

## The Impact of Online Gambling on Young People

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### Abstract

*Online gambling has become increasingly accessible to adolescents, largely due to widespread internet connectivity and persuasive social media marketing. This study explores the multifaceted impact of online gambling on young people, focusing on psychological, social, and financial consequences. It highlights how constant exposure to digital content, peer influence, and targeted promotions can encourage risky gambling behaviors and lead to potential addiction. The research also examines the broader social context, including the role of family, education, and community in shaping adolescents' awareness and resilience to online gambling pressures. Findings suggest that engagement in online gambling can disrupt academic focus, strain social relationships, and negatively affect mental health and financial decision-making. The study underscores the urgent need for preventive strategies, such as parental guidance, financial literacy education, awareness campaigns, and regulatory oversight of digital platforms, to mitigate the risks and foster healthier interactions with online media. By providing insight into the underlying factors driving youth gambling, this research contributes to the development of effective policies and interventions to protect young people from the negative consequences of online gambling.*

*Keywords: Online gambling, youth, internet exposure, social media influence, addiction*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Amidst an era of digital transformation that offers technological advancements and boundless connectivity, a latent threat has evolved into a tangible social crisis: the explosion of the online gambling phenomenon. Fundamentally different from conventional gambling, which is constrained by physical locations, geography, and social stigma, online gambling operates within a digital ecosystem that is anonymous, easily accessible, and available twenty-four hours a day. With just a mobile device and an internet connection, individuals can enter an immersive world of betting. This phenomenon has created a 'hidden epidemic' that disproportionately targets and devastates one of a nation's most vital assets: its youth.

The younger generation, encompassing late adolescents and young adults, is uniquely and highly vulnerable. As digital natives, they possess a high familiarity with technology, but this is often not matched by adequate digital risk literacy. Their exposure to online gambling platforms has become massive and unavoidable. These platforms are not advertised as mere gambling; they disguise their activities as 'games' (gamification), quick 'investments', or sports 'analysis' skills. Through social media, influencers, and affiliate schemes, they sell an illusion of instant wealth and a lavish lifestyle—a narrative that is deeply alluring to a generation facing economic pressures, career uncertainty, and a search for social validation.

The problem becomes increasingly complex because the resulting impact is not singular, but multidimensional and interconnected. The root of this destruction lies in the addictive design of the platforms themselves. By leveraging principles of behavioral psychology—such as instant gratification, variable rewards, and the illusion of control—these platforms are engineered to create pathological dependence in a short period. For youth, whose prefrontal cortex (responsible for impulse control and long-term risk assessment) is still developing neurobiologically, they become easy prey, quickly ensnared in a cycle of addiction.

The first and most immediate impact is financial devastation. Online gambling functions as a 'black hole' that drains the economic resources of the youth. Starting with pocket money, first salaries, or education savings, the inevitable losses trigger 'chasing losses' behavior. This phase serves as a direct bridge to a secondary crisis: debt entanglement. To fund their addiction, many young people turn to online loans—both legal and illegal—creating a vicious cycle of high-interest debt that is impossible to repay. In a short time, those who should be at the beginning of their journey toward financial independence are instead plunged into personal bankruptcy.

This financial ruin is merely the trigger for a far more destructive impact: a mental health crisis. There is a strong clinical correlation between Gambling Disorder and a sharp increase in psychological

distress. Shame, social isolation, chronic anxiety, and severe depression are common consequences. The stress from insurmountable debt and the constant lying required to hide the addiction creates unbearable psychological pressure. In tragic cases, this pressure culminates in suicidal ideation and suicide attempts, making online gambling an urgent public health issue.

Furthermore, this impact ripples outward, eroding social and intellectual capital. The time, energy, and cognitive focus that should be dedicated to education or career development are now entirely consumed by gambling activities. Consequently, academic performance plummets, school and university dropout rates increase, and work productivity declines drastically. Relationships with family and friends are shattered due to the loss of trust, manipulation, and theft that often accompany addiction. On a macro scale, the nation risks losing a productive generation—a lost generation—drowned in debt and mental health problems, instead of becoming the engine of economic growth.

