

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Examining University Students' Opinions on Online Gambling Behaviors, Motivations, and Negative Effects: A Qualitative Analysis Study

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Main Points

- University students demonstrate a significant involvement in online gambling, with the majority engaging in these activities regularly, often daily or several times a week.
- Smartphones are the most used devices for online gambling among university students, providing ease of access and contributing to habitual gambling behavior.
- The study reveals that university students primarily engage in online gambling for social interaction, excitement, and the desire to earn substantial amounts of money quickly and easily.
- Illegal online gambling sites are preferred by a notable number of university students, exposing them to legal risks and potential cyber threats.
- Online gambling has significant negative impacts on students' physical and mental health, including issues like insomnia, stress, and deterioration of social relationships.

Abstract

This study investigates the phenomenon of online gambling among university students, focusing on its underlying factors and the negative consequences it entails. At a Turkish government university, a total of 40 students have confessed to engaging in online gambling. The inquiry utilized the methodology of phenomenology. The results were derived from a process of content analysis. The analysis involved tabulating the codes, sub-themes, and themes according to the research sub-problems. The interpretation was based on direct quotes. The participants devoted an average of 1 – 2 hours each day to participating in online gambling platforms at least once a week, ranked by frequency. Typically, participants utilize smartphones to access appropriate platforms and show a preference for slot machines and iddaa/match betting. Research indicates that individuals who engage in both legal and criminal online gambling sites are driven by social motivations, the thrill of the activity, and the aspiration to generate income. Ultimately, the research concluded that engaging in online gambling leads to bodily ailments, the compulsion to conceal it from loved ones, feelings of sorrow or discontentment due to financial losses, and detrimental impacts on social relationships.

Keywords: Behaviors, Motivation, Online Gambling, University Students.

Introduction

Gambling has been a prevalent form of entertainment and risk-taking behavior throughout history, often driven by the allure of financial gain

and excitement (Secades-Villa et al., 2024). From traditional forms such as card games, lotteries, and casino activities to more modern iterations, gambling has continuously evolved alongside societal changes (Griffiths, 2003). Technological

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advancements, particularly in recent decades, have played a pivotal role in reshaping gambling habits. Some scholars argue that technology not only propels the gambling industry but also introduces many individuals to their first gambling experience, often making it more appealing than earlier, non-technological forms (Griffiths, 1999).

The emergence of “internet gambling” or “online gambling” has marked a significant shift, referring to betting and gaming activities accessible through computers, mobile phones, and other internet-enabled devices such as smartphones, tablets, and digital TVs (Gainsbury, 2015). Over the past two decades, exponential advances in technology, particularly the internet, have made remote gambling sites increasingly accessible (Colado et al., 2017). Online gambling encompasses various forms, including sports betting, online poker, casino games, lotteries, and sports betting (Littler & Jarvinen-Tassopoulos, 2018). Notably, sports betting, often widely advertised, predominantly targets young men, creating significant concerns regarding its influence (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2017; Hollén et al., 2020). The accessibility and appeal of these activities have been further amplified by websites and mobile apps, which are designed to be increasingly engaging, efficient, and cost-effective as internet technologies continue to evolve (Effertz et al., 2018). Online gambling poses significant risks to young people, particularly due to their widespread use of mobile internet and smartphones (González-Roz et al., 2017). These risks include financial losses, strained social relationships, addictive behaviors, and psychological distress (Allami et al., 2021; Black & Allen, 2021; Chóliz, 2016; Effertz et al., 2018; Melodia et al., 2020; Thorne et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2021).

