

A Theoretical Framework on Online Gambling to Reduce Related Harms

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Abstract

Gambling is a form of entertainment centered on the wagering of any kind of valuable object or possession on a game, whose outcome is predominantly random. Internet gambling (iGambling) is the fastest growing mode of gambling due to the high speed internet accessibility, availability of online gambling sites, anonymity, event frequency, convenience, dissociation, associability, availability of variety of games, interactivity, simulation, the pervasive use of mobile devices, ease way of money spent, and immersive boundary due to intrinsic characteristics that make it particularly attractive to the players. It allows the gamblers to play many games at the same time without interruption. For many people, it is an enjoyable activity; and for others, it is addictive that provides few societal benefits, and drains resources from the society. Continuous iGambling activities lead to addiction that has serious side-effects, such as social isolation, financial hardships, and scholastic challenges among young people. In this study an attempt has been taken to discuss aspects of iGambling stressing on reduction of risk-factors and related harms.

Keywords: online gambling, disordered gambling, addiction, mental disorder, prevention, risk factors

1. Introduction

Gambling is the wagering of money or property on the outcome of a game that is largely random with the intent to win more money or property. It is a recreational and popular activity due to its appeal in potentially transforming lives, enhancing social bonds, altering mood states, and generating financial gains (Calado & Griffiths, 2016). It taps into human biopsychology, easily evokes powerful psychological processes, and connects with profound cultural meanings (Binde, 2013).

Internet or online gambling is also known as iGambling that is a kind of gambling, such as virtual poker, bingo, slot machines, casinos, lotteries, and horse race betting, which is conducted on the internet through the smart phones, laptops, personal computers, tablets and digital televisions (Gainsbury, 2015; Mohajan, 2025c, d). It is the fastest growing mode of gambling and is changing the way very rapidly. It allows gamblers to play many games at the same time without interruption. It is considered as an entertainment in the virtual world by placing, receiving, or transmitting a bet. Usually,

credit cards are used to place the bet, and wins or losses are enjoyed thereby (Chandra, R., et al., 2020).

The iGambling is easy and accessible, with new forms of gambling and new sites being added each year, and people can gamble anywhere and anytime privately away from friends and family (Naraine & Bradish, 2022; Mohajan, 2025a). During the last 30 years, it has grown exponentially mainly due to technological innovation. It is growing rapidly in-terms of popularity, market share, and products offered. Moreover, the iGamblers can create profiles that can hide one's real identity and to play alone or interact with others through instant chats and forums (Hing et al., 2014; Mohajan, 2025e). Globally, the largest iGambling product is wagering that accounts 53% of the online gambling market, followed by casino games (25.4%), poker (14.2%), and bingo (7.4%). The iGambling has generated approximately \$30 billion in annual revenue (Lycka, 2011).

The iGamblers are more likely to develop gambling problems than the offline iGamblers due to many online gambling features. They are more likely to believe that iGambling is harmful and wrong than non-problem gamblers (Gainsbury et al., 2015; Mohajan, 2026a, b). The iGambling is associated with problematic gambling and carries the risk of criminal activity and it may be addictive. It is legal in 85 countries, many countries restrict or ban it; and it is legal in some states of the USA, some provinces in Canada, most countries in the EU, and several nations in the Caribbean (Wright, 2023).

2. Literature Review

A literature review is an overview of previously published works on a particular research area that provides general information of an existing knowledge on a particular topic. It is a section of a document that collects key sources on a topic and discusses those sources in conversation with each other (Torraco, 2016). It is one of the most fundamental components of academic research and one of the most misunderstood. It discusses published information in a particular subject area within a certain time period (Sajeevanie, 2021; Mohajan, 2025c). It surveys scholarly articles, books and other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research or theory that provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works, and tries to identify gaps in existing knowledge (Ramdhani et al., 2014). It can be a

part of a research paper or scholarly article, usually falling after the introduction and before the research methodology sections. An excellent literature review has a proper research question, a proper theoretical framework, and a chosen research process (Bolderston, 2008). It helps the researcher to get familiar with relevant knowledge related to the problem that aims to solve (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). It also plays an important role in identifying the research problem, seeking new lines of inquiry, avoiding fruitless approaches, gaining methodological insights, identifying recommendations for further research and seeking support for grounded theory (Randolph, 2009).

