

Mobile Gambling Addiction and Its Effects on the Academic Performance and Mental Health of Criminology Students at CICOSAT Colleges

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Abstract

This study investigated the prevalence and effects of mobile gambling addiction among criminology students at CICOSAT Colleges. Specifically, it examined the level of addiction to online betting and gambling activities, the factors influencing gambling behavior, and the effects of mobile gambling addiction on students' academic performance and mental health. The study utilized an Explanatory Sequential mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Quantitative data were gathered from 330 criminology students through structured survey questionnaires, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews with 20 purposively selected students involved in online gambling activities. Weighted mean and thematic analysis were used to analyze the collected data. The findings revealed that criminology students were moderately addicted to online gambling activities, showing early signs of gambling dependency such as increased engagement, cognitive preoccupation, and tolerance. Social, environmental, financial, and technological factors were found to be influential contributors to gambling behavior. Peer influence, easy access to gambling applications, availability of e-wallet services such as GCash, and continuous exposure to gambling advertisements significantly encouraged students to participate in mobile gambling. Moreover, the study found that mobile gambling addiction negatively affected students' academic performance by reducing concentration, causing absenteeism, poor time management, and declining academic motivation. In terms of mental health, students experienced stress, anxiety, emotional instability, sleep deprivation, and compulsive behavior associated with gambling activities. The study concluded that although mobile gambling has not yet become a dominant routine among most respondents, its increasing prevalence poses serious risks to students' academic achievement and psychological well-being. The researchers recommended the implementation of stricter anti-gambling policies within educational institutions, the establishment of counseling and mental health support programs, integration of financial literacy education into the curriculum, and restrictions on gambling access within campus internet networks. These measures may help reduce gambling-related harm and promote healthier academic and personal development among criminology students.

Keywords: Mobile Gambling Addiction, Online Betting, Academic Performance, Mental Health, Gambling Behavior

Introduction

Mobile gambling has become one of the fastest-growing digital activities worldwide due to the increasing accessibility of smartphones, mobile applications, and internet connectivity. The convenience of online betting platforms allows individuals to participate in gambling activities anytime and anywhere, increasing the risk of addiction among vulnerable groups such as college students. Young adults are particularly susceptible to gambling behavior because of peer influence, curiosity, financial pressure, and the psychological attraction of instant rewards and entertainment. Globally, studies have shown that gambling addiction negatively affects students' academic performance, emotional well-being, and social relationships. Problem gambling has been associated with absenteeism, poor concentration, declining grades, stress, anxiety, depression, and financial instability. The rapid expansion of digital payment systems and gambling applications has further intensified student engagement in online betting activities. In the Philippines, online gambling continues to grow significantly, making mobile betting more accessible to students through e-wallet platforms and mobile applications. Criminology students face unique academic and professional demands that require discipline, sound judgment, and emotional stability. Excessive engagement in gambling activities may affect their academic responsibilities, decision-making skills, and future professional conduct. Despite the growing prevalence of online gambling among students, limited studies have specifically explored the effects of mobile gambling addiction among criminology students in local academic institutions. This study aimed to determine the level of mobile gambling addiction among criminology students at CICOSAT Colleges and examine its effects on their academic performance and mental health. Furthermore, the study sought to identify the factors influencing gambling behavior in order to provide evidence-based recommendations for intervention, prevention, and policy development.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to assess the effects of mobile gambling addiction among criminology students at CICOSAT Colleges. Specifically, it sought to: Determine the level of addiction of students to online betting and gambling activities; Identify the level of influence of the following factors on gambling addiction among criminology students: a. Social Factors b. Environmental Factors c. Financial Factors d. Technological Factors Determine the effects of mobile gambling addiction on the academic performance and mental health of criminology students; and Propose intervention measures and recommendations to address mobile gambling addiction among students.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, specifically the Explanatory Sequential Design, to investigate the effects of mobile gambling addiction among criminology students at CICOSAT Colleges. The mixed-methods approach enabled the researchers to collect, analyze, and integrate both quantitative and qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of the research problem. The quantitative phase involved the use of structured survey questionnaires administered to 330 criminology students who were purposively selected from the total population of enrolled criminology students at CICOSAT Colleges. The respondents included first-year to fourth-year students who were engaged in online betting and mobile gambling activities and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. For the qualitative phase, 20 criminology students were deliberately selected based on their direct involvement and experiences in mobile gambling activities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather detailed insights