The convenience and autonomy offered by internet gaming platforms, combined with the ease of identity concealment, have contributed to the growing prevalence of online gambling (Griffiths, 2003). This behavior is considered risky, with the potential to become widespread and result in serious economic, educational, developmental, and health-related repercussions for individuals, societies, and nations (Blake et al., 2019; Gómez et al., 2020; Vijayakumar & Vijayakumar, 2023; Vayisoglu et al., 2019). Initially, online gambling behavior was predominantly observed among males aged 40 to 59 (Gainsbury et al., 2012). However, recent studies indicate a significant shift, with younger individuals engaging in online gambling at increasing rates. For example, a study by Gómez et al. (2020) found that the prevalence of online gambling among the younger population has tripled in recent years. Similarly, with the widespread access to the internet in Turkey, 80% of young people encounter virtual gambling platforms. This rate shows that virtual gambling addiction is spreading rapidly in Turkey, especially among children and young people (Toy, 2024). This increased online gambling behavior among young people also increases the risk of developing an online gambling disorder (Griffiths et al., 2009; Olason et al., 2011). An examination of the literature reveals that individuals engage in gambling for a variety of distinct motives. The factors influencing gambling behaviors include genetic predispositions, activation of the brain’s reward center through neurotransmitters, and socio-economic influences such as residing in a gambling environment, aspirations for easy wealth, entertainment, and accessibility to gambling, especially in the absence of legal constraints (Lee et al., 2007; Clark, 2014; Cakici, 2019).

Additionally, psychological mechanisms, including thrill-seeking, evasion of distress, inclination to socialize, and cognitive beliefs such as rapid financial gain and guaranteed success, play a significant role. These motives can be broadly categorized as socialization, entertainment, issue avoidance, thrill-seeking, and financial incentives (Lorains et al., 2011). However, these motivations and the demographic characteristics of participants, according to the economic and social conditions of the region, may vary. Notably, the gambling behaviors, motivations, and effects of online gambling among young individuals, who are adept at using the internet and technological tools, may differ from other groups. Therefore, identifying these specific behaviors and motivations among young people is crucial for reducing and preventing the risk of online gambling addiction.

Theoretical Background

In this context, the behaviors, motivations, and consequences of online gambling can be better understood through theoretical frameworks such as Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Korsakiene et al., 2024). SCT emphasizes the interaction between individuals’ personal factors, behaviors, and environmental influences (Bandura, 1986). The theory posits that individuals learn by seeing the behaviors of others and the anticipated bad or positive consequences that follow. Consequently, seeing alternative behaviors allows an individual to deduce the outcomes and effects generated by such behaviors (Bandura, 2001). The theory has been widely applied in various fields, aiming to reveal the influence of individual behavior (Ariyabuddhipongs, 2006; Korsakiene et al., 2024; Sarti & Triventi, 2017; Zhou & Wu, 2024). Online gambling behaviors often arise from the dynamic interaction of these elements, such as peer influences, personal motivations, and technological accessibility. For instance, students’ gambling tendencies may be shaped by the desire to fit into social groups or by observing the gambling behaviors of their peers (Wood & Griffiths, 2008). The dynamic interaction between personal and environmental factors, as emphasized by SCT, provides a framework for understanding how peer behaviors and technological convenience jointly influence students. Therefore, the theory seems appropriate for this study.

TPB (Ajzen, 1991), based on social cognition theories, offers a systematic framework for comprehending the intention to participate in online gambling. The TPB posits that individuals make rational decisions based on available information, which mediates the relationship between belief-based constructs—such as attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control—and subsequent behaviors (Hagger & Hamilton, 2024). In the realm of gambling, intentions are influenced by attitudes about gambling (e.g., perceiving it as a rapid source of revenue), subjective norms (e.g., approval from peers), and perceived behavioral control (e.g., accessibility through mobile devices). The idea has been utilized in other fields, but its application in elucidating gambling behavior has garnered considerable interest just in the past decade (León-Jariego et al., 2020; Martin et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2012). Smartphones and mobile applications, by enabling easy access to gambling platforms, substantially improve perceived behavioral control, thereby elevating the probability of gambling participation (Chóliz, 2016). This renders

the TBP especially pertinent for comprehending how attitudes, social perceptions, and accessibility jointly affect individuals' intentions toward online gambling.