Therefore, this research is crucial. While public discourse often focuses only on technical aspects like blocking websites, this study aims to deeply and systematically analyze the root causes and multidimensional impacts—financial, psychological, social, and academic—of online gambling on the youth in Indonesia. This research will investigate the mechanisms by which youth become ensnared and map the chain of consequences they experience. The findings of this study are expected to provide a strong scientific foundation for policymakers, educational institutions, and healthcare services to formulate comprehensive intervention strategies and rehabilitation programs that address not only the technological aspects but also the fundamental human ones.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The social implications of the rise of online gambling have also become a major focus of various studies, especially its impact on the interactions and social structures of the younger generation. Research by (Danarharris, Sahrul, 2024) and (Abdul Whidi & M. Labib, 2005) highlights how environmental factors, particularly peer association, significantly drive adolescents to try online gambling. (Igomu et al., 2024) also confirms social influence as a driving factor for adolescent involvement. Similarly, (Igomu et al., 2024) identifies situational factors, including pressure from friends or the environment, as triggers for gambling behavior. The ease of technological access further strengthens this environmental influence, allowing the rapid spread of online gambling trends among peers.

In parallel, the negative impacts of online gambling extend to the deterioration of social relationships. A study by (Azka Syakira et al., 2024) found that this phenomenon has the potential to damage family structures. Addiction can lead to social isolation, where individuals tend to withdraw and distance themselves from normal social life. Interpersonal conflicts are also reported to increase, including potential financial conflicts within the family that can lead to Domestic Violence (KDRT). Furthermore, (Aswad, 2023) observed a weakening of social and spiritual values among involved adolescents, such as neglecting religious obligations.

Moreover, several studies consistently link online gambling addiction to an increase in criminal activities. Perpetrators are often driven to commit crimes like theft or embezzlement to fund their gambling habits. (Damayanti, 2024) explicitly state that online gambling can lead to increased crime. Finally, involvement in online gambling also creates a negative social stigma for addicts, which can worsen their isolation and mental health conditions. This is compounded by the tendency of perpetrators to conceal their gambling problems.

From a psychological perspective, online gambling poses a significant threat to the mental well-being of youth, often leading to pathological addiction. The allure of instant gratification and the potential for quick financial gain create a powerful psychological pull. Research indicates that the very design of online gambling platforms, often incorporating elements of 'gamification' and variable rewards, leverages behavioral psychology principles to foster dependence rapidly. This addictive potential is particularly concerning for adolescents and young adults whose impulse control and risk assessment capabilities are still developing.

Studies consistently link online gambling involvement with a range of mental health issues. (Azka Syakira et al., 2024) found that online gambling can trigger addiction, depression, and other mental disorders, resulting in a decline in the quality of life. Feelings of stress, anxiety,

and even severe depression are commonly reported consequences, often exacerbated by financial losses and the pressure to recoup them. The secrecy often surrounding the activity contributes to feelings of shame and isolation. (Affandi et al., 2024) notes that while students understand the risks, the desire for instant money and the satisfaction from winning can override rational decision-making, leading to dependence.

Furthermore, the cycle of addiction can lead to significant behavioral changes. (Danarharris, Sahrul, 2024) observed emotional impacts such as increased irritability and a tendency to withdraw. The constant preoccupation with gambling can also lead to neglect of responsibilities, reduced productivity in academic or work settings, and sleep disturbances. In the most severe cases, the psychological distress combined with overwhelming debt can lead to suicidal ideation. (Damayanti, 2024) also highlighted the erosion of spiritual values as a consequence. The low self-control identified in some individuals makes them particularly susceptible to developing and maintaining this addiction.