regarding their gambling behavior, motivations, experiences, and the effects of gambling on their academic and mental well-being. The study was conducted at CICOSAT Colleges located in Barangay Lingsat, City of San Fernando, La Union. The researchers utilized purposive sampling to ensure that the participants possessed relevant experiences related to online gambling activities. The survey questionnaire focused on determining the level of addiction, the influencing factors of gambling behavior, and the effects of gambling on academic performance and mental health. The research instruments were validated by experts composed of non-uniformed personnel, a college instructor, and a research director, obtaining a weighted mean of 4.44 interpreted as “Highly Valid.” Weighted mean was used to analyze the quantitative data, while thematic analysis was employed for the qualitative data to identify common themes and patterns from the participants’ responses. Ethical considerations were strictly observed by ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and secure handling of all collected data throughout the conduct of the study.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The findings of the study reveal that criminology students of CICOSAT Colleges are moderately addicted to online betting and gambling activities, with an overall weighted mean of 2.02. This indicates that while gambling has not yet become a fully dominant behavior among students, there are already observable patterns of dependency and psychological attachment. Students frequently think about past bets, plan future gambling activities, and strategize ways to win more money. These behaviors suggest cognitive fixation, which is considered an early warning sign of gambling addiction. The findings imply that gambling is gradually becoming integrated into the daily routines and thought processes of students, placing them at risk for more severe addiction if left unaddressed. The study also established that the identified social factors were moderately influential in students’ gambling addiction, with an overall weighted mean of 2.13. Among these, the promotion of gambling applications, influencers, and advertisements obtained the highest mean. This suggests that exposure to gambling-related content through social media and online platforms strongly shapes students’ perceptions and encourages gambling participation. Peer pressure and family influence were also found to contribute to gambling behavior, indicating that students are often influenced by the normalization of gambling within their social environment. These findings imply that gambling behavior is not merely an individual choice but is reinforced by social interactions and digital exposure. Similarly, the environmental factors were found to be influential, with an overall weighted mean of 2.00. The influence of friends and close peer groups emerged as the most significant factor. This demonstrates that students are highly susceptible to gambling when surrounded by peers who engage in or encourage such activities. Exposure to gambling promotions during social events and the lack of strict school policies also contributed to gambling engagement. The findings indicate that the environment surrounding students creates opportunities and encouragement for gambling behavior, making it easier for them to view gambling as socially acceptable. Financial factors were likewise identified as influential, with an overall weighted mean of 2.05. The availability of digital payment platforms such as GCash and online banking systems obtained the highest weighted mean. This suggests that the accessibility and convenience of electronic transactions make online gambling easier and more tempting for students. Many students perceive gambling as a quick way to earn money, particularly when they face financial pressures or receive allowances and scholarships. The findings imply that financial accessibility, combined with the misconception of gambling as a solution to financial problems, increases students’ vulnerability to gambling addiction. Technological factors recorded the highest overall