Alexeis García-Perez and his coauthors have wanted to explore the relationship between monthly marketing expenditure by the gambling industry, the online amount of money bet, and the number of online accounts in Spain. Their study has suggested that the investment significantly increases the number of new and active accounts, deposits, and total money bet (García-Perez et al., 2024). Erika Langham and her coworkers have examined the harm from gambling on individuals, families, and communities to generate a conceptual framework that will lead to a more coherent interpretation of gambling harm among treatment providers, policy makers, and researchers (Langham et al., 2016). Sally Melissa Gainsbury has presented a greater understanding of adult participation in iGambling, the relationship between iGambling and related problems, as well as considers the role of the wider spectrum of gambling behavior and relevant individual factors that moderate this relationship (Gainsbury, 2015).

Sylvia Kairouz and her coauthors have revealed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, many land-based gambling venues being forced to close, and a significant increase has happened in iGambling practices when changes in the gambling landscape and in daily life occurred due to the health crisis (Kairouz et al., 2025). Michela Ghelfi and her coauthors have tried to present the current state of knowledge of the risk and protective factors of iGambling. Also the methodological aspects and risk and protective factors are analyzed cross-sectionals. In their study the risk factors and variables at the individual level are investigated to a greater extent, while protective factors at the relational and contextual level need more in-depth study in future research (Ghelfi et al., 2024). Pranav

Prakash and his coauthors have observed that the availability of online gambling sites and the pervasive use of mobile devices put a lot of college students at the risk of developing a gambling addiction. Teenagers engage in both regulated and non-regulated forms of gambling. As a result, iGambling has opened the doors for entrepreneurs to be involved in fraud, theft, extortion, and money laundering in the gambling sites (Prakash et al., 2024).

Bilal Kalkan and Christine Suniti Bhat have wanted to investigate the prevalence and extent of problematic internet use, online gaming behavior, and their relationships with depression and quality of life among college students (Kalkan & Bhat, 2020). Elisa Benedetti and her coworkers have realized that iGambling machines (IGM) are among the most harmful forms of gambling, and their widespread availability has been linked to increased gambling activity and a rise in harmful gambling. They have found that restricting IGM availability can help to mitigate harmful gambling, and it requires coordinated efforts across different levels of government to ensure uniform policy implementation, along with individual-level policies, such as banning advertising, and consideration of diverse gambling products and online gambling (Benedetti et al., 2025). According to Bjørn Thomassen, the five best iGambling sites in the world are i) Caesars Online Gambling, ii) BetMGM Online Gambling, iii) DraftKings Online Gambling, iv) FanDuel Online Gambling, and v) Fanatics Online Gambling (Thompson, 2015). I. Nelson Rose has stressed on elements of gambling (e.g., consideration, prize and chance); Federal, state and local gambling regulation (e.g., Internet Gambling Prohibition Act 1995); organized crime implications; extraterritorial jurisdiction; and police power and advertising for legal iGambling (Rose, 2006).

3. Research Methodology of the Study

Research is a systematic collection, organization, and analysis of evidence to increase knowledge, establish facts, solve problems, and enhance the cooperation among scholars. It wants to control sources of bias and advance understanding across various academic, scientific, and practical disciplines (Ackoff, 1961). It is an essential and powerful tool in leading the society towards progress. It is a scientific and systematic investigation for pertinent information on a specific area that is actually a voyage of discovery (Kabir, 2016; Mohajan, 2025b). It is an intellectual

activity and stresses on orderly collection, organization, and analysis of information with an ultimate goal of making the concepts useful in decision-making. It must have beneficence and non-malicious, and respects for autonomy of the participant (Naidoo, 2011). It leads to progress in some fields of life, such as new products, new facts, new concepts and new ways of doing things that are being found in every subject (Swarooprani, 2022).

A methodology is the study of research methods, which is a structured procedure for bringing about a certain goal, like acquiring knowledge or verifying knowledge claims (Silverman, 2011). It is a body of methods, rules, and ideas that are important in a science, art, or discipline. It is the overarching strategy, framework, and theoretical analysis of the methods (Howell, 2012). Therefore, research methodology is a structured and scientific approach used to collect, analyze, and interpret quantitative or qualitative data to answer research questions or test hypotheses (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). It comprises of various essential predefined components, such as aims, population, technique, outcome, and statistical considerations. It is an overall plan of the research. It is used to identify, choose, process, and analyze information about the subject that is being studied (Creswell, 2003; Mohajan, 2020).

Throughout the study, we have used the secondary data sources that are collected and analyzed from national and international journals; various research reports of research scholars, books of well-known authors, research note books, hand books, theses, magazines, and newspapers, and other sources of published information (Mohajan, 2018a). In this study, we have taken attempt to discuss aspects of iGambling. We have stressed on qualitative data analysis related to online gambling (Mohajan, 2018b). The reliability and validity are essential issues in any research. In this article we have tried our best to maintain the reliability and validity throughout of the research (Mohajan, 2017).

