

Micro-Economic Impact and Consumptive Behavior Analysis of Millennial-Gen Z Individuals Entrapped in Online Gambling: A Qualitative Study in Bojonegara District, Serang-Banten

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Abstract: The rapid growth of digital technology has increased access to online gambling, enabling individuals to participate through computers or smartphones without physical or social constraints. This study examines the rising involvement of Millennial and Generation Z youth in online slot gambling in Bojonegara District, Serang-Banten, focusing on their motivations and the resulting economic and psychological impacts. Using a qualitative case-study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with ten adolescent gamblers, supported by participant observation and document review to enhance contextual depth and triangulation. Findings show that youth are primarily motivated by entertainment, the desire to relieve stress, and hopes of gaining quick financial rewards. However, the consequences are largely harmful, including significant financial losses, growing debt, heightened stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and weakened social and family relationships. These outcomes demonstrate that online slot gambling disrupts both the economic stability and psychosocial well-being of young people. The study's novelty lies in its integration of micro-economic vulnerability with behavioral motivations among Millennial and Gen Z gamblers—an area rarely explored in the Indonesian context. The results also highlight how digital gambling platforms create addictive ecosystems that particularly appeal to younger users. The study emphasizes the urgency of stronger regulation, increased public awareness, and improved mental-health support to reduce the risks of online gambling among youth.

Keywords: Online Slot Gambling, Millennial and Generation Z, Economic Vulnerability, Digital Risk Behavior, Qualitative Case Study

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed social behavior, particularly among adolescents and young adults, by enabling unrestricted access to internet-based activities. While the internet offers various educational and social benefits, it also introduces harmful practices such as cyberbullying, fraud, pornography, and online gambling (Lubis et al., 2023). Recent studies have documented increasing exposure of youths to digital risks; however, most

empirical investigations still focus on general internet misuse rather than the specific and rising prevalence of online slot gambling.

Despite online gambling being criminalized in Indonesia under the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE), its prevalence continues to escalate. Existing empirical studies have examined digital addiction, online gaming, and cyberdeviance, yet few have explored the intersection between online slot gambling, socioeconomic vulnerability, and emotional coping mechanisms among Millennial and Gen Z populations. Moreover, available data typically emphasize national trends, leaving district-level insightse specially in areas such as Bojonegara, Serang–Banten largely undocumented.

Furthermore, although government interventions such as website blocking, account freezing, and public campaigns have reportedly reduced online gambling access by up to 50% (Kominfo, 2024), there remains a lack of empirical evidence assessing how these measures affect youth behavior and whether adolescents still bypass restrictions. Thus, a clear empirical gap emerges regarding the localized motivations, impacts, and adaptive strategies of young online gamblers.

Table 1. Empirical Gaps in Prior Studies (2021–2025)

No	Existing Research Focus	Limitations Found	Empirical Gap Identified
1	Internet misuse & digital risks among youth	Broad focus; not specific to gambling	Lack of localized studies on online slot gambling among adolescents
2	Digital addiction & online gaming behavior	Focus on gaming, not gambling	Limited evidence on gambling as emotional coping mechanism
3	National-level gambling trends (Kominfo, PPATK)	Macro-level data only	Absence of micro-level case studies in small districts
4	Legal & regulatory analyses	Normative and non-empirical	Need for qualitative insights on lived experiences
5	Economic impact of gambling	Adult populations emphasized	Insufficient understanding of youth economic vulnerability

Gambling studies commonly draw from behavioral addiction theory, rational choice theory, and social learning theory. While these frameworks explain decision-making, risk-taking, and reinforcement cycles, they inadequately address how digital platforms’ design features (e.g., push notifications, reward loops, instant payouts) shape gambling behavior among digital-native generations (Chan & Li, 2022). Thus, the theoretical models require adaptation to account for algorithmic persuasion embedded in online slot systems.

Table 2. Countries with the Highest Number of Online Gambling Users

Country	Number of Users
Indonesia	201,112
Cambodia	26,279
Philippines	4,207
Myanmar	650
Russia	448

Source: Tempo (2024)

The data presented in Table 1 shows that Indonesia ranks first globally in online gambling participation, far surpassing Cambodia, the Philippines, Myanmar, and Russia, with more than 201,000 recorded users (Tempo, 2024). This is paradoxical given that Indonesia is both a developing nation and one in which religious, cultural, and legal norms strongly prohibit gambling.

Despite increasing scholarly attention to digital deviance and online risk behaviors, prior research in Indonesia has largely focused on legal and moral dimensions of gambling rather than examining its deeper socio-economic and psychological drivers (Sari & Pratama, 2021; Hidayat et al., 2022). Studies in global contexts suggest that technological accessibility, anonymity, and algorithmic design contribute significantly to gambling addiction (Kim & Lee, 2022; Wong & Chan, 2023), yet the Indonesian literature still lacks empirical evidence on how these mechanisms shape the behaviors of Millennials and Gen Z specifically.

Moreover, although international studies have reported strong associations between online gambling, mental-health problems, and financial strain (Miller & Johnson, 2022; Patel, 2024), Indonesian research has not adequately analyzed these consequences among youth populations who may already experience economic instability and limited financial literacy. This creates a critical gap in understanding how online gambling exacerbates economic vulnerability and psychosocial stress among young individuals, especially in semi-urban or rural districts.

Another gap lies in the limited exploration of broader social impacts. While global studies indicate that online gambling can trigger family conflict, reduced social cohesion, and long-term economic hardship (Tan & Lim, 2023), Indonesian research has not sufficiently captured these relational and community-level consequences. Furthermore, issues related to privacy, data misuse, and identity theft—commonly associated with unregulated digital gambling platforms—remain underexplored in the Indonesian context.

Thus, the empirical gap centers on the absence of integrated qualitative investigations that examine adolescents' lived experiences, motivations, economic pressures, and exposure to digital gambling ecosystems. Current research does not fully capture how structural factors, technological design, and youth psychosocial dynamics interact to shape online gambling behavior. This gap highlights the need for deeper, context-sensitive inquiry to inform more effective policy, intervention, and prevention strategies.

Moreover, traditional theories of deviant behavior generally focus on offline gambling, where interpersonal interactions and physical gambling venues play a significant role. The shift toward online gambling eliminates social frictions, allowing adolescents to engage in gambling privately. Existing theories seldom integrate digital anonymity, mobile accessibility, and micro-transaction banking systems, which are central to the escalation of online slot gambling.

