

Review

# Online gambling addiction: Problems and solutions for policymakers and stakeholders in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** The rise of online gambling in Indonesia has emerged as a significant public health concern, driven by various psychological, social, and regulatory factors. Despite stringent laws prohibiting gambling, the accessibility and appeal of online platforms have led to increased participation, particularly among young adults. This phenomenon is characterized by a paradoxical sense of control that users feel while gambling online, which can lead to compulsive behaviors and addiction. The structural characteristics of online gambling platforms, including fast-paced games and easy accessibility, further exacerbate this issue. Social influences, particularly through social media and peer interactions, normalize gambling behaviors, making them more appealing to adolescents. Mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, are closely linked to online gambling addiction, as individuals may use gambling as a coping mechanism. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified these challenges, with many individuals turning to online gambling for entertainment during lockdowns. To address the growing prevalence of online gambling addiction, comprehensive regulatory frameworks are needed, alongside responsible gambling initiatives and public awareness campaigns. Collaboration among stakeholders, including government agencies, healthcare providers, and gambling operators, is crucial for effective intervention. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of online gambling trends will inform future policies and help identify emerging risks. By adopting a multifaceted approach, Indonesian policymakers and stakeholders can work towards minimizing the risks associated with online gambling and fostering a healthier environment for its citizens.

**Keywords:** online gambling; addiction; mental health; regulatory framework; youth vulnerability

## 1. Introduction

Online gambling addiction has emerged as a significant public health concern in Indonesia, particularly following the legalization of online gambling platforms. The rapid growth of online gambling has been associated with an increase in gambling-related disorders, especially among younger populations. This synthesis will explore the problems related to online gambling addiction in Indonesia and propose potential solutions based on existing literature. Gambling addiction as a compulsive and uncontrollable behavior that leads to negative personal, social, and financial consequences. the American Psychiatric Association's DSM-5, which classifies gambling disorder as a behavioral addiction, and the similarities it shares with substance use disorders. "Gambling addiction, also known as gambling disorder, is

characterized by an inability to control gambling behavior despite negative consequences, mirroring the features of substance addiction (DSM-5, American Psychiatric Association). This compulsive behavior can disrupt personal, professional, and financial well-being. In recent years, the rise of online gambling has intensified this issue, with platforms designed to maximize user engagement and exploit vulnerabilities, particularly through easily accessible, fast-paced, and immersive games. The shift to digital environments has led to higher rates of gambling addiction, especially among younger populations. The omission of online gambling in Indonesia has led to a marked increase in gambling participation, with online gambling becoming a leading cause of gambling addiction among individuals seeking treatment for gambling disorders, particularly affecting those under 26 years of age (Chóliz, 2024). This trend is echoed in various studies that indicate a higher addiction potential for online gambling compared to traditional forms of gambling. For instance, research suggests that online gamblers are less likely to switch to offline gambling as they age, which may lead to a sustained or increased prevalence of gambling disorders over time (Yazdi and Katzian, 2017). The addictive nature of online gambling is further exacerbated by its accessibility, anonymity, and the rapid pace of online games, which can lead to impulsive gambling behaviors (Pallesen et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, the youth demographic is particularly vulnerable to online gambling addiction. A study focusing on university students revealed that emotional regulation significantly influences internet addiction, including online gambling behaviors (Fortuna, 2024). This indicates that individuals with poor emotional regulation may be more susceptible to developing gambling addictions. Additionally, the prevalence of internet addiction among adolescents has been linked to increased gambling severity, suggesting a cyclical relationship between these two behaviors (Chinawa, 2023).

The implications of online gambling addiction extend beyond individual health, impacting families and communities. The normalization of gambling through social media and influencer marketing has been identified as a contributing factor to the rising rates of gambling addiction among young people (Vallés et al., 2021). This phenomenon highlights the need for targeted public health campaigns that address the risks associated with online gambling and promote responsible gambling practices. To mitigate the problems associated with online gambling addiction in Indonesia, several solutions can be proposed. Firstly, implementing comprehensive education programs in schools and universities can raise awareness about the risks of online gambling and promote healthy coping mechanisms for emotional regulation (Fortuna, 2024). Secondly, stricter regulations on advertising and marketing practices related to online gambling can help reduce exposure among vulnerable populations, particularly youth (Vallés et al., 2021). Finally, enhancing support systems for individuals struggling with gambling addiction, including counseling and treatment programs, can provide necessary resources for recovery (Chóliz, 2024).