4. Objective of the Study

The iGambling may increase rates of disordered gambling due to its high degree of accessibility, immersive interface and simply spending money for gaming activities (Prakash et al., 2024). The availability of iGambling websites and the pervasive use of electronic devices put a lot of young people at risk of developing a gambling addiction. They are engaged in both regulated

and non-regulated forms of gambling, such as card games, followed by dice, instant lotteries, skill-based activities, sports betting, and bingo with peers (Stewart, 2011). The problematic iGambling is linked with various adverse health outcomes, such as mental health disorders like depression and anxiety, substance use, and sometimes suicidal tendencies (Langham et al., 2016). Recently the iGambling has gained very much popularity and acceptance worldwide. At present the five best casinos in the world are i) Bellagio, Las Vegas, USA; ii) The Venetian Macao, China; iii) Monte Carlo Casino; iv) Casino Baden-Baden, Germany; and v) Marina Bay Sands, Singapore (Thompson, 2015). Main objective of this study is to reduce iGambling addictions of the young generations. The other minor objectives of the study are as follows:

- 1) to highlight on the historical background of the iGambling, and
- 2) to stress on the usefulness and side-effects of iGambling.

5. Historical Background

The precise origin of gambling is unknown. The first known European gambling house was the Ridotto, established in Venice, Italy, in 1638 by the Great Council of Venice to provide controlled gambling during the carnival season (Thomassen, 2014). The first iGambling venue opened to the general public was ticketing for the Liechtenstein International Lottery in October 1994 (Cabot, 2006). In the late 1990s, iGambling had gained popularity for three reasons: i) the small Caribbean nation of Antigua and Barbuda creating a “free trade zone” in 1994 that effectively allowed US bookmakers to accept bets by phone on horse racing and sports, ii) the development of gambling software by Microgaming in 1994, and iii) the development of encrypted communication protocols by CryptoLogic in 1995 that allowed secure online monetary transactions (Wood & Williams, 2007). In 1996, there were only 15 iGambling websites, and that had increased to 200 by the following year; and about 1,800 websites had developed by 2002 (Scott et al., 2019). In 2006, there were about 2,500 websites owned by 465 different companies (Bowsher, 2006). The iGambling starts from lotteries, instant lotteries, bingo, betting on billiards or pool, card games, sports lotteries, casino games, video lottery terminals, dice, etc. (Prakash et al., 2024).

The revenue rate in the iGambling was increased

similarly, although it was very difficult to determine. It was exceeded \$830 million in 1998, and in 2000 it was generated to \$2.2 billion (Amey, 2001). In 2008, it was \$21 billion, and it reached to \$45.86 billion in 2016, and the Statista predicted that it may reach to \$56.05 billion by 2018 and \$66.67 billion by 2020 (Statista, 2016). The first online poker rooms were introduced in 1998. The Internet Gambling Prohibition Act was introduced as a bill in the US Senate in 1999, but it did not pass. In 2000, the first Australian federal government passed the Interactive Gambling Moratorium Act to make it illegal for any non-licensed online casino (Derevensky et al., 2006). It is estimated that about 5,000 iGambling sites offer wagering on sports, casino games, poker, bingo, lottery and other games and the global gambling market is estimated to reach roughly \$876 billion by 2026. At present the iGambling are driven by artificial intelligence (AI), mobile-first gaming, new regulatory paradigms, and the creation of immersive digital spaces (Poley, 2023).

6. Usefulness of iGambling

The iGambling is the fastest growing form in the world that offers higher level of privacy and anonymity. It creates a digitized, mobile-friendly platform of the players to engage in real-time gaming and wagering without visiting a physical location, and sometimes they get better returns on their wagers (Wood & Williams, 2009). It allows the players to easily compare casinos, games, and betting options to find the best odds and promotions. It can create a quiet and controlled environment that can help to enhance focus on strategic thinking and mind concentration (Chalaguine, 2018). It pays the opportunity to access a wide range of games that may not be available locally. The players have the opportunity to access a wide-range of games that may not be available locally international gambling styles and rules (Griffiths, 2003).

Millions of people of the world consider it as an enjoyable form of convenient entertainment due to its appeal in potentially transforming lives, enhancing social bonds through socializing, having fun by altering mood states, avoiding problems, seeking excitement, or generating financial gains (Binde, 2013). The players can access a plethora of games from the comfort of their own homes or even on the go, using their mobile devices saving time and money. New players might receive substantial welcome bonuses, and regular players also find bonuses and promotions (Gainsbury, 2011). Legal

iGambling provides both psychological and economic benefits to expert gamblers. It adds significant economic value to communities in the form of employment opportunities and higher tax revenue. This tax revenue helps states to pay in many projects, such as education, infrastructure, economic development, and other state-funded services that create many new jobs (Anand, 2018).