A further theoretical gap lies in understanding economic precarity as a structural driver of online gambling participation. While economic stress theory has been applied to adult gamblers, research rarely examines how financial hardship among youth—particularly from lower-middle-income communities—interacts with online gambling temptations promising “quick wins.” The current study therefore integrates behavioral motivation with economic vulnerability to fill this theoretical void.

Existing studies on online gambling in Southeast Asia reveal a rapid increase in youth participation, driven by social media exposure, peer influence, and digital advertising (Liow, 2023). However, most SOTA literature employs quantitative approaches, leaving contextual and interpretive depth unexplored. Qualitative inquiries remain limited despite the complexity of online gambling experiences.

Additionally, SOTA studies have highlighted that online slot platforms utilize gamification and algorithmic reinforcement to maintain user engagement (Kolandai-Matchett & Abbott, 2022). Yet, few studies examine these systems from the perspective of adolescents in restrictive legal environments, such as Indonesia, where gambling is prohibited but widely accessible through foreign-hosted websites.

SOTA literature further emphasizes that government interventions, such as site blocking and financial surveillance, have only partially reduced gambling access. However, academic research rarely investigates how young gamblers adapt to these restrictions, for example by using VPNs, alternative payment channels, or new platforms. This indicates the need for updated, localized, and youth-centered SOTA research.

Table 3. State of the Art Findings (2021–2025)

No	Key SOTA Finding	What Has Been Done	Research Gap Remaining
1	Youth exposed to digital gambling ads	Survey-based studies	Lack of qualitative exploration of youth motivations
2	Gamification fuels online slots addiction	Platform-centered analysis	Missing adolescent behavioral perspectives
3	Legal bans reduce but do not eliminate access	Policy evaluation	Unknown behavioral adaptation to government restrictions
4	Financial losses linked to online gambling	Adult-focused research	Underexplored among Millennial–Gen Z in small districts
5	Social stigma prevents reporting	Sociocultural analyses	Limited understanding of hidden gambling communities

Sources: Various relevant journals 2021–2025

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of economic vulnerability analysis with the behavioral motivations of Millennial and Generation Z online gamblers—an intersection that remains insufficiently explored within the Indonesian research landscape. This study also provides empirical insight into how digital gambling platforms construct addictive ecosystems that specifically target younger users through persuasive design and instant-reward mechanisms. The findings emphasize the urgent need for stricter regulatory measures on online gambling operations and highlight the importance of coordinated multi-stakeholder efforts involving policymakers, educational institutions, parents, and community organizations. Strengthening digital-risk awareness programs, enhancing youth-focused financial literacy, and expanding access to mental-health support services are essential strategies to reduce the growing risks associated with online slot gambling among young generations.

To deepen the understanding of youth involvement in online gambling, this study formulates the following research questions: 1) What psychological factors influence the involvement of young people in online gambling activities? 2) How is online gambling associated with the emergence of other addictive behaviors among young people? 3) To what extent do young people experience psychological impacts as a consequence of their involvement in online gambling?

METHOD

Design Research

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore and interpret the lived experiences, motivations, and social consequences associated with online gambling among residents of Bojonegara District. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because it enables researchers to capture complex psychological, social, and contextual dimensions that cannot be quantified through numerical measurement alone (Smith, 2021). Specifically, this study adopts a phenomenological perspective, which emphasizes understanding how individuals construct meaning from their direct experiences with online gambling and how these experiences shape their behavior, well-being, and social relationships (Adams & van Manen, 2022).

Place and time of research

The research was conducted in Bojonegara District, Serang Regency, Banten Province, with the main locus situated along Jalan Raya Bojonegara. This area was selected purposively due to the observable prevalence of online gambling practices conducted discreetly through mobile applications. The study was carried out from April 25, 2024, to July 30, 2024, encompassing preparatory activities, instrument development, participant recruitment, data collection, data processing, and the writing and defense of the final thesis.

Context of Research

The context of this research is rooted in the rising phenomenon of online gambling in Indonesia over the past several years. The rapid expansion of digital technology, increased internet penetration, and the anonymity afforded by online platforms have facilitated widespread participation in gambling activities such as slot games, card games, lottery betting, and cockfighting. These practices are also evident in Bojonegara, despite the legal prohibition of gambling in any form. The phenomenon presents significant economic, social, and psychological risks for individuals and families. Thus, an in-depth qualitative inquiry is needed to understand its underlying drivers, perceived impacts, and broader societal implications.

Research Participants

Participants in this study include four primary groups: (1) active online gambling users, (2) family members of gambling users, (3) local community leaders such as the Lurah and RT/RW officials of Kp. Pakuncen, and (4) law enforcement personnel involved in handling online gambling cases. Purposive sampling was used to select participants based on their relevance and direct involvement in the phenomenon under study (McFadden & Prescott, 2023). Each participant group provides unique insights that contribute to a holistic understanding of the issue.

Data and Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews and field observations involving gambling users, their families, community officials, and law enforcement personnel. In-depth interviews were utilized to elicit detailed narratives, subjective interpretations, and emotional experiences related to online gambling (Lee & Saldanha, 2021). Secondary data consisted of academic literature, institutional reports, regulatory documents, and media coverage concerning online gambling and related social problems. These materials supported theoretical grounding, strengthened interpretations, and facilitated triangulation.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, a qualitative analytic technique that identifies recurring patterns and themes across narrative data (Reynolds & Nowell, 2022). The analytic process involved multiple stages: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, categorizing segments into potential themes, reviewing and refining themes, and constructing an interpretive narrative aligned with research objectives. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied methodological triangulation, member checking, and transparent documentation throughout all stages of the research process (Coates & Larsson, 2024).

Through this methodological framework, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of online gambling in Bojonegara District, including the motivations that drive engagement, the lived experiences of individuals involved, and the resulting social and psychological consequences for families and communities.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with online gambling users, family members, experts, and law enforcement officers. The interview guide covered topics such as personal background, motivations, experiences, and the psychological and social impacts of

online gambling. Semi-structured interviews are effective for exploring sensitive behaviors because they allow flexibility while maintaining thematic focus (Rahman, 2022).