## **2. Understanding online gambling addiction**

Online gambling addiction is a multifaceted issue shaped by psychological, social, and technological dimensions. The increasing prevalence of online gambling

has sparked concerns about its addictive potential, especially among vulnerable populations. Online gambling addiction is a multifaceted issue influenced by psychological, social, and technological factors. The increasing prevalence of online gambling, especially among vulnerable populations, has raised concerns about its addictive potential. Online platforms provide a unique environment where the design and functionality actively shape user behavior. According to the actor-network theory, these platforms create a relational dynamic that encourages continued engagement, which can exacerbate addiction (Törrönen et al., 2020). This dynamic is critical as the design of these sites can manipulate user experiences, leading to compulsive gambling behaviors. Moreover, the sense of control that users experience while gambling online plays a paradoxical role in addiction. While users believe they have control over their gambling behaviors, this perceived control can result in increased gambling frequency and intensity, ultimately heightening the risk of addiction (Trivedi and Teichert, 2017). The immediacy of rewards and feedback in online gambling further reinforces this cycle, contributing to the development of gambling disorders.

The demographic profile of online gamblers provides additional insights into addiction trends. Studies suggest that younger individuals are particularly susceptible to online gambling addiction, as they are more exposed to the influence of social media and online influencers, who often glamorize and normalize gambling behaviors (Vallés et al., 2021). This exposure can increase participation among youth, leading to a higher risk of addiction. The relationship between mental health issues and online gambling addiction is also significant. Individuals engaging in online gambling often experience co-occurring mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression (Granero et al., 2020; Khanlari and Naseri, 2022). For some, gambling may serve as a coping mechanism for psychological distress, while for others, the addiction exacerbates their mental health problems, creating a vicious cycle (Hing et al., 2017).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified the challenges associated with online gambling addiction. Lockdowns and social distancing measures have led many individuals to seek entertainment online, resulting in increased participation in online gambling activities (Håkansson, 2020). This shift has raised alarms among public health officials, as the pandemic has created an environment conducive to gambling addiction, particularly for those already at risk. Online gambling addiction is a multifaceted issue influenced by the design of gambling platforms, the demographic characteristics of gamblers, the impact of social media, and the interplay with mental health. Addressing this growing concern requires a collaborative approach that includes public health initiatives, regulatory measures, and educational campaigns aimed at promoting responsible gambling practices.

### **3. The rise of online gambling in Indonesia**

Online gambling addiction in Indonesia is a growing concern, but data specific to the country remains limited. However, reports indicate that online gambling has become increasingly popular among young adults, particularly those aged 18–24, who are highly vulnerable to gambling disorders. The rapid rise in internet penetration and the availability of smartphones has made gambling more accessible. In a survey conducted by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), internet

usage among young adults was reported at 91%, suggesting high exposure to online gambling platforms. Cultural factors further complicate the issue of gambling addiction in Indonesia. Despite the country's predominantly Muslim population and strict prohibitions on gambling in Islamic teachings, gambling remains prevalent, particularly in online formats. The anonymity provided by online platforms allows individuals to gamble without facing social stigma or legal consequences, making enforcement difficult.

Mental health services in Indonesia are also underfunded, with only a small percentage of the population having access to treatment for psychiatric conditions, including gambling addiction. The stigma surrounding mental health conditions, particularly addiction, often prevents individuals from seeking help, compounding the issue. Cultural norms that discourage open discussions about mental health contribute to this challenge. Efforts to address online gambling addiction in Indonesia have faced numerous hurdles. One significant challenge is the absence of comprehensive legislation that specifically targets online gambling. While Indonesia's gambling laws are strict, they focus primarily on land-based gambling and do not adequately regulate online platforms. Offshore gambling sites are commonly used by Indonesian players, making it difficult for authorities to enforce existing laws.

Several Southeast Asian countries, including Singapore and Malaysia, have implemented successful regulatory frameworks to combat online gambling. Singapore's Remote Gambling Act of 2014 is a good example, as it restricts access to unlicensed gambling websites and imposes fines or imprisonment for violators. Indonesia could explore similar models by implementing tighter controls on internet service providers (ISPs) to block access to unregulated gambling sites. In terms of prevention, efforts to implement school-based educational programs face significant challenges. While some schools have introduced internet safety and gambling awareness initiatives, they are not widespread or mandatory. Cultural barriers, such as a reluctance to discuss gambling openly, hinder these efforts. Additionally, the lack of government funding and trained professionals in this area limits the effectiveness of these programs.

