

Gambling disorder among young migrants in Germany

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Abstract

This study examines the development of gambling disorder among young migrants in Germany, focusing on the interaction between migration-related experiences and social contexts. The study adopts a qualitative, practice-based exploratory design, drawing on anonymized composite case vignettes derived from professional counseling practice in the fields of family and gambling disorder support. The empirical material consists of analytically condensed case representations reflecting three predominant migration constellations in Germany: marriage migration, forced migration, and second-generation migration. The data were analyzed using an inductive thematic approach, informed by sociological and psychological theories, including acculturation stress, stigma, social exclusion, and behavioral addiction models. The findings identify five central mechanisms shaping gambling trajectories among young migrants: migration-related vulnerability, the social embedding of gambling practices, the increasing role of digital gambling environments, escalation dynamics, and the emergence of debt, shame, and social withdrawal. Gambling behavior emerges not only as a coping strategy in response to psychosocial stressors such as discrimination, unemployment, and identity conflicts, but also as a socially embedded practice that provides temporary inclusion and recognition. This study contributes to existing research by offering a practice-based qualitative perspective that complements predominantly quantitative findings. It highlights the importance of culturally sensitive prevention and intervention strategies, particularly in addressing barriers related to stigma, language, and institutional trust. The findings underline the need for integrated approaches that connect social policy, public health, and community-based support structures.

Keywords: gambling disorder, migrant youth, sports betting, acculturation stress, intercultural prevention, online gambling

Main points

- Young migrants in Germany are particularly vulnerable to gambling disorder due to migration-related stress, social exclusion, and limited opportunities for social participation.
- Sports betting and online gambling often function not only as risk behaviors but also as socially embedded practices linked to belonging, recognition, and everyday interaction.
- The analysis of composite case vignettes identifies five central mechanisms shaping gambling trajectories: migration-related vulnerability, social embedding, digital gambling environments, escalation dynamics, and psychosocial consequences.
- Shame, stigma, and institutional mistrust can delay help-seeking and reinforce the persistence of gambling disorder among migrant youth.
- Effective prevention and intervention require culturally sensitive, community-based, and digitally informed strategies that address both structural and psychosocial barriers.

Introduction

Migration is often accompanied by profound psychological and social stressors that can affect individuals long after their arrival in the host country. For young migrants in particular, the simultaneous negotiation of identity, social belonging,

and future prospects creates a complex vulnerability structure that may increase the risk of developing maladaptive coping strategies. While substance use among migrant youth has been extensively studied (Kuhn, 2018; Parla, 2005), gambling disorder remains an underexplored yet increasingly relevant

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phenomenon (Petry, 1998; Şahinöz, 2025), especially in the context of digital gambling environments.

In countries such as Germany, where large groups of young migrants experience structural disadvantages including discrimination, unemployment, and limited social mobility, gambling may function both as a coping mechanism and as a form of social participation. At the same time, this practice is associated with significant risks, frequently resulting in cycles of indebtedness, loss of control, and social isolation (Şahinöz, 2014). Cultural stigma, limited access to culturally sensitive services, and the normalization of gambling in certain social environments further complicate early intervention.

Existing research has largely focused on quantitative prevalence data and structural risk factors. Less attention has been paid to the lived experiences and trajectories through which gambling behavior develops within specific migration contexts. In particular, there is a lack of qualitative, practice-based analyses that connect migration-related stress, social environments, and individual coping strategies in an integrated framework.

Against this background, this study aims to examine how migration-related experiences and social contexts shape the development of gambling disorder among young migrants in Germany. It adopts a qualitative, practice-based perspective and combines composite case vignettes from counseling practice with sociological theory and empirical research.

The study contributes to the literature by providing a theoretically informed, practice-based analysis of gambling trajectories among young migrants. By focusing on everyday contexts and lived experiences, it offers insights into mechanisms that are often not captured by quantitative approaches, particularly the role of social environments, stigma, and digital gambling structures.