7. Risky Behaviors and Effects of iGambling

When a disorder is developed in gambling, the gambler is referred to as a pathological gambler, who is unable to resist his or her impulses to gamble. The iGamblers are more likely to be younger, has less education and false beliefs, and more debt than iGamblers who do not have gambling problems (Blaszczynski & Nower, 2002). The iGambling occurs in different forms and on different platforms. Its related harms are a well-established public health concern and are associated to socio-demographic and psychological factors that create negative effects on individuals, families, and communities that encompass contextual, sociocultural, environmental, commercial, and political determinants to comprehensively understand the development of problematic gambling (Langham et al., 2016). The problematic iGambling causes many problems, such as illegal operating, adolescent gambling, fraud, theft, extortion, and money laundering. An iGambler may be tempted to borrow money to gamble from banks and known people, and may face various difficulties repaying the debt; family may suffers due to domestic violence and divorces (Chóliz et al., 2021).

It is found that online gamblers are more likely to be characterized by a low degree of sociability and a higher level of frugality (Redondo, 2015). Problematic gambling behaviors, such as substance misuse, etc. are associated with various adverse health outcomes, including mental health disorders, such as moderate to severe depression and anxiety, substance use, and even suicidal tendencies (Christensen et al., 2015). It is observed that online gamblers are more likely to misuse substances than offline gamblers both while gambling and at other times (Dowling et al., 2015). The iGamblers often take regular drugs, such as medicines, alcohol, tobacco, etc.; illicit drugs, such as methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine, cannabis (marijuana), ketamine, LSD (acid), MDMA (ecstasy), speed and ice (crystal meth), etc.; and cannabinoids, such as

hexahydrocannabinol (HHC), Delta-8-THC, and Delta-10-THC, etc. which regulates essential functions like mood, memory, sleep, pain, and appetite (Mihaylova et al., 2013).

The iGambling can stretch beyond the gambler to their partners, family, and friends. It can create financial instability, relationship problems, and reduced work performance, exacerbating social inequalities in the communities that lead to broader societal costs (Gainsbury, 2015). It is associated with fraud, money laundering, corruption of match-fixing, etc. Sometimes problems with pathological gambling can lead to bankruptcy, crime, domestic abuse, and even suicide (Langham et al., 2016). The iGambling frequency is significantly associated with poor physical and mental health, and smoking and alcohol consumption are also increased (Welte et al., 2002). The individual may even attempt suicide due to depression and emotional breakdown (Karaibrahimoğlu, 2021).

The money for iGambling can be transferred through the digital forms of money, such as credit card, debit card, electronic check, electronic bank transfers, certified check, money order, wire transfer, crypto currencies, and e-wallets. The gamblers upload funds to the iGambling companies, and play the games that these offer (Williams et al., 2007; Mohajan, 2026c).

8. Risk Reduction Strategies

In iGambling, the challenges come quickly and unexpectedly. The iGamblers often face financial risks, regulatory compliance, protecting player trust, and staying ahead of fraud is essential for survival (Paterson et al., 2020). The risk management system in iGambling is proactively identifying potential threats, such as financial losses, legal issues, and data breaches. It ensures stability and compliance for operators, guarantees a fair and secure environment for players, and preserves credibility for the industry (Blaszczynski, 2002).

Many iGambling sites use technology to help players who gamble excessively and might be at risk for the disorder through the amount limits, alert messages, self-exclusion programs, and easy procedures for closing accounts (Shaffer et al., 2010). The iGambling can be reduced by updating automated transaction monitoring, and rigorous identity verification through the prevention of fraud, maintaining of compliance, financial security, responsible gambling, and balancing financial exposure (Hing et al., 2025).

Also an increasing number of jurisdictions are legalizing and regulating iGambling for harm minimization measures to enhance consumer protection, and generating taxation revenue (Gainsbury & Wood, 2011).

9. Conclusions

The iGambling represents an even more challenging phenomenon than offline gambling, as it is extremely widespread and characterized by more risks that make control, prevention, and intervention complicated. It is more attractive to gamblers due to the opportunity to create profiles that can hide one's real identity and to play alone and interact with others through instant chats and forums. It continues to evolve and participation increases, particularly among young people who are highly familiar with ICT. It may create a range of harms, from financial distress to relationship breakdown and mental health issues. In the study, we have highlighted the risk and protective factors associated with online gambling. To reduce the iGambling social awareness, regular parents monitoring, strictness of laws and regulations, and financial fraud identification and strong cyber law implementation and consistent updating are necessary to prevent victimhood.

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