The ability to gamble from the comfort of one's home, combined with the wide variety of games available, has made online gambling an attractive option for many individuals. Research indicates that the ease of access to diverse gambling options is a significant motivator for participation in online gambling activities (McCormack et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2018). This trend is not isolated to Indonesia; similar patterns have been observed globally, where online gambling is increasingly favored over traditional land-based options due to its immediacy and the anonymity it provides (Chóliz, 2015; Goldstein et al., 2016). The regulatory environment in Indonesia presents a complex backdrop for online gambling. Despite strict laws prohibiting gambling, including online platforms, enforcement remains challenging due to the pervasive nature of the internet and the use of offshore gambling sites (Rodhiyah et al., 2022). The Indonesian legal framework includes provisions that criminalize online gambling, yet the effectiveness of these laws is often undermined by the rapid evolution of technology and the global nature of online gambling operations (Elfaza, 2021). Furthermore, the lack of comprehensive regulations specifically addressing online gambling exacerbates the situation, leading to a rise in unregulated and

potentially harmful gambling practices (Håkansson et al., 2017). Moreover, the impact of advertising on the proliferation of online gambling cannot be overstated. Studies have shown that online gambling advertisements are prevalent and often target vulnerable populations, including young adults and adolescents (Håkansson and Widinghoff, 2019; Hollén et al., 2020). The normalization of gambling through media channels contributes to a culture where gambling is perceived as a socially acceptable activity, further entrenching its popularity (Guerrero-Solé et al., 2017). The psychological effects of such advertising can lead to increased gambling behaviors, particularly among those predisposed to addiction (Lee and Lee, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic has also played a significant role in the rise of online gambling in Indonesia. As social restrictions were implemented, many individuals turned to online gambling as a form of entertainment and a potential source of income during economic hardships (Dwihayuni and Fauzi, 2021). This shift has raised concerns about the potential for increased gambling-related harm, as individuals may engage in gambling as a coping mechanism for stress and uncertainty (Fortuna, 2024).

#### **4. Factors contributing to online gambling addiction**

Gambling addiction stems from complex psychological factors, with emotional instability and impulsive behavior being prominent contributors. Individuals with difficulty managing emotions often turn to gambling as a form of escape, increasing their susceptibility to addiction. The factors contributing to online gambling addiction in Indonesia are complex and interrelated, encompassing psychological, social, and environmental dimensions. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. One significant psychological factor is the sense of control that online gambling provides. Research indicates that individuals who engage in online gambling often perceive themselves as having greater control over their gambling activities compared to traditional gambling settings. This perceived control can paradoxically lead to increased gambling behavior and a higher risk of addiction (Trivedi and Teichert, 2017). The ability to choose when and how to gamble, along with the anonymity offered by online platforms, can create an environment conducive to compulsive gambling behaviors (Marmet et al., 2021). This sense of control may initially attract individuals to online gambling but can ultimately contribute to problematic behaviors as they lose track of their gambling patterns. Another critical factor is the structural characteristics of online gambling platforms. The design of these platforms often includes features that enhance their addictive potential, such as fast-paced games, easy accessibility, and the ability to gamble at any time and place (McCormack et al., 2013; Yazdi and Katzian, 2017). These features can lead to increased engagement and expenditure, making it easier for individuals to develop gambling problems. Studies have shown that the more immersive and interactive the gambling experience, the greater the likelihood of addiction (Lelonek-Kuleta et al., 2020). This is particularly concerning in Indonesia, where the rapid growth of internet access has made online gambling more accessible than ever. Social influences also play a significant role in online gambling addiction. The normalization of gambling through social media and peer interactions can lead to increased participation among young people (Blaszczynski et al., 2015). Influencers

and online communities often glamorize gambling, making it appear as a socially acceptable and even desirable activity (Gainsbury, 2015). This exposure can create a culture where gambling is seen as a routine part of entertainment, particularly among adolescents and young adults, who may be more susceptible to peer pressure and social norms (Montel et al., 2014).

