that could **undermine** match fairness.

The governance structure also contributes to the problem. Unlike international associations with established integrity monitoring systems (Forrest et al., 2019), the Goa Football Association lacks comprehensive mechanisms to detect or respond to suspicious behaviour. This absence of oversight creates an environment where unethical actions can take root without consequence.

## 7. Recommendations

1. Form an integrity monitoring unit within the Goa Football Association.
2. Conduct recurring educational programmes on ethics, financial responsibility, and manipulation risks.
3. Introduce secure and confidential reporting channels for players and officials.
4. Partner with cybercrime authorities to monitor online betting activity connected to local matches.
5. Encourage continued research, discussion, and community outreach on sports integrity.

## 8. Conclusion

Gambling has become embedded in football culture in Goa, creating a set of challenges that steadily **undermine** match integrity and ethical conduct. The study highlights how financial instability, group influence, and limited governance contribute to the problem. Without stronger structures for

monitoring, education, and accountability, gambling related issues may escalate into organised forms of manipulation. Implementing the recommended changes can help protect the credibility of Goan football and restore confidence in the game.

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