Demographics, Behavioral Patterns, and Motivations for Online Gambling

The number of studies on internet gambling behavior and addiction is increasing worldwide. Research consistently shows that men are more likely to engage in online gambling compared to women, particularly in sports betting and strategic games (Adu-Akoh and Kwarteng-Nantwi, 2023; Firat, 2015; Pinarci, 2014; Siran, 2020; Potenza et al., 2001; Prakash et al., 2024; Williams et al., 2021). However, women are also likely to gamble online in different activities, although less than men (Wardle et al., 2011). When studies examining gambling frequency, reasons, and motivations are considered, several key findings emerge. In a study conducted by Griffiths and McCormack (2010), a main theme related to the motivation to gamble online, namely more gambling opportunities, and four sub-themes, namely convenience, value for money, more game variety, and anonymity, were revealed. In support of the sub-themes, the results of a study conducted in Ghana with university students showed that the preferred online betting of university students is sports betting, and the motivation is to earn money (Adu-Akoh and Kwarteng-Nantwi, 2023). An Irish study of 208 participants revealed that sports betting and mobile app access are the most preferred online gambling methods, with financial gain and emotional satisfaction being the primary motivations (Columb & O'Gara, 2018). Similarly, Williams et al. (2006) reported that over 72% of Canadian students had gambled in the preceding six months. A Canadian study further highlighted that substance use behaviors like smoking and alcohol consumption, involvement in high-risk gambling activities such as electronic gambling machines (EGMs), and socioeconomic vulnerabilities are significantly associated with problem gambling, both online and offline (Williams et al., 2021). In the study conducted by Gainsbury et al. (2016), social casino games were emphasized, and it was stated that social casino games triggered real-money gambling behavior in young adults, and the main motivations for this behavior were the desire to win real money and entertainment. In Turkey, a study conducted with 339 university students reported that 41.4% had gambled at least once, 21.5% within the past month, and 15.3% online. Among these, "İddaa (Bet)" emerged as the most popular gambling method, played by 80.7% of participants. Also, the main motivation was determined to be thrill-seeking in this study (Vayisoglu et al., 2019). Siran (2020) similarly found that 39.4% of university students engaged in gambling, with the national lottery (18.8%) and internet betting (18.6%) being the most preferred. In addition, 26.7% of students reported having a friend with gambling issues, while 11.9% indicated a family member with similar problems. Further research highlights specific predictors and outcomes of gambling behavior. Koc et al. (2023) reported that university students' gambling behavior significantly differed according to gender, family structure, income level, sense of achievement, happiness, psychological distress, satisfaction with social relationships, and substance use such as smoking and alcohol. Dinc et al. (2020) found that high school students cited reasons for online gambling such as earning easy money, peer influence, and the desire for acceptance. Karabrahimoglu et al. (2023), in a study with 449 university students, identified

that 35.0% of the group was addicted to online gambling and that loneliness levels were significantly higher among addicted individuals compared to non-addicted peers. In one of the recent studies conducted in Turkey, it was found that online addiction score was associated with age, low grades, alcohol use, low family communication, and dissatisfaction with life (Sen & Pirincci, 2024). Although the frequency and duration of online gambling may vary, increasing studies and reports of social community organisations consistently indicate an upward trend in university students' online gambling behaviors (McBride & Derevensky, 2012; Sarsilmaz, 2021).

Purpose of the Present Study

Overall, the findings emphasize the complex interplay of social, economic, and psychological factors driving online gambling among university students. Despite the prevalence of online gambling studies in global literature (Calado et al., 2017; Columb & O'Gara, 2018; Gainsbury et al., 2019; Ghelfi et al., 2024; McCormack & Griffiths, 2012; Williams et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2006; Secades-Villa et al., 2024), Turkish academic research on online gambling remains limited (Vayisoglu et al., 2019; Dinc et al., 2020). Particularly in Turkey, there is a critical need for studies that aim to determine why university students engage in online gambling and to understand their underlying motivations. This research gap becomes even more pressing when considering the exacerbating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Social isolation, limited opportunities for socialization, and heightened concerns about health and the future have collectively intensified issues related to substance use, behavioral addictions, and gambling behaviors during this period (Price, 2022). Increased leisure time and reliance on internet-based entertainment accelerated the transition to online gambling, reinforcing pre-existing habits and fostering new addictive behaviors (Avena et al., 2021; Quinn et al., 2022). Young men, in particular, were disproportionately affected by the rise in online gambling during lockdowns (Hodgins & Stevens, 2021). Given this substantial increase in online gambling, particularly among young people, it is crucial to investigate the patterns, motivations, and consequences of online gambling among university students in Turkey, especially those who are far from their homes or have minimal family supervision. Addressing this issue could provide valuable data to bridge the current literature gap and support the development of more effective strategies to combat online gambling addiction across all age groups.