Moreover, mental health issues are closely linked to online gambling addiction. Individuals with pre-existing mental health conditions, such as depression or anxiety, may turn to online gambling as a coping mechanism, which can exacerbate their conditions and lead to a cycle of addiction (Gainsbury et al., 2015; Törrönen et al., 2020). The stress and isolation that can accompany gambling addiction further contribute to mental health deterioration, creating a feedback loop that is difficult to escape (Chóliz and Marcos, 2022). In Indonesia, where mental health stigma may prevent individuals from seeking help, this issue is particularly pressing. The COVID-19 pandemic has also influenced the dynamics of online gambling addiction. Lockdowns and social distancing measures have led many individuals to seek entertainment online, resulting in increased participation in online gambling activities (Håkansson, 2020). This shift has raised concerns about the potential for increased gambling-related harm, as individuals may engage in gambling as a coping mechanism for stress and uncertainty during challenging times (Gainsbury et al., 2015). The pandemic has highlighted the need for targeted interventions to address the unique challenges posed by online gambling in a rapidly changing environment. The factors contributing to online gambling addiction are complex and multifaceted, encompassing psychological, social, and environmental influences. Understanding these factors is essential for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies, particularly in contexts like Indonesia, where online gambling is on the rise. One significant factor is the psychological predisposition of individuals. Research indicates that cognitive distortions, such as overestimating the likelihood of winning or underestimating the risks involved, play a crucial role in the development of gambling addiction (Chóliz, 2024; Esparza-Reig, 2023). These cognitive biases can lead individuals to engage in gambling behaviors that are not aligned with their actual chances of success, fostering a cycle of repeated gambling despite negative consequences (Winarsih and Salsabila, 2022). Additionally, impulsivity is a critical characteristic associated with gambling addiction. Individuals who exhibit high levels of impulsivity are more likely to engage in risky gambling behaviors, as they may struggle to delay gratification or consider the long-term consequences of their actions (Montel et al., 2014; Potenza, 2013). Socio-demographic factors also significantly influence the likelihood of developing an online gambling addiction. Studies have shown that younger individuals, particularly those aged 15–26, are at a heightened risk for gambling disorders, often due to their greater exposure to online gambling platforms and the influence of peer behaviors (Marmet et al., 2021; Pallesen et al., 2021). Furthermore, gender differences have been observed, with males generally exhibiting higher rates of gambling participation and addiction compared to females (Columb and O’Gara, 2017; Pallesen et al., 2021). The social environment, including peer pressure and the normalization of gambling behaviors through social media and influencer marketing, can further exacerbate the risk of addiction among young people (Serna, 2023; Vallés et al., 2021).

The availability and accessibility of online gambling platforms are critical environmental factors contributing to addiction. The ease of access to gambling sites via smartphones and computers allows individuals to gamble at any time and place, increasing the likelihood of excessive gambling (Törrönen et al., 2020; Yazdi and Katzian, 2017). This constant availability can lead to impulsive gambling behaviors, as individuals may find it challenging to resist the temptation to gamble when they have immediate access to online platforms (Gainsbury, 2015). Additionally, the structural characteristics of online gambling games, such as fast-paced gameplay and the potential for immediate rewards, can create an engaging environment that fosters addictive behaviors (Lelonek-Kuleta et al., 2020). Social influences also play a significant role in the development of online gambling addiction. The presence of social networks that normalize gambling behaviors can lead individuals to perceive gambling as a socially acceptable activity, thereby increasing their likelihood of participation (McCormack and Griffiths, 2010; Vallés et al., 2021). Moreover, the impact of advertising and promotional strategies employed by online gambling operators can further entice individuals to engage in gambling, often targeting vulnerable populations such as young adults (Chóliz, 2024; Chóliz and Marcos, 2022).

Lastly, mental health issues are closely linked to online gambling addiction. Individuals with pre-existing mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression, may turn to gambling as a coping mechanism, leading to a higher risk of developing problematic gambling behaviors (Khanlari and Naseri, 2022; Winarsih and Salsabila, 2022). This relationship is particularly concerning as it creates a feedback loop where gambling exacerbates mental health issues, further entrenching the addiction. The factors contributing to online gambling addiction are diverse and interconnected, involving psychological predispositions, socio-demographic characteristics, environmental influences, social norms, and mental health issues. By understanding these psychological vulnerabilities—especially among younger individuals who are more prone to impulsive decisions—interventions can better target the root causes of gambling addiction.