This article proceeds as follows: First, the theoretical framework and relevant literature are outlined. Second, the methodological approach is presented. Third, the empirical material is analyzed through thematic findings. Finally, the findings are discussed in relation to existing research and implications for prevention and intervention.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding gambling disorder among young migrants requires a multidimensional theoretical perspective that integrates migration-related stress, social exclusion, identity formation, and behavioral addiction. This study draws on four complementary theoretical approaches: acculturation stress theory, stigma theory, perspectives on social exclusion and integration, and models of behavioral addiction in digital environments.

First, acculturation stress theory provides an important framework for understanding the psychological burden associated with migration processes. According to Berry

(1997), individuals who migrate are confronted with the challenge of negotiating between their culture of origin and the host society. This process often involves identity conflicts, experiences of marginalization, and perceived discrimination. Such stressors have been shown to increase vulnerability to maladaptive coping strategies, including substance use and behavioral addictions (Berry, 2006; Bhugra, 2004). In the context of young migrants, these tensions are often intensified by developmental challenges related to adolescence and identity formation.

Second, the concept of stigma, as developed by Goffman (1963), offers a valuable lens for analyzing the social dynamics surrounding gambling disorder. Stigma refers to the social devaluation of individuals who deviate from normative expectations, leading to shame, secrecy, and social withdrawal. In migrant communities, stigma can be further reinforced by cultural norms, collective honor, and moral expectations (Link & Phelan, 2001). As a result, individuals affected by gambling disorder may delay or avoid seeking professional help, thereby exacerbating the progression of the disorder.

Third, sociological perspectives on social exclusion and integration are central to understanding the structural conditions that shape gambling behavior among migrants. Social exclusion refers to the limited access to economic, social, and cultural resources that are necessary for full participation in society (Bourdieu, 1986; Castel, 2003). Migrant youth are disproportionately affected by unemployment, precarious labor conditions, and educational disadvantages, which can lead to feelings of marginalization and lack of belonging (Heckmann, 2005). In this context, gambling environments such as betting shops, cafés, or online communities can function as alternative spaces of social inclusion, offering recognition, belonging, and temporary relief from everyday stress.

Fourth, behavioral addiction models help explain the specific mechanisms underlying gambling behavior. Gambling disorder is characterized by impaired control, continued engagement despite negative consequences, and the pursuit of reward and excitement (Griffiths, 2005; Petry, 2004). In recent years, the expansion of digital gambling platforms has significantly transformed the accessibility and intensity of gambling experiences. Online betting and gaming environments operate through rapid reward cycles, continuous availability, and personalized incentives, which increase the risk of addictive behavior (Gainsbury, 2015; King & Delfabbro, 2018). For young migrants, who are often highly engaged in digital environments, these structural features interact with psychosocial vulnerabilities and further amplify addiction risks.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives are used as complementary analytical lenses throughout the study. Acculturation stress helps explain migration-related psychological strain, stigma theory illuminates delayed help-seeking behavior, social exclusion theory explains structural marginalization and the search for alternative spaces of belonging, and behavioral addiction models

help interpret escalation processes within digital gambling environments. Combined, these perspectives provide an integrated framework for analyzing how structural, social, and psychological factors interact in the development of gambling disorder among young migrants.

Literature Review

In Germany, gambling-related problems represent a significant public health issue. Recent data indicate that approximately 4.6 million adults show problematic gambling behavior or early symptoms of addiction, while around 1.3 million individuals meet the criteria for a gambling disorder, corresponding to 1.54% of the population (Schütze et al., 2023). In international comparison, prevalence rates are somewhat lower in countries such as Switzerland (0.5%; Bondolfi et al., 2008), Sweden (1.4%; Volberg et al., 2001), and Spain (1.7%; Becona, 1993) (Müller et al., 2013). Research further indicates that around 80% of individuals affected by gambling disorder are male. According to a study, male gender, low educational attainment, unemployment, and a migrant background are particular risk factors for problem gambling behavior (BZgA, 2014, pp. 8, 11, 21, 106, 108, 161). Being male increases the risk by approximately 2.7%, having a migrant background by approximately 3.7%, unemployment by approximately 6.5%, and low educational attainment by approximately 3.8% (BZgA, 2014, p. 107).