weighted mean of 2.21, interpreted as influential. The availability of gambling sites through Facebook, applications, and GCash Play, as well as stable internet connectivity, significantly contributed to students' gambling engagement. These findings indicate that modern technology has removed barriers to gambling by allowing students to access betting platforms anytime and anywhere. The convenience, anonymity, and gamified features of online gambling applications encourage repeated engagement and increase the likelihood of compulsive behavior. This implies that technological advancements, while beneficial in communication and learning, also intensify students' exposure to harmful online gambling practices. With regard to the effects on academic performance, the study revealed that gambling addiction negatively affects students through lack of concentration, time management issues, and financial disruptions. Lack of concentration emerged as the most common effect. Students admitted that they often spend more time thinking about gambling and recovering losses than focusing on lessons and academic responsibilities. Time management issues also became evident as students prioritized gambling over studying, resulting in incomplete assignments, late submissions, and absenteeism. Financial disruptions further affected students because money intended for school expenses and personal needs was redirected toward gambling activities. These findings imply that gambling addiction weakens students' academic discipline and hinders their ability to fulfill educational responsibilities effectively. In terms of mental health, the study found that gambling addiction leads to stress and anxiety, emotional distress, and compulsive behavior. Emotional distress was identified as the most evident effect. Students reported feelings of frustration, guilt, depression, and disappointment, especially after experiencing gambling losses. Stress and anxiety were also common due to financial worries and the pressure to recover losses. Compulsive behavior manifested through constant thoughts about gambling and difficulty controlling urges to bet. These findings imply that gambling addiction extends beyond financial and academic concerns, becoming a serious psychological burden that negatively affects students' emotional well-being and overall quality of life. Overall, the data indicate that mobile gambling addiction among criminology students is influenced by interconnected social, environmental, financial, and technological factors. Although the level of addiction remains moderate, the presence of cognitive fixation, emotional distress, and risky financial behaviors signals the possibility of escalation into severe addiction. The findings highlight the urgent need for preventive measures, institutional intervention, and mental health support to protect students from the harmful effects of online gambling.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are significant because they provide a deeper understanding of the growing issue of mobile gambling addiction among criminology students of CICOSAT Colleges. The study contributes valuable information regarding the level of addiction, the factors influencing gambling behavior, and its effects on academic performance and mental health. For criminology students, the study serves as an eye-opener regarding the dangers and consequences of excessive involvement in online gambling. It increases awareness about how gambling can negatively affect their studies, finances, relationships, and emotional well-being. The findings may encourage students to develop responsible behaviors and healthier coping mechanisms. For criminology instructors, the study provides insights into the behavioral patterns and challenges experienced by students involved in gambling activities. This can help instructors identify warning signs among students and guide them in providing academic support, mentorship, and referrals to counseling services when necessary. For the CICOSAT Colleges administration, the results of the study may serve as a basis for the development and implementation of school policies, intervention programs,

and awareness campaigns related to gambling addiction. The findings may also encourage the institution to strengthen guidance and counseling services to address students' psychological and behavioral concerns. For parents and guardians, the study offers valuable information about the influence of online gambling on students' academic and emotional lives. The findings can help parents become more observant and proactive in guiding their children, monitoring online activities, and fostering open communication regarding gambling-related issues. For policy makers and regulators, the study provides empirical evidence regarding the accessibility and influence of mobile gambling among students. The results may support the formulation of stricter regulations on online gambling advertisements, age restrictions, and the accessibility of gambling applications among young people. For the community, the study raises awareness about the social and psychological risks associated with mobile gambling addiction. Increased understanding of the issue may encourage community organizations and stakeholders to collaborate with educational institutions in promoting responsible digital behavior and mental health awareness. For future researchers, the study serves as a valuable reference for further investigations related to gambling addiction, student behavior, mental health, and academic performance. It may also inspire future studies focusing on intervention strategies, preventive measures, and comparative research in different educational settings.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that criminology students of CICOSAT Colleges are moderately addicted to online betting and gambling activities. Although gambling has not yet become a fully dominant routine among most students, there are already clear signs of psychological attachment and risky behavior, such as cognitive fixation, emotional dependence, and tolerance. These patterns indicate the potential progression toward more severe gambling addiction if not addressed promptly. The study further concluded that social, environmental, financial, and technological factors all have an influential effect on students' gambling behavior. Peer influence, exposure to gambling advertisements, accessibility of e-wallets and online payment systems, and the availability of gambling platforms through social media and mobile applications significantly contribute to students' engagement in gambling activities. The convenience and accessibility offered by technology have made online gambling easier and more appealing to students. Moreover, gambling addiction was found to negatively affect the academic performance of criminology students by causing lack of concentration, poor time management, absenteeism, and financial difficulties that interfere with their educational responsibilities. The study also established that gambling addiction has serious effects on students' mental health, particularly in the form of stress, anxiety, emotional distress, and compulsive behavior. Therefore, the study concludes that mobile gambling addiction poses a significant threat to the academic success, emotional well-being, and future professional readiness of criminology students. Immediate intervention through stricter school policies, mental health programs, awareness campaigns, financial literacy education, and regulation of gambling accessibility is necessary to prevent the further escalation of gambling-related problems among students.

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