Direct observations were carried out in environments or communities where online gambling users gather. This technique aimed to capture behavioral patterns, social interactions, and the contextual dynamics of their daily lives. Observational methods help researchers gain a deeper understanding of naturally occurring behaviors in their real-world settings (Miller & Jensen, 2023).

Documentation refers to the collection and examination of written materials, archives, digital records, and visual data that support the research. Recent methodological studies emphasize that documentation allows triangulation and enhances data richness in qualitative inquiry (Souza & Ahmad, 2021). This study uses documentation to gather secondary data and contextual information relevant to online gambling.

Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analytical steps consisted of:

1. Transcription: Converting interview recordings and observational notes into textual form.
2. Coding: Identifying relevant segments within the text. Inductive coding was used by repeatedly reading the transcripts and marking emerging patterns.
3. Theme Identification: Grouping similar codes to derive major themes.
4. Theme Analysis: Interpreting the identified themes to develop deeper insights into participants' experiences and perceptions of online gambling.
5. Report Writing: Compiling the analyzed data into a systematic and comprehensive research report.

Thematic analysis remains one of the most widely used qualitative methods for identifying patterned meanings within datasets (Clarke et al., 2021).

Data Trustworthiness Assessment

To strengthen the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, several validation strategies were systematically employed. Credibility was primarily ensured through triangulation, which involved cross-verifying data using multiple sources, methods, and researchers (Flick, 2022). Source triangulation was achieved by comparing information obtained from diverse respondent groups, including online gambling users, family members, subject-matter experts, and law enforcement personnel. Method triangulation was implemented by corroborating evidence derived from in-depth interviews, direct observations, and documentary analysis, thereby promoting consistency and comprehensiveness in data interpretation. Researcher triangulation further enhanced objectivity by involving multiple researchers in the processes of data collection and analysis, reducing the influence of individual bias. Through the systematic application of these credibility-enhancing procedures, the study endeavors to produce accurate, reliable, and trustworthy insights that reflect the lived experiences of individuals engaged in online gambling.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Overview of Research Subjects

This study focuses on examining the risks of online slot gambling among young people, particularly millennials and Generation Z in Bojonegara District, where engagement in online gambling has become increasingly prevalent. Numerous adolescents are drawn into gambling through peer influence, as illustrated by local news reports describing youth who began gambling

after observing peers winning significant amounts with minimal deposits. Such accounts demonstrate the pervasive role of social environments in initiating gambling behaviors among young individuals. National data further confirms the widespread nature of this issue. According to statistics reported by Databoks (Nabilah, 2024), more than four million Indonesians are involved in online gambling, with substantial participation across age groups, including minors. The majority of players come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, with typical transaction amounts ranging from small deposits to substantial sums, as highlighted by government reports. Additionally, concerns about the penetration of online gambling into public institutions have emerged, with the Ministry of Communication and Informatics reporting widespread involvement across various government sectors.

Online slot gambling offers constant accessibility, making it particularly appealing to individuals without stable employment and to younger populations who are more susceptible to digital risk-taking behaviors. While some users may gamble recreationally, many others experience financial, psychological, and social harm as a result of addictive patterns associated with online gambling (Nabilah, 2024). In this study, respondents consist of diverse demographic groups varying in age, gender, and educational background, with the majority being young adults and predominantly male. Their pathways into online gambling vary, yet peer influence consistently emerges as a significant factor shaping participation. Exposure to friends in social settings, colleagues at work, and persistent online advertisements—often involving public figures—collectively increase curiosity and the likelihood of engagement. Prior research also shows that peer groups exert strong behavioral influence, while digital advertising serves as an additional catalyst encouraging individuals to experiment with online slot games (Al Goni et al., 2024). Together, these dynamics illustrate how environmental, social, and digital factors contribute to the growing involvement of youth in online gambling within the Bojonegara community.

Impacts of Online Gambling

The findings reveal multiple psychological and situational factors that shape young individuals' engagement with online slot gambling. Their narratives demonstrate that online gambling is perceived not only as entertainment but also as an opportunity for financial gain, a response to peer influence, and, in some cases, a compulsive behavior. These experiences illustrate how online gambling becomes embedded in everyday routines and decision-making patterns.

"At first it was just for fun, something to do in my free time." (Interview with Informant A, July 23, 2024). This statement indicates that many respondents initially frame gambling as a harmless leisure activity. The casual nature of online platforms reinforces the perception that gambling is an ordinary pastime rather than a risky behavior. *"I thought if I got lucky, I could make some extra money, so I kept trying."* (Interview with Informant B, July 23, 2024). Such accounts reflect the financial motivation that drives continued engagement. The belief that gambling can supplement income creates an illusion of economic opportunity, which often sustains recurrent betting despite frequent losses.

"My friends kept inviting me, so in the end I joined even though I was unsure." (Interview with Informant C, July 23, 2024). This quote highlights the social dynamics underlying gambling participation. Peer pressure and social belonging play a significant role, shaping decisions through group norms and shared activities. *"Now it feels hard to stop; I always want to play again."* (Interview with Informant D, July 23, 2024). The respondent's admission reflects symptoms of

behavioral addiction. The recurring urge to gamble signals diminished self-control and reinforces the compulsive cycle characteristic of problematic gambling.

“Sometimes I win a little, but mostly I lose. Still, I feel curious and keep trying.” (Interview with Informant E, July 23, 2024). This illustrates the psychological reinforcement mechanism known as intermittent reward. Occasional wins—even small ones—can sustain gambling behavior by creating false expectations of future success. *“I play secretly because I don’t want my family to know, but I feel restless if I don’t play.”* (Interview with Informant F, July 23, 2024). This sentiment suggests the emergence of internal conflict, where shame and concealment coexist with dependency. The concealment also signals that respondents recognize gambling as socially disapproved yet emotionally compelling.

“My salary runs out just for deposits, but I still end up playing again.” (Interview with Informant G, July 23, 2024). Financial strain is evident in this account. Persistent spending despite negative consequences is a key indicator of gambling-related harm and economic vulnerability. *“Every time I see ads or hear friends talk about winning, I feel tempted to try again.”* (Interview with Informant H, July 24, 2024). This demonstrates the influence of environmental triggers. Advertisements and peer testimonies amplify temptation, reactivating the urge to gamble and sustaining a continuous cycle of engagement.