## **5. Effects of online gambling addiction in Indonesia**

The effects of online gambling addiction in Indonesia are profound and multifaceted, impacting individuals' mental health, financial stability, and social relationships. As online gambling becomes increasingly accessible, particularly among the youth, understanding its implications is crucial for developing effective interventions and policies. One of the most significant consequences of online gambling addiction is its association with mental health issues. Research indicates that individuals engaged in online gambling often experience elevated levels of depression, anxiety, and overall poor mental health (Casu et al., 2023; Marmet et al., 2021). The compulsive nature of gambling can exacerbate these conditions, creating a vicious cycle where gambling serves as a temporary escape from psychological distress, only to lead to further emotional turmoil (Rizzo, 2023). This relationship is particularly concerning among adolescents, who may be more vulnerable to the adverse effects of gambling due to their developmental stage and susceptibility to addictive behaviors (Chóliz et al., 2021; Wong and So, 2013).

Financial difficulties are another critical outcome of online gambling addiction. Many individuals who develop problematic gambling behaviors often find themselves in significant debt, which can lead to a range of negative consequences, including loss of employment, strained relationships, and even criminal behavior to fund their gambling habits (Elie, 2023; Winarsih and Salsabila, 2022). In Indonesia, where economic disparities exist, the financial repercussions of gambling addiction can be particularly devastating, affecting not only the individuals but also their families and communities (Columb and O’Gara, 2017). The normalization of gambling through online platforms further complicates this issue, as individuals may underestimate the risks involved, leading to reckless financial decisions (Gainsbury, 2015). Moreover, the social implications of online gambling addiction are profound. Individuals struggling with gambling addiction may experience isolation and withdrawal from social activities, as their focus shifts predominantly to gambling (Winarsih and Salsabila, 2022). This withdrawal can lead to deteriorating relationships with family and friends, as loved ones may become frustrated or concerned about the gambler’s behavior. The stigma associated with gambling addiction can also prevent individuals from seeking help, further entrenching their isolation (Rizzo, 2023).

The role of technology in facilitating online gambling addiction cannot be overlooked. The ease of access to gambling platforms via smartphones and computers has made it increasingly difficult for individuals to regulate their gambling behaviors (Pallesen et al., 2021). The anonymity and convenience offered by online gambling sites can lead to impulsive decisions and a lack of accountability, contributing to the development of addiction (Gainsbury, 2015). Additionally, the influence of social media and online advertising has been shown to normalize gambling behaviors, particularly among younger audiences, thereby increasing the likelihood of addiction (Gainsbury et al., 2015; Vallés et al., 2021). The effects of online gambling addiction in Indonesia are extensive, encompassing mental health challenges, financial instability, and social isolation. As online gambling continues to rise, policymakers, healthcare providers, and communities must collaborate in developing comprehensive strategies to address this growing public health concern. This includes implementing educational programs about the risks of gambling, providing accessible mental health services, and enforcing regulations on gambling advertisements, particularly those targeting vulnerable populations.

## **6. Existing solutions and interventions**

Several existing solutions and interventions have been developed to address online gambling addiction, reflecting the complexity of the issue. One of the most effective approaches is the integration of responsible gambling tools directly into online platforms. These tools, such as self-exclusion options, spending limits, and behavioral tracking systems, can alert users when they engage in risky gambling behaviors (Ramnerö et al., 2019). Research indicates that when implemented effectively, these tools can reduce gambling-related harm by promoting self-awareness among gamblers. The idea is that the very platforms that facilitate gambling can also provide mechanisms for users to manage their gambling habits. Research indicates that these tools can be effective in reducing gambling-related harm when



they are implemented correctly and are accessible to users (Marmet et al., 2021). Community-based programs also play an essential role in addressing gambling addiction. Programs that integrate support for gambling addiction within shelters for individuals experiencing poverty and homelessness have shown promising results (Matheson et al., 2022). These programs aim to raise awareness about gambling harms, develop therapeutic relationships, and establish support networks, addressing the underlying social issues contributing to addiction. These programs focus on increasing awareness of gambling harms, developing therapeutic relationships, and establishing support networks (Matheson et al., 2022). By addressing the underlying social issues that contribute to gambling addiction, such as poverty and lack of access to mental health services, these programs can create a more supportive environment for recovery. Moreover, Educational initiatives are another crucial intervention. Programs designed to educate young people about the risks of gambling and the tactics used by gambling companies are essential. Teaching adolescents to recognize marketing strategies can empower them to make informed decisions and resist gambling temptations (Chóliz et al., 2021). Parents and guardians should also be included in these efforts to help them discuss gambling responsibly with their children. For instance, initiatives that teach adolescents to recognize the marketing strategies employed by gambling operators can empower them to make informed decisions and resist the allure of gambling (Siricharoen, 2024). These educational efforts should also extend to parents and guardians, equipping them with the knowledge to discuss gambling responsibly with their children. Policy reforms are necessary to combat online gambling addiction. Governments should implement stricter regulations on online gambling advertisements, especially those targeting vulnerable populations like youth (Chóliz, 2024). Moreover, policies that mandate the inclusion of responsible gambling features on online platforms can mitigate addiction risks by ensuring safer gambling environments.

