

Addiction research paper

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Introduction- Definition

Gambling addiction is the desire to continually gamble regardless of the existence of negative effects. ‘Ludomania’ as it is scientifically called is a mental health problem. Gambling is therefore an impulse control problem because a gambler cannot stop despite their desire to stop gambling. While gambling addictions vary as much as the available games, they are all predisposed to extreme continuous gambling habits including preoccupation gambling even when the addict is not gambling (MedicineNet. com).

Types of Gamblers

According to the ‘stop gambling now’ website, there are several forms of gamblers but not all of them are necessarily addicted to gambling as illustrated below.

Professional Gamblers- They are the rarest type and they depend on their skills as opposed to make money. As such they have full control over the money and resources spent gambling.

Social Gambler- Regards gambling as a recreational activity and thus has control over the resources spent as they consider them as ‘entertainment’ expenses.

Problem Gambler- Engages in gambling continuously regardless of the negative consequences.

Compulsive/pathological Gambler- this is a severe mental addiction to gambling where gambling is their central business in life and they will do

anything to sustain in including severing relationships and engaging in crime.

Antisocial Gambler- has a career of getting money through illegal channels.

Other Types of gamblers include antisocial gamblers, frequent gambler, escape gamblers, action gamblers and binge gamblers (Stop Gambling Now).

Causes/Risk Factors of Gambling Addiction

Gambling which is an emotional disorder has multiple causes like: social stressors, biological vulnerabilities, and ways of thinking and to some extent the socialization of a person. Pathological gambling has no specific cause none the less some exceptional like patients treated for Parkinson's disease and restless leg disorder have been observed to develop compulsive gambling mainly as a result of increased activity of dopamine in the brain (Resner).

There are factors that increase the probability of individuals developing addiction to gambling. Risk factors for developing pathological gambling include: Mood disorder, antisocial personality disorder and addiction to alcohol or cocaine. These factors basically alter the emotional intelligence of individuals and create a need for money. People with antisocial personality disorder tend to rely on gambling rather than socializing with other people and gambling gives them a feeling of victory. It is essential to note that the factors above interfere with a person's personality making them inhuman and also have a tendency of not caring for others (Orford).

People who suffer from compulsive gambling have a tendency of wanting to be unique and to stand out in a crowd. They also are innovative in a way. People with low level of serotonin in the brain which is a neurotransmitter that controls numerous functions in the brain like: appetite, mood, sleep and memory also stand the risk of contracting pathological gambling. Serotonin levels have deep relationships with depression and vulnerability to alcohol addiction.

Other factors that can cause addiction are people with emotional immaturity this is mainly because they are a bit unstable and prone to influence. Also people who associate with friends who are gamblers have a tendency of ending up being gamblers. As it is said birds of a feather flock together so it's basically inevitable to hang out with gamblers and not gamble. Also people with low self esteem may be victims of gambling and also people living near casinos or bingo tracks, this is because the environment plays a major role in shaping a person's behavior and personality. Stress can also result to gambling more so if the person affected doesn't have a good means of relieving it and also traumatic experience mostly if it was experienced during childhood (Epstein).

Signs/Characteristics of a Gambling Addiction

Gamblers basically show consistency and recurrence in the signs and symptoms. Most gambling addicts just like any other form of addiction defend the fraternity of gambling so harshly to the extent that they really get offended when people query on their gambling habits. Like a religion they really defend the ethics and it's basically hard to convince them it's wrong. They actually get very depressed if they cannot gamble for whatever

reason and they also are in a habitual borrowing habit and are also very vulnerable to steal, if they don't get the money (Derevensky and Gupta). The addicts are so faithful to the habit to the extent that they take time away from family or work just to gamble consequently they risk losing relationship. In essence most gambling addicts are in bad relationships or broken relationships and have lost their jobs owing to absenteeism or mishandling company resources. Most of the addicts do not have any other hobby. They lie so much about the time spent gambling and the amount they bet and they tend to have an increased frequency to bet. They are basically pre-occupied with gambling either on the past successes or how to finance future gambling ventures.

Majority of the thieves and fraudsters are also gambling addicts and this is as a result to the persistent urge of having money. Just like a drug gambling has some dependency effects in the sense that gambling addicts cannot do without gambling even after a major loss they still gamble in pursuit of recovering the loss and even when they have stress from other areas may be family or work they tend to gamble to relieve the stress. They also have repeated attempts to stop the betting behavior to no avail, they always resolve to stop but always find themselves betting again (Spapens, Spapens and Littler).

Negative Effects of Gambling Addiction

Gambling addiction has multiple effects that range from a micro level i. e. the effects on an individual for instance: bankruptcy, poverty, crime, effect on family and other relationships, effect on personality amongst others to

the macro level i. e. effects to the society or country for instance: escalated levels of crime, financial implication and the effect on development of a country.