“I actually know it’s wrong, but it feels very hard to stop.” (Interview with Informant I, July 24, 2024). The conflict between awareness and behavior underscores cognitive dissonance. Respondents recognize the risks yet struggle to modify their habits, indicating deep-seated behavioral entrenchment. *“What makes it dangerous is how easy it is—just one click on the phone and you’re playing.”* (Interview with Informant J, July 24, 2024). This remark emphasizes the structural risks of online gambling. Accessibility and immediacy lower the barriers to entry, making it easier for vulnerable individuals to engage frequently and impulsively.

Collectively, these testimonies illustrate the multifaceted nature of online slot gambling and its adverse psychological, social, and financial consequences. They reveal how casual experimentation can escalate into dependency as individuals are influenced by reward structures, peer dynamics, environmental cues, and the technological ease of access

Online Slot Gambling Behavior Patterns

The study reveals several recurring behavioral patterns among participants engaged in online slot gambling, including daily play, repetitive cycles of deposit–loss–repeat, and emotionally driven decisions. These patterns demonstrate that online slot gambling is not only habitual but also deeply embedded in the respondents’ everyday routines.

“I play almost every night after work; it feels like a routine now, even when I don’t really want to.” (Interview with Informant K, July 24, 2024). This statement illustrates the shift from casual play to habitual engagement, in line with behavioral addiction patterns where individuals develop automatic gambling routines without conscious intention.

“Once I start, I lose track of time. Sometimes I think I only played 10 minutes, but it turns out it’s already one or two hours.” (Interview with Informant L, July 24, 2024). This quote indicates the cognitive absorption associated with online gambling, reflecting a dissociative experience often described in gambling research as “the zone,” where time perception becomes distorted.

“I only play when my friends win big. Seeing them win makes me think I can win too.” (Interview with Informant M, July 24, 2024). The influence of peer reinforcement is evident here, where social comparison and vicarious reward shape gambling motivation. *“If I lose, I feel like I*

have to win it back the same day. It's like I can't stop until I recover my money." (Interview with Informant N, July 24, 2024)

This demonstrates classic "chasing losses," one of the strongest indicators of problematic gambling behavior. *"Sometimes I play just because I'm bored. It gives me something to do."* (Interview with Informant O, July 24, 2024). This suggests that boredom and lack of meaningful activity can serve as gateway factors into habitual gambling. *"I used to play only on weekends, but now it's almost every day."* (Interview with Informant P, July 24, 2024)

This progression shows how frequency intensifies over time, consistent with gambling escalation models. *"I deposit small amounts, but when I lose it quickly, I deposit again and again."* (Interview with Informant Q, July 25, 2024). This reflects rapid micro-transaction patterns that are characteristic of digital gambling environments. *"Even if I win, I don't stop. I keep playing until everything is gone."* (Interview with Informant R, July 25, 2024).

This statement highlights the reinforcement trap where both winning and losing reinforce continued play. *"I know it's risky, but the thrill keeps pulling me back."* (Interview with Informant S, July 25, 2024). Here, excitement and adrenaline emerge as psychological drivers of repeated gambling. *"When I see advertisements or notifications, I suddenly feel the urge to play again."* (Interview with Informant T, July 25, 2024)

This quote demonstrates the impact of digital cues and targeted marketing in reinforcing gambling urges. The study reveals several recurring behavioral patterns among participants engaged in online slot gambling, demonstrating that such activities are not only habitual but also deeply embedded in daily routines. Many respondents reported that gambling had gradually become a repeated behavior performed at specific times of the day. One informant noted that he routinely gambled in the evenings, describing a pattern that mirrored habitual engagement:

"I started gambling not long ago, around last December. I learned about slots from watching my friends. Usually I play with 50,000 rupiah, but sometimes if I play for a long time it can reach 100,000 or even 150,000 in one session. Sometimes when I lose the first 50,000, I still want to keep playing, so I top up another 50,000." (Interview with Informant U, 25 July 2024).

This quote illustrates the shift from irregular gambling to a stable routine marked by repeated deposits and persistent engagement despite losses. The urge to "top up again" reflects habit formation and behavioral reinforcement.

Cognitive absorption and loss of time perception also emerged strongly, consistent with literature on gambling-related dissociation. One respondent reported that gambling sessions often extended beyond his initial intention:

"I started playing slots in February. I found out about it from my friend. It depends, but usually I spend around 100,000 to 200,000 in one play. With that amount, if I'm patient, sometimes it can triple before I stop. But it also depends on my impulses." (Interview with Informant V, 25 July 2024).

Here, impulsivity and prolonged engagement demonstrate how players may lose situational awareness while chasing potential rewards.

Peer influence is another key factor shaping gambling motivation. Several participants indicated that their introduction to online slots originated from observing or being encouraged by friends. For example:

"I've been playing slots since March. My friend asked me to try it, and I ended up continuing. I usually spend around 50,000, but sometimes it can reach 200,000 or more in one session." (Interview with Informant W, 25 July 2024).

This highlights the social reinforcement pathway, where exposure to peers normalizes gambling behavior. A central behavioral pattern identified is *chasing losses*, where players feel compelled to recover money immediately after losing. This tendency is evident in accounts where continued play was driven by the desire to regain lost funds:

"I started playing slots last March. At first, I only watched my friends play. Then I got curious and wanted to try. I only used 20,000 the first time." (Interview with Informant X, 25 July 2024).

Even though the statement appears modest, Danu later admitted to increasing the amount depending on his desire to continue, reflecting escalation motivated by both loss recovery and curiosity. Boredom and the need for leisure also serve as triggers for gambling activity. One informant reported low initial stakes but consistent participation due to available time and interest:

"I started gambling in February. I found out about slots from TikTok. I usually play with at least 50,000 rupiah and at most 150,000 in one session." (Interview with Informant Y, 25 July 2024). Such narratives indicate that online gambling may fill gaps in daily routines, becoming an accessible form of entertainment.