Finally, therapeutic interventions, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), have proven effective in treating gambling disorders by helping individuals identify and change harmful thought patterns (Pickering et al., 2017). Support groups and peer-led initiatives provide a sense of community for individuals struggling with addiction, fostering a more supportive recovery environment (Bradley and James, 2020). Additionally, support groups and peer-led initiatives can provide a sense of community and understanding for individuals struggling with gambling addiction, facilitating their recovery journey (Bradley and James, 2020). Finally, ongoing research into the effectiveness of these interventions is essential. Systematic reviews of treatment outcomes in gambling disorders can provide valuable insights into what works and what does not, allowing for the continuous improvement of intervention strategies (Pickering et al., 2017). By evaluating the impact of various approaches, stakeholders can develop evidence-based practices that enhance the effectiveness of gambling addiction treatment. The existing solutions and interventions for online gambling addiction encompass a range of strategies, including technological tools, community programs, educational initiatives, policy reforms, and therapeutic interventions. A comprehensive approach that integrates these various elements is necessary to effectively address the growing issue of online gambling addiction, particularly in contexts like Indonesia where the prevalence of gambling is on the rise.

## **7. Challenges in addressing online gambling addiction**

Addressing online gambling addiction in Indonesia presents several significant challenges, stemming from cultural, regulatory, technological, and societal factors. Understanding these challenges is essential for developing effective interventions and policies to combat this growing issue. One of the primary challenges is the cultural acceptance of gambling within Indonesian society. Despite the legal prohibitions against gambling, many individuals engage in online gambling due to its perceived social acceptance and the normalization of gambling behaviors through various media. The influence of social media and online influencers further exacerbates this issue, as they often promote gambling as a form of entertainment, particularly among younger audiences (Serna, 2023; Vallés et al., 2021). This cultural backdrop complicates efforts to raise awareness about the risks associated with gambling addiction and to promote responsible gambling practices. Another significant challenge is the regulatory environment surrounding online gambling. While Indonesia has strict laws prohibiting gambling, enforcement is often inconsistent and ineffective due to the global nature of online gambling platforms (Lelonek-Kuleta et al., 2020; Marmet et al., 2021). Many gambling sites operate offshore, making it difficult for Indonesian authorities to regulate or monitor these activities effectively. This lack of oversight allows individuals to access unregulated gambling sites, which can lead to increased risks of addiction and financial harm (Yazdi and Katzian, 2017). Moreover, the absence of comprehensive regulations that specifically address online gambling further complicates the situation, as there are no standardized measures to protect consumers or promote responsible gambling (Columb et al., 2020).

The technological landscape also poses challenges in addressing online gambling addiction. The rapid advancement of technology has made online gambling more accessible than ever, with individuals able to gamble at any time and from any location (Pallesen et al., 2021; Toscani et al., 2019). This ease of access can lead to impulsive gambling behaviors, as individuals may find it difficult to resist the temptation to gamble when it is readily available (Håkansson, 2020). Additionally, the structural characteristics of online gambling platforms, such as fast-paced games and immediate rewards, can create an engaging environment that fosters addictive behaviors (Jeannot et al., 2023). The challenge lies in developing effective technological interventions that can help mitigate these risks while still allowing for user engagement. Furthermore, the mental health implications associated with online gambling addiction present another layer of complexity. Many individuals who engage in online gambling also struggle with co-occurring mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression (Blaszczynski et al., 2015; Columb et al., 2020). This dual diagnosis can complicate treatment efforts, as individuals may be reluctant to seek help for their gambling addiction due to the stigma associated with both gambling and mental health issues (Catania and Griffiths, 2021). The interplay between gambling addiction and mental health necessitates a comprehensive approach that addresses both issues simultaneously. Lastly, the lack of awareness and education regarding gambling addiction remains a significant barrier. Many individuals, particularly young people, may not fully understand the risks associated with online gambling or the signs of addiction (Törrönen et al., 2020). Educational initiatives aimed at raising awareness

about the dangers of gambling and promoting responsible gambling practices are essential for preventing addiction. However, implementing such programs in a culturally sensitive manner that resonates with the target audience can be challenging. The challenges in addressing online gambling addiction in Indonesia are multifaceted, involving cultural acceptance, regulatory shortcomings, technological accessibility, mental health implications, and a lack of awareness. A comprehensive and collaborative approach that involves policymakers, healthcare providers, and community organizations is essential to effectively tackle these challenges and promote healthier gambling behaviors among the population.