Effects on family and other relationships

Gambling addicts have a tendency of taking time away from the families and friends and also statistics have indicated that most family's of gamblers have domestic violence and child abuse this is owing to the fact that the gamblers are never transparent about their finances, this results to a lot of tensions and fights consequently the parents end up not being able to provide the basic needs for the children and more often than not they have to fend for themselves. Children of gambling addicts stand a high probability of being depressed, having behavior problems or abusing drugs owing to lack of parental guidance. The addicts have accrued debts from friends, family and work mates and they end up not being able not to honor debts resulting to bad relationships (The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health).

Poverty and Bankruptcy

The recurrent need for money makes the gambling addicts borrow money from everywhere; friends, family and financial institutions. They even borrow beyond their capacity to re-pay and at the end of time they remain bankrupt. They also spend more time gambling than doing some constructive jobs make money. This affects both at the individual level and at the macro level. At the macro level this drops the per capita income of a country and also adds the dependants of a nation in the sense that if children are not taken good care of, they end up being a burden to the nation. The United States

spends up to \$5 million dollars on issues pertaining gambling and the gamblers themselves have million of shillings in debt.

Crime

Crime and gambling are so inter-twinned like a finely knit woven net . Most gambling addicts end up stealing or conning people to earn the much needed cash. They can also result to prostitution, mostly female gamblers, just to earn some money for gambling. They may also be on the wrong side of the law for having unpaid debts. Mostly they are a frustrated lot if their bid is turned down and they loose and majority of them have tried or contemplated suicide. Crime also affects at the two levels micro and macro and a society with a lot of gambling activities is also said to have very high crime rates.

Effect on development

Gambling impacts on development in the sense that most working gamblers are under-performers and they also take a lot of the company's time to gamble and at times company's resources. They thus do not invest and basically impacting on both personal and the nations development level. They also do not take good care of their families and thus affecting literacy levels (Coryn, Fijnaut and Littler).

Diagnosis of a Gambling Addiction

The best way to offer accurate treatment is to get the correct diagnosis; the fact that this cannot be diagnosed in a laboratory the clinician has to be very articulate in getting the synopsis of the disorder, the prognosis, and the causes. This can be done through an interview, physical examination and

also a full mental health evaluation. The physician should get the history of the disorder by asking a number of questions that can help him identify the extent to which a person is addicted and the root cause of the disorder. Undertaking a mental state examination is also necessary to check if the patients thought pattern have been affected.

Treatment of Gambling Addiction

Gamblers Anonymous which is a program to abstain from gambling when combined with psychotherapy often gives a high success rate when administered by a trained professional. It is not a spontaneous action but rather a slow healing procedure that may even take a number of years depending on the intensity of the addiction. Drugs believed to reduce the urge to gamble or the joy that comes from gambling is anti-seizures like tegretol and topamax and mood stabilizers too can be used to treat addiction in gambling. None the less psychotherapy tends to be the most effective method of treating addiction in gambling since it involves active participation of the individual which requires a lot of personal discipline. Behaviorist scientists believe that every behavior is learnt and it can be unlearnt and thus exercising on self discipline becomes a habit and finally a behavior. Depending on the extent a combination of behavioral, cognitive, psychological and relaxation therapy can be used either together or each alone. However, this is basically viewed as the individual's initiative and the affected person must accept the illness and portray a desire to recover. People who have engaged in criminal activities before seeking treatment are more adversely affected and they require more intense treatment, they may even require inpatient service to achieve the result. This is owing to issues

like large amount of accrued debts or big financial losses. The victims must also get treatment for the other underlying problems since around 70% of the people with gambling addiction have another emotional disorder like alcoholism, mood disorder, or personality disorder.

Support on Gambling Addiction

In most of the countries gambling addicts can get the support they require from general rehabilitation centers. However, countries like the United States have more specific institution like: compulsive gambling center, Debtors Anonymous, Gamblers anonymous amongst others. They also have help lines that are toll free for gamblers.

Conclusion

Gambling has become a high end and socially accepted social evil in some countries. It is a career to some people, creates employment to quite a number of people in casinos and is contributes to a nations income. However, gambling can result to addiction and end up resulting to very adverse effects to the gambler, family, and friends and to the nation. It is essential to note that all gambling activity is risky venture and hence one has to think of possible ways of mitigating the risks involved by:

- Reducing the amount of money on bets
- Reducing the amount of time spent on gambling
- Venturing into other social activities
- Not using your wins on gambling

The gambling industry has grown ten folds over the years and so is the rate of addiction and consequently the effects of gambling. Therefore, Its

essential for a collective action between people and government authorities to turn the tables of gambling otherwise in years to come the effects might be so massive.

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