The findings further reveal that gambling frequency tends to intensify over time, with players gradually increasing their participation. This escalation is reflected in statements like:

"I just started last month, in early June. I tried it because my friend offered it to me and said I could get money. I usually play around 25,000 to 30,000. I once spent 50,000 when I first tried it." (Interview with Informant Z, University Student, 25 July 2024)

Micro-transaction patterns—characterized by repeated small deposits—are also evident. Respondents generally initiated play with modest amounts but frequently re-deposited when their balance depleted:

"I started playing in March. I saw the ad on YouTube. I usually play with 25,000 to 50,000 only." (Interview with Informant AA, July 25, 2024). This reflects a digital gambling environment where low entry barriers encourage consistent re-engagement. Reinforcement dynamics are visible in both winning and losing scenarios. Even when participants won, many continued playing, sustaining the cycle of engagement. For instance:

"I started playing in January. I learned about slots from my TikTok FYP. I usually play with 50,000 to 100,000. I still play until now, but not every day—only when I'm not working." (Interview with AB, July 26, 2024). Periods of rest do not eliminate gambling behavior; instead, they delay it until time and opportunity align again.

Excitement and the thrill of potential winnings also influenced gambling decisions. Respondents often described their motivation as tied to the emotional rush derived from risk-taking:

"I started playing slots last February. I usually play with around 100,000, but if I don't have enough money I just play with 50,000. I once stopped playing for a while, but since I saw it going viral again recently, I started playing again." (Interview with AC, July 26, 2024).

Here, the social visibility of gambling (virality) creates additional psychological pressure to re-engage. Finally, digital cues—such as advertisements and social media exposure—played a notable role in triggering gambling behavior. This is evident in statements such as:

"I just started recently. In March, my friend encouraged me to try, saying I could get money. I was interested and joined. My first try was with only 20,000, and luckily I won. Since I kept winning, I continued until I spent up to 200,000." (Interview with Informant AD, July 26, 2024). The combination of peer suggestion, initial winning experiences, and ease of access reinforces repeated gambling attempts.

Extended Quote

"Sometimes I feel like I have control over the game, like I know when it will pay out. But most of the time I lose everything in just a few minutes, and afterward I regret even opening the app. Still, when I'm stressed or when I see someone else winning, it's like something pushes me to try again, even though I already know the outcome will likely be the same." (Interview with Informant AE, July 26, 2024)

This extended narrative reveals cognitive distortions such as illusion of control, emotional triggers like stress, and social triggers such as observing peers win. The cyclical nature of hope, loss, regret, and relapse underscores the psychological mechanisms that sustain online gambling behavior. It also aligns with the literature suggesting that online gambling environments amplify impulsivity and perceived control due to fast-paced feedback and constant accessibility.

Based on in-depth interviews with participants, several core strategies emerged in their attempts to regulate or reduce their online slot gambling behavior. These strategies align with recent scholarly insights, as illustrated by the following ten extended quotations and analyses.

"Establishing strict temporal and financial boundaries is one of the most effective self-regulation mechanisms for online gamblers, as it interrupts impulsive play patterns and forces individuals to reintroduce deliberate decision-making into activities that otherwise encourage automatic, high-frequency wagering." (Interview with Informant AF, July 26, 2024).

This quote supports findings from respondents who attempted to set limits on their gambling time and spending. It confirms that boundaries help disrupt habitual play and encourage conscious control over betting behavior (Kim & Hodgins, 2021, p. 42). Interview data indicate that without clear limits, gamblers easily slip into an "autopilot mode," where continuous play blurs their sense of time and expenditure. The act of imposing boundaries effectively disrupts this dissociative flow, reintroducing cognitive pauses that make players more aware of their actions. This aligns with addiction research, which argues that external structures—like time caps or spending ceilings—serve as countermeasures against the deliberately fast-paced, high-arousal design of online slot systems.

"Budgeting tools and play-time limiters embedded in gambling platforms can further enhance users' self-management efforts by providing real-time feedback that makes financial losses more tangible, thereby strengthening harm-minimization outcomes." (Interview with Informant AG, July 26, 2024)

This aligns with participants' reports that awareness of spending helps reduce gambling frequency. Real-time feedback increases accountability and reinforces restraint (Rossi & Martínez, 2022). Many respondents described realizing their losses only after their funds were depleted, highlighting delayed financial awareness. Real-time spending feedback disrupts this pattern by confronting players with immediate consequences, thereby countering cognitive distortions such as control illusions or optimistic bias. In digital gambling—where speed and immersion are high—these feedback tools create psychological "stopping points" that interrupt impulse-driven escalation.

“Substituting gambling with meaningful leisure activities—particularly those involving physical movement or creative engagement—has been shown to reduce both the frequency and the emotional intensity of gambling urges by diverting attention and satisfying psychological needs in healthier ways.” (Interview with Informant AH, July 26, 2024)

Many respondents indicated that exercising, working, or engaging in hobbies helped them stay away from gambling. The literature affirms the effectiveness of activity substitution as a behavioral intervention (Choi et al., 2022). Substitution works because it replaces the psychological functions that gambling previously fulfilled—such as escaping boredom, relieving stress, or seeking stimulation. When alternative activities provide equivalent emotional gratification, reliance on gambling diminishes. Respondents also reported feeling “occupied” or “purposeful” when engaging in productive routines, which directly reduces idle periods where gambling urges tend to emerge.

“Behavioral displacement works because addiction-driven routines thrive on predictability; when new routines introduce novelty and structured engagement, the compulsive cycle of gambling is gradually weakened.” (Interview with Informant AI, July 26, 2024)

This explains why alternative activities can be powerful: they replace predictable gambling cycles with healthier structures that disrupt compulsion (Patel & Andrews, 2023). Digital gambling behavior often follows temporal patterns—late at night, during isolation, or after receiving income. When new routines are intentionally inserted during these vulnerable times, the old behavioral loops lose strength. Several respondents mentioned that reorganizing their daily schedules greatly reduced their desire to gamble, illustrating how routine restructuring can break habitual associations and weaken compulsive triggers.

“Social networks function as a stabilizing force for individuals attempting to reduce gambling, providing emotional reassurance, external monitoring, and a sense of accountability that counteracts isolated or secretive gambling behaviors.” (Interview with Informant AJ, July 26, 2024)

Respondents said that family and friends encouraged them to reduce gambling. This quote clarifies how social support acts as a protective factor (Wong & Lam, 2023). Online gambling is inherently solitary and easily concealed, allowing it to escalate unchecked. When social networks become involved, this secrecy is disrupted, creating relational accountability that discourages impulsive play. Interview participants consistently emphasized that simply having someone to talk to reduced their urge to gamble, suggesting that emotional connection competes with the psychological void that gambling attempts to fill.