In this respect, this study aims to explore the dynamic factors underlying the online gambling activities of university students through the lens of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986; Wood & Griffiths, 2008) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Accordingly, the following research questions were sought to be answered in this study:

1. What are the frequency and duration patterns of online gambling among university students (TPB)?
2. What are the preferences of university students with regard to:
 - (a) the technological devices for online gambling (SCT),
 - (b) the legality of their chosen platforms (SCT),
 - (c) the types of online gambling they engage in (SCT), and
 - (d) their motivations for online gambling (TPB)?
3. What are university students' opinions about the effects of online gambling on their lives (SCT)?

Material and Methods

This study was conducted with phenomenology method, one of the qualitative research methods, in order to examine university students' online gambling behaviours, motivations, and negative effects of these behaviours. Qualitative research aims to enable the reader to develop insight and sensitivity about human experiences (Knafl & Howard, 1984). Qualitative research can reveal how people make sense of and interpret a phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The phenomenological design emphasizes phenomena like events, sensations, perceptions, and circumstances that we recognize but do not fully comprehend (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Phenomenology allows for the examination of event progression in everyday life and provides foundational insights for assessing events derived from these studies (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998). In other words, it aims to distil human experiences into phenomena to elucidate the essence of global reality, events, or things (Creswell, 2007). This study employed a phenomenological methodology to elucidate the motivations and patterns of university students who play online gambling. The phenomenological research approach was chosen due to its efficacy in accurately representing experiences and perspectives while minimizing researcher bias (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Also, this strategy was favoured since it sought to comprehend the shared experiences of a substantial number of persons concerning an event.

Participants

The participants were determined using the maximum variation method, a type of purposive sampling. In this approach, the researcher exercises judgment to select participants who are most relevant to the research purpose. This method allowed for a diverse sample representing a wide range of demographic characteristics, experiences, and contexts (Patton, 2014). The sample size in qualitative research, as in this study, aims to reach theoretical saturation, which occurs when no new themes or information emerge during data collection (Guest et al., 2006; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

In this study, a sample of 40 university students studying at a state university in Turkey and engaging in online gambling was sufficient to achieve both diversity and saturation. Saturation refers to the point where data begins to repeat, indicating that an adequate sample size has been reached (Morse, 1991). Furthermore, the reliability of the research was enhanced through data triangulation, ensuring that the findings were comprehensive and consistent (Arastaman et al., 2018). This optimal sample size enabled the categories to be fully saturated, with repetitions in the data confirming the completeness of the analysis. The demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that 85% ($f = 34$) are male and 15% ($f = 6$) are female. When the age range of the participants is examined, it is seen that there are 19 people between the ages of 10 and 20 and 21 people between the ages of 21 and 30. The study group mostly consists of people studying in the Department of Mechanical Engineering ($f = 12$). In the research, information reflecting the identities of the participants was not included by adhering to the principle of confidentiality of their

private and organizational identities. Instead, each participant was given a nickname between "K1" and "K40."

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews are among the most effective and widely used qualitative research methods for systematically gathering information on people's knowledge, experiences, perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, and interpretations of various subjects (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Semi-structured interview questions were developed based on a review of relevant literature and consultation with experts in behavioral addictions. A pilot study was conducted with five participants to refine the questions for clarity and relevance (Guest et al., 2006). During February and March of the 2022 – 2023 academic year, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews in a private and quiet university lecturer's office to ensure participants' comfort and confidentiality. This controlled setting was chosen to minimize distractions and create an environment conducive to open and honest discussions. Participants were invited to learn about the study's objectives, scope, and methods before each interview. Participation was voluntary, with no consequences for those who chose to withdraw at any stage. Participants were assured that the collected data would only be used for research purposes.