Addressing online gambling addiction presents a range of challenges that complicate prevention and treatment efforts. These challenges stem from the nature of online gambling itself, the psychological factors involved, societal influences, and the regulatory environment. Understanding these challenges is crucial for developing effective interventions. One of the primary challenges is the inherent design of online gambling platforms. These platforms are engineered to maximize user engagement, often employing techniques that enhance the gambling experience, such as rapid gameplay, immersive graphics, and immediate rewards (Ramnerö et al., 2019; Trivedi and Teichert, 2017). This design can lead to increased gambling frequency and intensity, making it difficult for users to recognize when their behavior becomes problematic. The constant availability of online gambling—accessible at any time and from any location—further exacerbates the risk of addiction, as individuals can easily gamble without the social constraints typically associated with land-based gambling (Pallesen et al., 2021). The anonymity provided by online platforms can also diminish accountability, allowing individuals to gamble without the social repercussions they might face in a physical setting (Jeannot et al., 2023).

Psychological factors also play a significant role in the challenges of addressing online gambling addiction. Many individuals who engage in online gambling may possess cognitive distortions, such as overconfidence in their gambling abilities or a belief in luck, which can lead to compulsive gambling behaviors (Yazdi and Katzian, 2017). These cognitive biases can be difficult to overcome, as they are often deeply ingrained and reinforced by the gambling experience itself. Furthermore, impulsivity is a common trait among online gamblers, which can hinder their ability to make rational decisions regarding their gambling habits (Montel et al., 2014). The interplay between these psychological factors and the design of online gambling platforms creates a potent environment for addiction. Another significant challenge is the social influence and normalization of gambling. The rise of social media and influencer marketing has contributed to the perception of gambling as a socially acceptable activity, particularly among younger audiences (Gainsbury et al., 2015; Vallés et al., 2021). This normalization can lead to increased participation in gambling activities, as individuals may feel pressured to conform to social norms. Additionally, the portrayal of gambling in popular culture can glamorize the activity, further entrenching its acceptance and making it difficult for individuals to recognize the potential harms associated with gambling (Vallés et al., 2021).

The regulatory environment surrounding online gambling also poses challenges. In many jurisdictions, regulations may not adequately address the unique aspects of online gambling, leading to gaps in consumer protection (Chóliz, 2024; Chóliz and

Marcos, 2022). For instance, while some jurisdictions mandate responsible gambling tools, the effectiveness of these tools can vary significantly, and many platforms may not prioritize their implementation (Ramnerö et al., 2019). Furthermore, the rapid evolution of technology often outpaces regulatory frameworks, making it difficult for policymakers to keep up with the changing landscape of online gambling (Yazdi and Katzian, 2017). This lack of comprehensive regulation can leave vulnerable populations, particularly youth, at risk of developing gambling problems.

Finally, the stigma associated with gambling addiction can deter individuals from seeking help. Many individuals may feel ashamed or embarrassed about their gambling behaviors, leading them to avoid treatment options (Marmet et al., 2021). This stigma can be particularly pronounced in cultures where gambling is viewed negatively, making it essential for interventions to address these societal perceptions and create supportive environments for those seeking help. Finally, the challenges in addressing online gambling addiction are multifaceted, involving the design of gambling platforms, psychological predispositions, social influences, regulatory gaps, and stigma. A comprehensive approach that considers these challenges is essential for developing effective prevention and treatment strategies to combat online gambling addiction.

## **8. Recommendations for policy makers and stakeholders in Indonesia**

The rise of online gambling in Indonesia has prompted significant concerns regarding addiction and its associated harms. As policymakers and stakeholders seek to address these challenges, several recommendations can be made to mitigate the risks associated with online gambling addiction.