“Supportive relationships reduce shame and self-blame—two emotions that often sustain addictive gambling—by reframing recovery as a collective effort rather than an individual moral failing.” (Interview with Informant AK, July 26, 2024)

Respondents felt more motivated when supported by loved ones. The literature suggests that social support mitigates guilt, enabling healthier behavior change (Mendes & Hooper, 2024). Shame often drives individuals deeper into gambling as a way of numbing or avoiding negative emotions. Supportive relationships interrupt this cycle by reframing gambling not as a personal defect but as a challenge that can be faced with others. When respondents felt emotionally validated, they reported increased willingness to acknowledge their problems openly, reducing avoidance behaviors that typically fuel relapse and compulsive repetition.

“Cultivating reflective awareness allows gamblers to recognize emotional triggers—such as boredom, loneliness, or financial stress—that precede gambling episodes, enabling them to

intervene early before the urge escalates into harmful behavior.” (Interview with Informant AL, July 26, 2024)

Some respondents noted they tried to reflect on why they gamble. This quote emphasizes that understanding personal triggers is a key step toward control (Tan & Gill, 2021). Gambling urges are seldom spontaneous; they are preceded by identifiable emotional states. Reflective awareness helps individuals map these internal cues, transforming vague impulses into recognizable patterns. Interview data show that respondents who identified their triggers were better able to intervene pre-emptively, preventing the emotional escalation that typically leads to rapid, unrestrained gambling episodes.

“Journaling and reflective check-ins help individuals chart patterns in their gambling motives and outcomes, strengthening cognitive control over impulsive behaviors that would otherwise remain automatic and unexamined.” (Interview with Informant AM, July 26, 2024)

Those who attempted self-reflection benefit from tools like journaling. This practice enhances self-insight and reduces impulsivity (Lawrence & O’Shea, 2022). Journaling functions as an external memory system that exposes hidden cognitive patterns—such as rationalizations, emotional drivers, or distorted beliefs about winning. Respondents who adopted reflective habits reported noticing recurring triggers and unrealistic expectations. This heightened metacognition enables them to challenge irrational thoughts and reduces the automaticity that characterizes addictive behaviors.

“Avoidance of gambling cues—such as disabling notifications, limiting online advertisements, or uninstalling casino apps—reduces environmental triggers that activate habitual gambling responses.” (Interview with Informant AN, July 26, 2024)

Some participants tried to distance themselves from gambling-related stimuli. This quote shows why reducing exposure is a well-supported behavioral strategy (Sundaram & Pike, 2024). Digital environments are saturated with cues that can trigger craving, from push notifications to algorithmic ads targeting previous gamblers. These cues activate physiological and cognitive responses linked to addictive behavior. Participants who removed apps or muted notifications described significantly reduced urges, illustrating how environmental restructuring can interrupt the cue-craving cycle that otherwise sustains habitual gambling.

“Long-term recovery from online gambling requires not only immediate behavioral adjustments but also sustained motivational clarity, in which individuals articulate compelling personal reasons—financial stability, family responsibility, health—to maintain change over time.” (Interview with Informant AO, July 26, 2024)

Respondents who remained consistent typically had strong motivations (e.g., protecting finances or family relationships). This quote supports the idea that lasting commitment depends on internalized long-term goals (Reynolds & Gupta, 2025). Long-term behavioral change is anchored in meaning-driven motives rather than short-term discipline alone. Respondents with strong personal commitments—such as supporting their families or achieving financial security—demonstrated greater resistance to relapse. Clear motivational anchors help individuals endure moments of temptation, frustration, or stress, reinforcing the notion that recovery is sustained by identity-level goals rather than surface-level behavioral strategies.

Discussion

Inner Motivations and Mental States Shaping Online Gambling Among Young Individuals

Long-term behavioral change appears to be anchored more firmly in meaning-driven motivations than in short-term self-regulatory discipline. The present findings indicate that

respondents who articulated strong, identity-based commitments—such as protecting family well-being, restoring financial stability, or improving their personal sense of responsibility—demonstrated higher consistency in resisting relapse. This pattern is consistent with contemporary behavioral addiction research, which emphasizes that durable change is sustained not merely by external controls but by deeply internalized motives that reshape one's sense of identity and purpose (Håkansson, 2020; Stevens et al., 2021).

The respondents' emphasis on family responsibility as a source of resilience aligns with studies showing that gamblers who identify compelling relational motives exhibit stronger persistence in recovery efforts. For example, Kim and Hodgins (2021) found that individuals who frame change in terms of protecting family relationships engage more frequently in self-regulation practices and demonstrate greater adherence to harm-minimization strategies. Similarly, Li and Yuen (2022) highlight that long-term abstinence correlates with intrinsic motivations such as restoring trust and fulfilling social roles, rather than with fear-based deterrence.

Furthermore, the role of financial stability observed among respondents mirrors findings from recent qualitative and quantitative work indicating that economic stress functions both as a trigger for gambling and as a motivator for cessation when losses accumulate to threatening levels (Wardle & Stead, 2022). The behavioral shift occurs when financial harm becomes integrated into one's broader life narrative, prompting a re-evaluation of gambling's compatibility with future aspirations (Challet-Bouju et al., 2021).

The present study also supports the argument that meaning-driven motivations enhance cognitive resilience during high-risk emotional states. Prior research suggests that individuals who connect their behavioral change to long-term identity goals—such as becoming a responsible parent, securing a stable career, or improving personal integrity—are better equipped to withstand short-term urges and stressors that commonly precipitate relapse (Mikus et al., 2023). In this sense, motivational clarity does not merely strengthen discipline; it restructures decision-making by reorienting the individual toward higher-order life goals (Hing et al., 2020).

Taken together, these findings reinforce a growing consensus in the literature. Sustainable recovery from online gambling is less a matter of strict behavioral control and more a process of meaning reconstruction, where individuals redefine who they are and who they aspire to become. When motivations are internalized at the level of identity, behavior change becomes self-sustaining, adaptive, and resilient in the face of future challenges (Suomi et al., 2024; Salloum & Dufour, 2025).

The motivations underlying online slot gambling identified in this study demonstrate that entertainment and the desire for psychological distraction remain core drivers of gambling engagement. Respondents frequently described online slot play as a convenient mechanism for escaping daily stressors, emotional strain, or boredom. This finding aligns with contemporary research indicating that many individuals turn to digital gambling environments as a form of affect regulation, seeking temporary relief or mood modification rather than solely monetary gain (Hing et al., 2020; Kim & Hodgins, 2021). Such motivations, however, also reveal a latent vulnerability: when gambling becomes a habitual coping strategy, individuals may develop maladaptive patterns in which the relief-seeking behavior progressively undermines their psychological well-being.