Repeated questioning was employed to ensure the collection of sufficient and comprehensive data. When participants did not fully understand a question, alternative phrasing was used to clarify the meaning (Shenton, 2004). Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour. To enhance the study's credibility, participants were asked to review their interview transcripts to confirm that their experiences and interpretations were accurately represented (Guba, 1981). It was observed that participants occasionally expressed more than one opinion for certain questions.

All participants provided informed consent in line with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later revisions. Consent was recorded during the interviews, and written consent forms were signed. These measures ensured ethical compliance and the protection of participants' rights. Ethics committee approval was obtained from Trakya University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Session No: 2022/03, Decision No: 2022.03.14, Decision Date: March 23, .2022).

Data Analysis and Process

Written documents containing the data obtained in the analysis part of the data were subjected to content analysis separately and independently by two researchers. The main purpose of content analysis is to reach concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Certain codes were determined here, and themes were obtained based on these codes (Berg, 2001). The content analysis process in the study consisted of data preparation, data description, coding, categorization, examination of themes, and exhaustion of results (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Accordingly, the data collected within the scope of the research (e.g., interview records or documents) were transcribed and checked for accuracy. Subsequently, the data were read for the first time in line with the research questions, and main themes and recurring patterns were identified. The first themes obtained were placed in a certain framework, and open coding was performed. At this stage, the data were divided into parts, and each part was labelled with a code.

Table 1.
Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographic	Variables	Participants	f
Gender	Male	K1, K3, K7, K8, K9, K10, K11, K13, K14, K15, K16, K17, K18, K19, K20, K21, K22, K23, K24, K25, K26, K27, K28, K29, K30, K32, K33, K34, K35, K36, K37, K38, K39, K40	34
	Female	K2, K4, K5, K6, K12, K31	6
Age	10-20	K2, K3, K4, K6, K7, K9, K10, K12, K15, K18, K22, K23, K24, K29, K31, K35, K36, K37, K40	19
	21-30	K1, K5, K8, K11, K13, K14, K16, K17, K19, K20, K21, K25, K26, K27, K28, K30, K32, K33, K34, K38, K39	21
Department	Mechanical Engineering	K1, K7, K9, K13, K21, K22, K23, K25, K29, K30, K33, K37	12
	Computer Engineering	K5, K6, K19, K36	4
	Physical Education and Sports	K17, K28, K32	3
	International Relations	K4, K34, K35	3
	Econometrics	K18, K39, K40	3
	Nutrition and Dietetics	K2, K31	2
	Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation	K12	1
	Medical Laboratory Technician	K15	1
	Laboratory and Veterinary Technician	K16	1
	Marketing	K14	1
	Nursing	K10	1
	Aircraft Technology	K3	1
	Foreign Trade	K20	1
	Business Administration	K38	1
	Electronics	K11	1
	Hybrid and Electric Vehicles Technology	K24	1
Radio and Television	K27	1	
Science Teaching Education	K26	1	

Subcategories and then broader themes were formed by combining similar codes, and the internal consistency and external differences of the themes were evaluated; the compatibility of each theme with the research questions was reviewed. In addition, in the study, regardless of its type, validity and reliability, which is one of the important criteria at all stages of the research, from the creation of the conceptual framework of a scientific study to the presentation of the results, was made. In this context, the data set was coded independently by two researchers and the consistency between the two codings was calculated with the formula $\Delta = C \div (C + \alpha) \times 100$ (Miles and Huberman formula). In this formula, Δ : Reliability coefficient, C: The number of terms on which consensus is reached, α : The number of terms on which no consensus is reached, and the consensus rate between the two encoders should be at least 80% (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this study, the reliability coefficient was found to be % 83.775. This rate represents a reliable level, according to Miles and Huberman (1994). In addition, it is stated in the literature that participant control, detailed description of the researched subject, and expert evaluation increase the credibility of the research (Arastaman et al., 2018). In this respect, the interview transcripts were sent to the participants, and the participants'

confirmation was provided. Finally, in order to further increase reliability, feedback was received from two experts in the analysis of the data.