Research on gambling disorder among migrants is situated at the intersection of migration studies, addiction research, and social inequality. While substance use among migrant populations has been widely examined, gambling behavior, particularly among young migrants, remains comparatively underexplored.

A substantial body of research has demonstrated that migration is associated with increased psychosocial vulnerability. Studies have shown that migrants are more likely to experience discrimination, social exclusion, and economic disadvantage, all of which are linked to negative mental health outcomes (Bhugra, 2004; Fragner et al., 2023; Wiesinger, 2018). These structural and psychosocial stressors are particularly pronounced among young people, who must simultaneously navigate developmental challenges related to identity formation and social belonging.

Within addiction research, several studies have identified a migration background as a significant risk factor for problematic gambling behavior. Data from Germany indicate that individuals with a migrant background show higher prevalence rates of pathological gambling compared to the general population (BZgA, 2014; Milin et al., 2017). These findings suggest that gambling disorder among migrants is not merely an individual issue but is closely linked to broader social and structural conditions.

Existing research has also highlighted the role of socioeconomic factors such as unemployment, low educational attainment, and financial insecurity in the development of gambling

problems (Müller et al., 2013; Schütze et al., 2023). These conditions are disproportionately prevalent among migrant populations and contribute to increased exposure to high-risk environments. In this context, gambling can function as a perceived strategy for economic improvement, even though it often leads to further financial instability and indebtedness.

In addition to structural factors, cultural and social dynamics play a crucial role. Studies focusing on migrant communities have shown that gambling may be embedded in social practices and collective environments, such as cafés or community meeting spaces, where it becomes normalized and socially reinforced (Milin et al., 2017; Şahinöz, 2011). Similarly, research on Turkish Cypriot communities has identified the emergence of a distinct gambling subculture, in which gambling is perceived less as a financial activity and more as a form of social interaction and emotional relief (Macit, 2021). Such findings highlight the importance of understanding gambling within its cultural and social context rather than solely as an individual pathology.

Recent developments in digital technologies have further transformed the landscape of gambling. Online betting platforms, mobile applications, and gaming environments with gambling-like features have significantly increased accessibility and participation, particularly among young people (Hayer, 2025; Hayer & Brosowski, 2025). These platforms operate through rapid reward mechanisms, continuous availability, and targeted marketing strategies, which are known to increase the risk of addictive behavior. Young migrants, who often rely heavily on digital environments for communication and socialization, may be particularly vulnerable to these dynamics.

Despite these important contributions, the existing literature reveals several gaps. First, there is a lack of qualitative research that explores how migration-related experiences and social contexts shape individual gambling trajectories. Second, the voices and lived experiences of young migrants are often underrepresented, as many studies rely primarily on quantitative data. Third, culturally sensitive perspectives remain limited, particularly with regard to how stigma, family structures, and community norms influence help-seeking behavior.

Thus, there remains a lack of qualitative, practice-based research that connects migration experiences, social environments, and gambling trajectories in an integrated analytical framework.

This study therefore aims to combine practice-oriented case analyses with theoretical and empirical findings. By focusing on young migrants in Germany and incorporating culturally embedded perspectives, it aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of gambling disorder as a socially situated phenomenon.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, practice-based exploratory design to investigate the relationship between migration-related experiences and the development of gambling disorder among young migrants in Germany. The research is grounded in professional counseling practice and aims to generate theoretically informed insights into recurring patterns and mechanisms rather than statistically generalizable findings.

Data Collection and Setting

The empirical basis of the study consists of case material derived from the author's professional work as a family counselor and gambling disorder counselor in Germany. The data originate from counseling interactions with clients from diverse migrant backgrounds collected over more than ten years of professional counseling practice in Germany. During this period, the author worked with several hundred clients in the fields of family counseling, migration counseling, and gambling disorder support.