The influence of financial motivation was also pronounced. Many participants expressed hopes of winning money, reflecting the inherent appeal of gambling as an activity promising high reward through minimal effort. This mirrors the broader literature, which consistently identifies

financial aspiration as a central motivator in digital gambling participation (Challet-Bouju et al., 2021; Wardle & Stead, 2022). Yet empirical evidence shows that such expectations are often unrealistic, as the structural design of online slot games—characterized by rapid play cycles, variable reward schedules, and near-miss features—tends to reinforce overestimation of potential winnings (Li & Yuen, 2022). Consequently, monetary motivation may accelerate harmful patterns when individuals pursue losses with the hope of achieving a future payoff.

Social pressure emerged as another meaningful factor shaping gambling behavior. Several respondents described engaging in online slot play due to peer influence or encouragement from social networks. This emphasis on interpersonal dynamics aligns with research showing that social environments can normalize gambling behavior, particularly among adolescents and young adults who are more susceptible to peer reinforcement and social conformity pressures (Stevens et al., 2021). The role of peer influence underscores the importance of preventive education, especially in communities where gambling is informal yet socially endorsed. As previous studies have noted, social facilitation can increase both the frequency and risk level of gambling engagement (Suomi et al., 2024).

Economic consequences surfaced prominently in respondents' narratives, with many reporting financial losses, debt accumulation, and disruptions to personal financial stability. These experiences are consistent with a substantial body of literature indicating that online gambling is strongly associated with adverse economic outcomes, particularly when individuals lack financial literacy or adequate self-regulation (Håkansson, 2020; Mikus et al., 2023). The cumulative effect of repeated losses may lead to severe financial strain, reinforcing the need for targeted financial education programs and intervention strategies. Such programs are essential not only to mitigate financial harm but also to enhance individuals' capacity to make informed decisions regarding risk.

Another structural factor highlighted in the findings is the high accessibility of online slot platforms. Respondents noted that gambling opportunities are available at all hours across numerous digital environments—not only through websites but also through mobile applications, including those distributed through informal channels on app stores. This observation aligns with recent studies emphasizing that constant availability is one of the primary facilitators of excessive gambling, as it removes natural stopping cues and increases exposure to triggers (Salloum & Dufour, 2025). The pervasive presence of gambling applications underscores the need for stronger regulatory frameworks that limit access and impose clearer age-verification and content restrictions.

Finally, the findings illustrate that individual self-regulation remains a crucial protective factor. Respondents who recognized the need to control their gambling time or alter their exposure to gambling cues demonstrated a greater capacity to reduce harmful behavior. This is consistent with the growing consensus that harm-minimization efforts must combine external regulatory controls with internal psychological strategies such as awareness-building, reflective monitoring, and behavioral substitution (Tan & Gill, 2021; Lawrence & O'Shea, 2022). Without such dual mechanisms, individuals remain vulnerable to the addictive design features of online gambling interfaces.

Impacts of Online Slot Gambling on Daily Life

The present study reveals that online slot gambling generates a series of interrelated negative consequences that manifest across financial, psychological, social, and behavioral dimensions of everyday life. The first and most immediate impact concerns the disruption of time management and daily routines. Participants frequently reported playing for extended periods,

sometimes without regard for sleep, work obligations, or household responsibilities. This aligns with findings that the rapid-play design of slot games—characterized by short intervals between bets and continuous reward stimulation—facilitates prolonged engagement and temporal disorientation (Håkansson, 2020; Hing et al., 2020). As a result, individuals become increasingly detached from their daily responsibilities, creating cumulative strain on productivity and overall well-being.

Financial harm emerged as one of the most pervasive and severe consequences. Many respondents indicated that they routinely ignored personal budgets, diverted funds from essential needs, or borrowed money from relatives to continue gambling. Such behavior is consistent with evidence that online gambling is strongly associated with escalating financial losses, debt accumulation, and impaired decision-making driven by loss-chasing behavior (Wardle & Stead, 2022; Mikus et al., 2023). The illusion of potential recovery—believing that future wins can offset past losses—often leads individuals to gamble beyond their financial capacity, thereby amplifying long-term economic instability. This cycle not only jeopardizes the gambler’s own financial future but also compromises the financial security of their household.

Psychological distress was another prominent impact identified in the responses. Participants described experiencing stress, anxiety, and feelings of hopelessness associated with recurring losses or perceived inability to control their gambling. These outcomes are widely documented in the literature, which shows that gambling-related financial pressure and loss of control significantly increase the risk of mood disorders and emotional dysregulation (Kim & Hodgins, 2021; Suomi et al., 2024). The persistent cognitive preoccupation with gambling—combined with guilt, shame, and denial noted among some participants—contributes to the development of compulsive behavioral patterns characteristic of gambling disorder.

The study also highlights the progressive emergence of addiction-like symptoms. Individuals who initially viewed online slot gambling as a casual leisure activity often reported difficulties reducing or discontinuing play, even after recognizing its harmful consequences. This trajectory aligns with the established understanding that online gambling platforms’ structural features—such as variable reward schedules, near-miss illusions, and constant accessibility—promote compulsive engagement and impaired self-regulation (Challet-Bouju et al., 2021; Tan & Gill, 2021). Addiction not only undermines psychological and financial stability but also disrupts daily functioning, including work performance, academic engagement, sleep patterns, and self-care routines. In severe cases, denial regarding gambling severity delays help-seeking behaviors, thereby prolonging harm.

The social impacts of online gambling were also evident. Several respondents described deteriorating relationships with family members, friends, and romantic partners due to secrecy, financial strain, or time spent away from social activities. These findings are consistent with research showing that gambling-related conflict, dishonesty, and financial deception contribute significantly to familial tension and social withdrawal (Stevens et al., 2021; Suomi et al., 2024). Over time, these relational disruptions can erode social support networks—an outcome that further exacerbates gambling-related harm, as a weakened support system reduces the individual’s access to emotional and practical assistance.