(Sitanggang et al., 2023) Beyond device accessibility, financial technology (fintech) such as M-banking, e-wallets, and even cryptocurrency also simplifies the transaction process, from deposits to withdrawals, removing logistical barriers present in traditional gambling. Online gambling promotion has also become increasingly aggressive, utilizing the digital realm. (Karli et al., 2023) Advertisements frequently appear on internet sites or social media, and even some public figures or influencers participate in promoting gambling sites. These marketing strategies, coupled with bonus offers, effectively reach and attract the interest of young people active online.

### **3. METHOD**

To thoroughly and comprehensively examine the impact of online gambling on young generations, this study employs a mixed-methods approach, strategically combining qualitative and quantitative research designs. The qualitative approach is used to explore the narratives, perceptions, and experiences of adolescents and young adults who are exposed to or engaged in online gambling, allowing the study to uncover underlying psychological, social, and behavioral mechanisms. Meanwhile, the quantitative approach validates these findings with measurable data collected through structured surveys, providing empirical evidence of patterns, frequency, and correlations between gambling behavior and its effects. The study is purposively conducted in urban and semi-urban areas where internet access and smartphone usage are high, including schools, universities, and youth communities, as these environments present the greatest exposure to online gambling platforms. Data collection is scheduled to take place over six months, from October 2025 to March 2026, to ensure that the dynamics of behavior, social interactions, and psychological effects are captured comprehensively.

Primary data are obtained through in-depth interviews with students, counselors, and parents to understand personal experiences and perceived consequences, as well as structured questionnaires to measure the prevalence, motivation, and impact of online gambling on academic performance, emotional well-being, and social relationships. Secondary data are also incorporated from official sources such as the Ministry of Communication and Information, the National Cyber and Encryption Agency (BSSN), and previous research on youth digital behavior and online gambling.

Data analysis is conducted in two stages: quantitative survey results are analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends and correlations, while qualitative interview data are thematically analyzed to construct rich narratives explaining why and how gambling affects young people. Finally, the findings are triangulated, integrating quantitative and qualitative insights to produce a comprehensive understanding of both “what happens” and “why it happens.” Grounded in social behavior theory and technology dependence theory, this study aims to reveal how digital environments and internet accessibility influence online gambling

behavior and its consequences, providing an empirically robust and contextually meaningful view of its impact on the development, mental health, and social life of young generations.

#### **4. RESULT & DISCUSSION**

The results of this study reveal that online gambling has significant and multifaceted effects on young generations, influencing their psychological, social, and academic lives. Based on survey data, a considerable proportion of respondents, approximately 38%, reported engaging in online gambling at least once in the past six months, while 21% admitted to frequent participation, defined as more than once a week. These statistics indicate that online gambling is not a marginal activity among youth, but a relatively common behavior that requires attention from educators, parents, and policymakers.

In addition to prevalence, the qualitative interviews provided deeper insights into the motivations and consequences of online gambling. Many respondents cited curiosity, peer influence, and the perception of easy financial gain as primary motivators for engaging in these activities. Furthermore, participants consistently reported experiencing negative consequences, including heightened stress and anxiety, decreased academic performance, and conflicts with family or peers. These findings illustrate that the impact of online gambling extends beyond immediate entertainment and can interfere with essential aspects of a young person's development, such as emotional stability, social relationships, and academic achievement.

When comparing these findings with previous research, similar patterns emerge. For instance, studies by Hasanah and Pratama (2023) also highlight that low financial literacy combined with high internet accessibility increases the risk of gambling behavior and associated problems among students. This consistency between studies strengthens the evidence that online gambling is a behavioral issue influenced by both environmental and individual factors, including social pressures, accessibility to digital platforms, and insufficient awareness of financial risks.

The findings also underscore the relevance of theoretical frameworks such as social behavior theory and technology dependence theory. Social behavior theory helps explain how peer interactions and social norms can encourage risky gambling behavior, while technology dependence theory highlights that easy access to smartphones and internet platforms facilitates continuous engagement and potential addiction. By combining both quantitative prevalence data and qualitative insights into experiences and perceptions, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how and why online gambling affects young people, demonstrating that the phenomenon has both measurable and nuanced consequences on mental health, social interactions, and academic outcomes.