To ensure confidentiality and ethical compliance, all cases were fully anonymized. Individual case elements were not presented as single-client biographies but were systematically reconstructed into composite case vignettes. These vignettes represent analytically condensed patterns observed across multiple counseling cases and are intended to illustrate typical trajectories rather than individual life histories.

Case Selection and Analytical Focus

The composite vignettes represent three analytically relevant migration constellations within the German context:

- marriage migration
- forced migration (refugees)
- second-generation migration

The cases are not presented as individual biographies but as anonymized, composite vignettes that reflect recurring patterns observed across multiple clients.

The cases of Cengiz, Faris, and Diyar serve as representative examples of these constellations. They were constructed by synthesizing recurring features related to migration experiences, social environments, and gambling trajectories.

The vignettes are presented as empirical material that forms the basis for the thematic analysis in the following section. Rather than functioning as isolated narratives, they are understood as analytically condensed representations of typical patterns observed in counseling practice.

Analytical Procedure

The analysis followed principles of inductive thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The case material was systematically examined to identify recurring patterns related to migration-related stress, social exclusion, identity conflicts, and gambling behavior.

At the same time, the analysis is theoretically informed. Concepts derived from acculturation stress theory, stigma theory, social exclusion, and behavioral addiction models were used as sensitizing frameworks to interpret the empirical material. This approach combines inductive pattern generation with theory-guided interpretation.

The analytical process involved moving from narrative case descriptions to analytically condensed thematic categories, which form the basis of the Findings section. The aim is to identify underlying mechanisms and trajectories rather than to test predefined hypotheses.

Triangulation

The study applies a form of methodological triangulation by integrating three sources of knowledge:

- practice-based counseling observations
- existing empirical research
- sociological and psychological theory

This triangulation allows for a more comprehensive understanding of gambling behavior among young migrants by linking lived experiences with broader structural and theoretical perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

All data used in this study were handled in accordance with professional ethical standards of counseling practice. Personal identifiers were removed, and sensitive details were modified to prevent identification. According to institutional guidelines, formal ethical review was not required because the study relied exclusively on anonymized composite case material derived from routine counseling practice. Nevertheless, particular attention was paid to confidentiality, vulnerability, and the prevention of indirect identification.

Findings and Case-Based Analysis

The following analysis is based on composite case vignettes derived from the author's professional practice as a family counselor and gambling disorder counselor in Germany. Rather than presenting the vignettes as isolated narratives, the analysis integrates them as empirical material illustrating recurring patterns observed across different migration constellations. The cases of Cengiz, Faris, and Diyar represent

analytically condensed examples of marriage migration, forced migration, and second-generation migration. The findings reveal five interconnected dimensions shaping gambling disorder among young migrants: migration-related vulnerability, the social embedding of gambling practices, the role of digital gambling environments, escalation trajectories, and psychosocial consequences.

Migration-Related Vulnerability

Across all cases, migration-related experiences constitute a central background condition shaping the emergence of gambling behavior. Although the cases represent different migration trajectories, they share experiences of social dislocation, insecurity, and limited social participation.

Cengiz, a 27-year-old marriage migrant, arrived in Germany with expectations of building a stable future. However, limited German language skills, unemployment, and the absence of social networks contributed to feelings of loneliness and alienation. His trajectory illustrates how recent migration can produce psychosocial vulnerability, particularly when individuals experience dependency and loss of orientation in the host society.

A different form of vulnerability appears in the case of Faris, a 16-year-old refugee from Syria. Having experienced war, displacement, and the loss of his father, Faris entered Germany under conditions marked by trauma and instability. In school, he encountered racism, bullying, and cultural isolation, while his family struggled with bureaucratic challenges and emotional exhaustion. His case demonstrates how forced migration intensifies psychological stress and increases susceptibility to maladaptive coping strategies.