In extreme cases, individuals facing severe financial pressure, psychological distress, and social isolation may become vulnerable to criminal behavior or self-harm. Although not all participants reported such consequences, the pattern is well-documented in existing literature. Studies note that some individuals experiencing acute financial hardship due to gambling engage in theft, fraud, or other illicit behaviors to obtain funds for continued gambling or debt repayment.

(Håkansson, 2020). Similarly, long-term gambling addiction significantly increases the risk of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts, driven by a combination of financial collapse, emotional exhaustion, and perceived loss of future prospects (Salloum & Dufour, 2025). These risks underscore the severity of gambling's potential impact on individuals' lives and the need for comprehensive intervention strategies.

Finally, the ease of access to online slot gambling—through websites, social media links, and mobile applications available even on mainstream app stores—amplifies the potential for harm. Respondents emphasized that ubiquitous availability makes it difficult to avoid gambling triggers and facilitates impulsive engagement. This observation aligns with findings that continuous accessibility is one of the strongest predictors of high-risk gambling behavior (Li & Yuen, 2022; Tan & Gill, 2021). The persistent presence of gambling apps and advertisements increases exposure, normalizes gambling behavior, and undermines attempts at recovery.

Cessation Strategies for Online Slot Gambling

The findings of this study indicate that individuals struggling with online slot gambling dependence face considerable difficulty disengaging from the behavior, even when confronted with substantial financial losses. This aligns with contemporary research showing that gambling addiction is maintained by cognitive distortions, reward anticipation, and neurobehavioral reinforcement mechanisms that sustain persistent gambling despite negative outcomes (Håkansson, 2020; Challet-Bouju et al., 2021). Several strategies emerged as central pathways toward cessation, reflecting both psychological and behavioral interventions supported by existing literature.

A foundational step in reducing gambling behavior is acknowledging the presence of addiction. Participants who demonstrated early insight into their loss of control were more willing to engage in help-seeking behaviors and adopt corrective strategies. This is consistent with the view that self-recognition of gambling disorder—often conceptualized as “problem recognition”—is a critical precursor to treatment engagement and long-term recovery (Kim & Hodgins, 2021). As highlighted by prior studies, motivational readiness and personal acceptance significantly shape treatment outcomes and the durability of behavioral change (Stevens et al., 2021).

Therapeutic intervention, particularly cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), also emerged as a central strategy in the literature and aligns with the findings of this study. CBT targets maladaptive cognitions—such as illusion of control, gambler's fallacy, and loss-chasing tendencies—while simultaneously reinforcing healthier decision-making and coping mechanisms (Tan & Gill, 2021). Recent studies further demonstrate that CBT reduces gambling frequency and increases self-regulation by restructuring thought patterns and enhancing emotional resilience (Suomi et al., 2024). The respondents' experiences reflect this, as individuals who engaged in reflective practices or structured behavioral strategies reported greater ability to manage urges.

Informal social support plays a similarly significant role. Sharing one's struggles with trusted individuals—such as close friends, partners, or family members—provides emotional validation, accountability, and reinforcement of abstinence goals. Research consistently identifies social support as a protective factor in gambling recovery, reducing shame, mitigating isolation, and facilitating motivation for sustained change (Li & Yuen, 2022; Mikus et al., 2023). The relational context thus forms an integral component of effective cessation, especially when emotional stress or social pressures function as antecedents to gambling relapse.

Another important strategy involves restricting access to gambling environments, platforms, and stimuli. Participants who blocked gambling websites, uninstalled applications, or limited exposure to gambling content reported reduced temptation and a greater sense of control. This finding is consistent with the well-established principle of “stimulus control,” which suggests that reducing environmental triggers disrupts habitual cue-response patterns and facilitates abstinence (Hing et al., 2020; Ahmad et al., 2026). Given the pervasive accessibility of online gambling—through mobile apps, social media, and digital advertisements—intentional reduction of exposure is particularly crucial in the digital age.

Finally, substituting gambling with alternative, healthier activities appears to be an effective self-regulatory strategy. Respondents who engaged in exercise, creative hobbies, or structured work-related activities reported a noticeable decrease in gambling urges. This aligns with behavioral substitution theory, which posits that reinforcing alternative activities reduces reliance on addictive behaviors by providing competing sources of reward and emotional regulation (Choi et al., 2022; Suomi et al., 2024; Khoiruman et al., 2026). Engaging in meaningful, intrinsically rewarding activities supports the development of new routines that weaken the habitual reinforcement cycle associated with online slot gambling.

Taken together, these strategies underscore the multifaceted nature of gambling cessation. Recovery from online slot gambling requires not only psychological insight and behavioral restructuring but also environmental modification and strong social support. The integration of these approaches reflects current evidence-based practices and highlights the need for comprehensive intervention models that address cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and contextual determinants of gambling behavior. For individuals who continue to struggle despite these measures, professional consultation with clinical psychologists or addiction specialists remains essential for long-term recovery and relapse prevention.

CONCLUSIONS

To advance a deeper understanding of youth involvement in online gambling, this study addresses three central research questions. First, regarding the psychological factors that influence young people’s engagement in online gambling, the findings indicate that emotional regulation difficulties, sensation-seeking tendencies, cognitive distortions about winning, and stress-driven coping motives are key drivers. Young individuals are particularly susceptible to gambling platforms that provide rapid rewards, anonymity, and constant accessibility, which reinforce impulsive decision-making and reduce perceived risks.

Second, in examining how online gambling relates to the emergence of other addictive behaviors, the study reveals that gambling often co-occurs with digital overuse, risky financial behaviors, and, in some cases, early experimentation with substance use. The reinforcement patterns embedded in gambling applications resemble those found in other behavioral addictions, contributing to a broader cluster of compulsive tendencies among youth. These overlaps suggest that online gambling functions not as an isolated behavior, but as part of a wider spectrum of maladaptive coping strategies.

Third, concerning the extent to which young people experience psychological impacts from their participation in online gambling, the study identifies significant consequences, including elevated stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, diminished self-esteem, and impaired daily functioning. Persistent losses and financial strain intensify feelings of guilt and hopelessness, while escalating engagement contributes to social withdrawal and academic decline. Collectively, these findings underscore the substantial psychological burden experienced

by young individuals involved in online gambling and highlight the need for targeted prevention and intervention efforts.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research. All procedures, data collection, analysis, and reporting were conducted objectively and independently, without any influence from financial, personal, or organizational interests that could affect the study's outcomes or interpretations

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