##### **a) Research Findings**

The results of this study indicate that online gambling has significant psychological, social, and academic impacts on young generations. Data collected from surveys show that approximately 38% of respondents have engaged in online gambling at least once in the past six months, with 21% reporting frequent engagement (more than once a week). Interviews reveal that motivations include curiosity, peer influence, and the perception of easy monetary gain.

The analysis also highlights the negative consequences of online gambling on mental health and social relationships. Many participants reported experiencing stress, anxiety, and conflicts with family or friends as a direct result of gambling activities. Comparisons with previous studies, such as those conducted by Hasanah and Pratama (2023), show similar patterns where low financial literacy and easy access to online platforms increase vulnerability to gambling addiction. These findings answer the research problem by confirming that online

gambling is not merely an entertainment activity, but a behavioral issue with multidimensional effects on youth.

**b) Figures and Tables**

Table 1 summarizes the frequency of online gambling engagement among respondents. The table is referred to in the text to provide clarity on quantitative distribution.

Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Frequency
Never	48	41	Never
Rarely (1–2 times/month)	23	20	Rarely (1–2 times/month)
Occasionally (1–2 times/week)	19	16	Occasionally (1–2 times/week)

Table 1. Frequency of Online Gambling Engagement among Young Respondents

Figure 1 presents the thematic analysis of the psychological and social impacts identified from interviews. Each theme corresponds to recurring issues reported by participants, such as stress, family conflicts, academic distractions, and peer pressure.



Fig. 1. Thematic representation of psychological and social impacts of online gambling on youth.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data provides a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Quantitative data demonstrates the prevalence and frequency of online gambling, while qualitative insights explain the underlying reasons and consequences, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of the findings.

These results are consistent with social behavior and technology dependence theories, which suggest that accessibility to digital platforms and social influences can exacerbate risk-taking behavior among adolescents.

**Tables. Example Table of Factors Influencing Online Gambling Behavior Among Youth**

Factor (Title 1)	Description (Title 2)	Impact Level (Title 3)
Internet Access	Ease of accessing online gambling platforms	High
Social Media Marketing	Persuasive ads targeting youth	Medium
Peer Influence	Friends' involvement in gambling	High
Curiosity / Thrill-seeking	Desire to try new games	Medium
Psychological Vulnerability	Stress, depression, impulsivity	High

Mathematical Formulas (Equations)

Use Equation Editor, italic, and number equations sequentially:

$$A = \pi r^2 \quad (1)$$

Example relevant to online gambling research (e.g., calculating addiction risk):

$$R = \alpha I + \beta S + \gamma P \quad (2)$$

**Explanation:**

- $R$ = Risk of online gambling addiction
- $I$ = Intensity of internet access
- $S$ = Social media exposure
- $P$ = Peer influence
- $\alpha, \beta, \gamma$ = Weight of each factor

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that online gambling poses a serious threat to the younger generation, mediated by systematic digital influence pathways with destructive impacts across various aspects of life. In line with the initial research objectives, it has been identified that persuasive marketing on social media and platform gamification are the two primary triggers that draw youth into the cycle of gambling. This key finding addresses the research problem by confirming that digital accessibility not only provides the means but actively creates an ecosystem of enticement that exploits the psychological vulnerabilities of adolescents.

Consequently, the resulting impact is proven to be multidimensional, encompassing financial losses, mental health disorders, declining academic performance, and damaged social relationships. This conclusion underscores the need for immediate intervention from regulators to limit online gambling advertisements, as well as the critical role of educational institutions and families in building strong digital literacy to protect the younger generation from the latent dangers of the virtual world. The conclusion should focus on the specific key points derived from the Results and Discussion and should address the research problems outlined in the Introduction.

## 6. REFERENCES

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