Diyar, a 17-year-old born in Germany to Kurdish migrant parents, represents a second-generation migration constellation. Unlike Cengiz and Faris, his vulnerability does not emerge from recent migration or forced displacement, but from a persistent feeling of not fully belonging. Despite growing up in Germany, he experiences exclusion at school and social marginalization in everyday life. His case illustrates how identity conflicts and experiences of symbolic exclusion can also generate psychosocial strain among second-generation migrant youth.

Taken together, the cases demonstrate that migration-related vulnerability manifests differently across migration trajectories. Nevertheless, all cases reveal common emotional dynamics characterized by insecurity, loss of control, and social exclusion, which create conditions under which gambling behavior becomes psychologically meaningful.

Social Embedding of Gambling Practices

A second central finding concerns the social contexts in which gambling behavior emerges and becomes normalized. In all cases, gambling is embedded in environments that provide forms of social interaction, familiarity, and belonging.

For Cengiz, gambling initially develops within the setting of a Turkish café. What begins as social interaction through tea drinking and conversations with compatriots gradually evolves into low-stakes gambling activities such as Okey or card games involving small bets. The café functions not only as a gambling environment but also as a compensatory social space that temporarily reduces feelings of isolation and exclusion.

Similarly, Diyar's gambling behavior is closely linked to peer-group dynamics. Sports betting becomes a shared activity among friends and serves as a means of recognition and group integration. Participation in betting practices allows him to experience temporary status and social acceptance that he otherwise lacks in school and everyday life.

In Faris's case, gambling is embedded in digital communities rather than physical social spaces. Through Arabic-speaking gaming networks and social media platforms, he encounters online gambling activities disguised as games or social challenges. These digital spaces combine linguistic familiarity with emotional escape and social connection.

The findings therefore indicate that gambling among young migrants cannot be understood solely as an individual economic activity or pathological impulse. Instead, gambling environments function as alternative spaces of inclusion in which belonging, recognition, and emotional relief are temporarily experienced.

Role of Sports Betting and Digital Gambling Environments

Digital gambling environments emerge as a particularly significant dimension in the development of gambling disorder among younger migrants. In the cases analyzed, online platforms constitute central entry points into gambling behavior.

Diyar's gambling practices are closely connected to smartphone use and online sports betting applications integrated into everyday digital routines. Betting is normalized within peer interactions and becomes part of daily communication patterns. Similarly, Faris encounters gambling through gaming applications and social media environments, where gambling mechanisms are embedded within seemingly harmless digital entertainment structures.

These online environments are characterized by continuous accessibility, rapid reward cycles, anonymity, and low barriers to entry. As a result, gambling behavior is often not perceived as a clearly distinct risk activity but rather as an ordinary element of digital interaction.

The findings suggest that digital gambling environments amplify existing psychosocial vulnerabilities by combining emotional stimulation, social interaction, and constant accessibility. Particularly for young migrants who rely heavily on digital spaces for communication and belonging, these

structures create intensified risks for problematic gambling behavior.

Escalation Trajectories

Another recurring pattern concerns the gradual escalation of gambling behavior. In all cases, gambling begins as a low-threshold activity associated with curiosity, distraction, or social participation before developing into increasingly problematic behavior.

In the case of Cengiz, gambling evolves from occasional café games to regular visits to gambling halls involving progressively higher financial stakes. His attempts to recover financial losses reinforce a repetitive cycle of hope, frustration, and renewed gambling.

Diyar's trajectory follows a similar pattern. What initially appears as harmless sports betting among peers gradually develops into secretive and financially risky behavior involving borrowed money and unauthorized account use. Likewise, Faris experiences rapid escalation within digital environments, where constant accessibility facilitates repeated engagement and intensifies loss of control.

Across all cases, escalation is characterized by increasing financial involvement, compulsive repetition, and repeated attempts to compensate for previous losses through further gambling. The findings therefore demonstrate that gambling disorder develops progressively through cumulative reinforcement mechanisms rather than sudden behavioral change.