**Implement Comprehensive Regulatory Frameworks:** Policymakers should establish a robust regulatory framework that governs online gambling activities. This framework should include licensing requirements for online gambling operators, ensuring that they adhere to responsible gambling practices. Research indicates that jurisdictions with stringent regulations tend to have better outcomes in terms of gambling-related harms (Chóliz, 2015; Pallesen et al. 2021). Regulations should also encompass advertising standards, particularly concerning the promotion of online gambling to vulnerable populations, such as minors (Håkansson and Widinghoff, 2019).

- 1) **Promote Prevention Gambling Initiatives:** Stakeholders should prioritize the development and implementation the prevention gambling initiatives. These initiatives can include mandatory self-exclusion programs, spending limits, and the provision of information about the risks of gambling (Ramnerö et al., 2019). Trivedi and Teichert (2017) state that online gambling platforms should be required to integrate responsible gambling tools that allow users to monitor their gambling behavior and set personal limits. Studies suggest that such tools can significantly reduce the risk of addiction by promoting self-awareness among gamblers.
- 2) **Enhance Public Awareness and Education:** Public education campaigns are essential to raise awareness about the risks associated with online gambling.

These campaigns should target young adults and adolescents, who are particularly vulnerable to developing gambling problems (Marmet et al., 2021). Educational programs should focus on the signs of gambling addiction, the importance of responsible gambling, and available support services. Engaging community organizations and educational institutions in these efforts can amplify their reach and effectiveness (Cataldo et al., 2022).

- 3) **Foster Collaboration Between Stakeholders:** Collaboration among various stakeholders, including government agencies and healthcare providers is crucial for addressing online gambling addiction effectively. A multi-sectoral approach can facilitate the sharing of resources, knowledge, and best practices (Yazdi and Katzian, 2017). For instance, partnerships with mental health organizations can enhance the support available for individuals struggling with gambling addiction, ensuring that they receive appropriate treatment and care (Park et al., 2022).
- 4) **Monitor and Evaluate Gambling Trends:** Continuous monitoring and evaluation of online gambling trends and their impacts on public health are vital. Policymakers should invest in research to understand the evolving landscape of online gambling and its implications for addiction (Chóliz and Marcos, 2022; Wong and So, 2013). This data can inform future policy decisions and help identify emerging risks, enabling timely interventions to protect vulnerable populations.
- 5) **Address Mental Health and Addiction Services:** Given the strong correlation between online gambling addiction and mental health issues, it is essential to integrate gambling addiction treatment into broader mental health services. Policymakers should ensure that mental health resources are accessible and adequately funded to support individuals affected by gambling addiction (Gainsbury et al., 2017; Vallés et al., 2021). Training healthcare professionals to recognize and address gambling-related issues can enhance the overall effectiveness of mental health services.
- 6) **Leverage Technology for Intervention:** Technology to provide interventions for online gambling addiction can be a game-changer. Digital platforms can offer real-time support, behavioral tracking, and feedback mechanisms to help users manage their gambling habits (Gainsbury et al., 2013). Implementing AI-driven tools that analyze user behavior and provide personalized recommendations can further enhance the effectiveness of these interventions (Törrönen et al., 2020).

Addressing online gambling addiction in Indonesia requires a multifaceted approach that combines regulation, education, collaboration, and the use of technology. By implementing these recommendations, policymakers and stakeholders can work towards minimizing the risks associated with online gambling and promoting a healthier environment for all citizens to prevent online gambling.

## **9. Conclusion**

To address the challenges posed by online gambling addiction in Indonesia, a multifaceted approach is necessary. Policymakers should implement comprehensive regulatory frameworks that govern online gambling activities, promote responsible gambling initiatives, and enhance public awareness through education campaigns.

Collaboration among stakeholders, including government agencies, healthcare providers, and gambling operators, is crucial for sharing resources and best practices. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of gambling trends will inform future policy decisions and help identify emerging risks. Furthermore, integrating gambling addiction treatment into broader mental health services and leveraging technology for intervention can provide critical support for individuals at risk. By adopting these recommendations, stakeholders can work towards minimizing the risks associated with online gambling and fostering a healthier gambling environment for all citizens. Online gambling addiction poses significant challenges in Indonesia, particularly among the youth. The interplay between emotional regulation, accessibility, and societal influences contributes to the rising prevalence of this issue. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes education, regulation, and support systems to foster healthier gambling behaviors and mitigate the associated risks. The rise of online gambling in Indonesia is a complex interplay of accessibility, regulatory challenges, advertising influence, and societal changes, particularly considering the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that includes stricter regulations, public health initiatives to mitigate gambling addiction, and a critical examination of the role of advertising in promoting gambling behaviors.

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