Psychosocial Consequences: Debt, Shame, and Social Withdrawal

The final analytical dimension concerns the psychosocial consequences associated with gambling disorder. Despite differences in migration background and social context, all cases reveal similar patterns of emotional distress, social withdrawal, and deteriorating relationships.

Cengiz experiences marital conflict, emotional isolation, and growing dependency as gambling increasingly dominates his daily life. Diyar accumulates debt, faces legal risks, and becomes increasingly disconnected from school and family structures. Faris encounters secrecy, family tension, and emotional isolation while struggling with unresolved trauma and addiction-related shame.

A central pattern across all cases is the emergence of stigma and concealment. Gambling behavior is hidden from family members and social networks due to fear of shame, social judgment, and loss of reputation. This secrecy delays help-seeking and contributes to the persistence of gambling disorder.

The findings therefore suggest that gambling disorder among young migrants must be understood not only in terms of financial consequences but also as a process of social and emotional disintegration shaped by stigma, exclusion, and loss of belonging.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide a practice-based, qualitative perspective on the mechanisms linking migration experiences and gambling disorder among young migrants in Germany. Rather than merely reiterating known risk factors, the analysis offers insight into how these factors interact within everyday social contexts and across different migration trajectories.

Reflection in Relation to Theoretical Framework

The results confirm the relevance of acculturation stress as a central explanatory framework. Consistent with previous research (Berry, 1997; Bhugra, 2004), migration-related experiences such as language barriers, social exclusion, and identity conflicts generate psychological strain. However, the present findings extend this perspective by demonstrating how such stress is actively processed through gambling practices. Gambling does not appear solely as a passive reaction to stress but as a structured attempt to regain agency, control, and emotional stability within contexts of uncertainty.

The findings also support and refine sociological theories of stigma (Goffman, 1963; Link & Phelan, 2001). While stigma is commonly understood as an individual experience of shame, the present analysis highlights its embeddedness in collective expectations related to family honor, masculinity, and social reputation. This culturally intensified form of stigma contributes to secrecy and delayed help-seeking, thereby reinforcing the persistence of gambling disorder.

Furthermore, the study confirms the relevance of social exclusion as a structural condition shaping gambling behavior (Bourdieu, 1986; Castel, 2003). At the same time, the findings extend this perspective by showing that gambling environments function as compensatory spaces of inclusion. Cafés, peer groups, and digital communities do not merely normalize gambling but provide alternative forms of recognition and belonging for individuals who experience marginalization in other areas of life.

Finally, the findings align with behavioral addiction models emphasizing the role of accessibility, reinforcement mechanisms, and continuous engagement (Gainsbury, 2015; Griffiths, 2005). The present study extends these models by illustrating how digital gambling environments intersect with migration-related vulnerabilities. For young migrants, digital spaces often represent primary arenas of social interaction. The integration of gambling elements into these environments creates a risk structure that is difficult to regulate and often not perceived as distinct from everyday digital practices.

Comparison with Existing Literature

The findings are consistent with quantitative research indicating higher prevalence rates of gambling problems among individuals with a migrant background (BZgA, 2014; Milin et al., 2017). However, while existing studies primarily identify structural risk factors, the present analysis provides insight into the processes through which these factors translate into everyday behavior.

In particular, the study highlights the role of social environments and cultural contexts in shaping gambling practices. Previous research has shown that gambling can be embedded in collective settings (Milin et al., 2017; Şahinöz, 2011). The present findings extend this perspective by demonstrating how these environments actively compensate for experiences of exclusion and lack of belonging.

Moreover, the analysis contributes to the literature on digital gambling by illustrating how online environments are integrated into everyday life. While existing studies emphasize accessibility and risk (Gainsbury, 2015; Hayer, 2025), the present findings suggest that digital gambling is often normalized as part of routine digital interaction. This perspective helps explain why early signs of problematic behavior are frequently overlooked.

Practical and Clinical Implications

The findings have important implications for prevention and intervention strategies. First, they highlight the need for culturally sensitive approaches that take into account migration-related experiences, social environments, and stigma dynamics. Standardized intervention models may not adequately address the specific barriers faced by young migrants, such as language difficulties, institutional mistrust, and culturally shaped perceptions of addiction.

Second, the results underline the importance of early detection within social environments. Since gambling behavior is often embedded in peer groups, cafés, and digital communities, preventive strategies should not be limited to individual counseling but should also target these social contexts.

Third, the findings point to the necessity of integrating digital dimensions into prevention efforts. Given the central role of online gambling, particularly among younger individuals, interventions should include digital literacy, awareness of gambling mechanisms, and targeted outreach in online environments.

Finally, the study suggests that trust-building measures are crucial for effective intervention. Collaboration with community networks, schools, and culturally embedded institutions may help reduce barriers to help-seeking and facilitate earlier access to support services.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is subject to several limitations. The analysis is based on qualitative, practice-based composite case vignettes, which do not allow for statistical generalization. The cases represent analytically condensed patterns rather than individual biographies. However, they offer conceptual insights into mechanisms that may be transferable to similar contexts.

In addition, the findings are shaped by the perspective of counseling practice, which may involve selective visibility of more severe cases. While efforts were made to ensure analytical rigor, the interpretive nature of the analysis may introduce subjective elements.

Future research should build on these findings by combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Larger-scale studies could examine the prevalence and variation of the identified mechanisms across different migrant groups. In particular, further research is needed on the role of digital environments, including algorithm-driven engagement and targeted marketing strategies. Moreover, the development and evaluation of culturally sensitive prevention programs should be prioritized to translate research findings into effective practice.

Conclusion

Gambling disorder among young migrants emerges as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that is deeply embedded in the broader context of migration, identity formation, and social integration. The findings of this study demonstrate that gambling behavior cannot be understood solely as an individual pathology, but must be analyzed in relation to structural inequalities, psychosocial stressors, and culturally embedded social practices.

Migration-related experiences such as social exclusion, discrimination, and identity conflicts create conditions that increase vulnerability to behavioral addictions. Within this context, gambling, particularly sports betting and online gambling, functions not only as a means of financial aspiration but also as a coping mechanism and a form of social participation. However, these short-term functions often lead to long-term consequences, including debt, social isolation, and emotional distress.

The study highlights that effective prevention and intervention strategies must go beyond individual-level approaches. Instead, they require culturally sensitive, community-based, and structurally informed responses that take into account the lived realities of migrant populations. Strengthening intercultural competence among professionals, reducing barriers to access, and addressing stigma within communities are essential components of such strategies.

At the same time, several limitations of this study must be acknowledged. First, the analysis is based on qualitative case vignettes derived from counseling practice, which do not allow for statistical generalization. The cases represent typical patterns rather than a representative sample of the population. Second, the reliance on practice-based observations may introduce subjective interpretations, even though efforts were made to ensure analytical rigor. Third, the study focuses primarily on specific migrant groups in Germany, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other contexts.

Future research should build on these findings by conducting systematic empirical studies, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches, to further investigate gambling behavior among migrant youth. Comparative studies across different migrant groups and national contexts would provide valuable insights into cultural and structural variations. In addition, more research is needed on the role of digital environments, particularly the impact of online betting platforms and algorithm-driven engagement mechanisms. Finally, the development and evaluation of culturally sensitive prevention and intervention programs should be prioritized in order to translate research findings into effective practice.

In conclusion, addressing gambling disorder among young migrants requires a holistic and multidisciplinary approach that integrates sociological, psychological, and public health perspectives. Only by considering the complex interplay between individual experiences and structural conditions can sustainable and effective solutions be developed.

Author contributions

Conception and design: C.Ş.; data acquisition: C.Ş.; data analysis: C.Ş.; data interpretation: C.Ş.; drafting of this study: C.Ş.; critical revision of this study: C.Ş. The author reviewed the results, approved the final version of this study, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of this study.

Ethical approval

Ethics committee approval and informed consent were not required for this study.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that this study was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Generative AI statement

The author declare that no generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing or preparation of this study.

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