Results

Findings on the Frequency of Online Gambling

Table 2 shows the frequency of online gambling, the first theme in this study on university students' online gambling behavior, motivations, and effects. Table 2 indicates that many college students bet online, with the majority doing so daily ($f = 9$) and two to three times a week ($f = 7$).

Supporting the data in Table 2, the direct opinions of some participants about the frequency of online gambling among university students are as follows:

K12(F): "I bet every day. I just can't put the phone down. I place my bets more on the match score than on touches or corners. I can say that it is on my mind every hour of the day."

K21(M): "I've been gambling for 3 years. I bet 4-5 days a week. It usually takes 3-4 hours when I start. I usually

Table 2.
Frequency and Daily Duration of Online Gambling

Theme	Sub Theme and Code	Participants	f
Frequency	Every day	K3, K6, K7, K8, K10, K12, K16, K36, K39	9
	2-3 days per week	K4, K15, K19, K20, K29, K31, K35	7
	4-5 days per week	K1, K9, K14, K21, K24, K30	6
	1-2 days per week	K5, K11, K25, K26, K34	5
	If there is enough money	K17, K28, K33, K40	4
	Erratically	K22, K27, K33	3
	3-4 days per week	K13, K37	2
	Every other day	K2, K32	2
	Biweekly	K38	1
Duration	1-2 hours	K18, K22, K24, K27, K32, K34, K36, K38, K40	9
	Erratically	K3, K4, K5, K7, K8, K13, K19, K26, K37	9
	3-4 hours	K1, K11, K21, K35	4
	2-3 hours	K14, K16, K17, K39	4
	5-6 hours	K9, K28, K29, K30	4
	0-1 hour	K20, K25, K31	3
	Till I am penniless	K15, K33	2

have free time after 10 – 11 at night, and that’s when I begin gambling.”

Findings on the Duration of Online Gambling

In the study’s online gambling duration results, the frequency distribution of usage length was 1 – 2 hours ($f = 9$) and “it is changing” ($f = 9$). Table 2 summarizes the data on online gambling duration. Some university students’ views on internet gambling’s daily duration:

K7(M): “I’ve been gambling for 5 years. I place bets every day of the week. If I made daily coupons for the duration of an entire day, then I would have to spend all day watching matches. Depending on the type of gambling, my online gambling time varies during the day.”

K32(M): “If I have to say, I bet a lot of money, but I study and work at the same time. I get paid every two days. I’m placing bets right now. I’d say twice a day. Game time depends on the case, but I think I bet for 1.5-2 hours on average.”

Findings of the Preferred Technological Device for Online Gambling

Many participants did not name their preferred online gaming device. Additionally, several participants used computers ($f = 5$) and smartphones ($f = 13$) for online gambling. Table 3 contains data.

The direct views of some participants about the preferred technological device for online gambling by university students are as follows:

- K18(M): “I usually place bets with a smartphone. I do it on the computer when I’m at home. Since I can actively carry

the smartphone, I bet more with the smartphone than the computer.”

- K19(M): “When I bet, I bet with mutual friends. I usually place bets with a smartphone. I do it on the computer when I’m at home. Since I can actively carry the smartphone, I bet more with the smartphone than the computer.”

Findings on the Legality of Preferred Websites or Apps for Online Gambling

An intriguing tendency emerges from participants’ online gambling website choices. Many respondents did not specify their favorite platforms. The data shows that some participants prefer illicit websites ($f = 13$), and others prefer lawful ones ($f = 12$). Table 3 details university students’ opinions. Some participants’ direct opinions on the legality of university students’ favored online gambling sites:

- K31(F): “I play more slots, so we can say casino games. I use illegal sites and frankly, I didn’t open a private account for myself because I was afraid of getting caught. We have one friend’s account in our friends, and we use it as a joint account. I always go through it.”
- K35(M): “I usually play İddaa. I play football, but sometimes I bet on tennis, basketball. I predict score or sometimes corners, touches. Sometimes I use legal and sometimes illegal sites. The reason I place bets using illegal sites is because I can get more by betting little.”

Findings on the Preferred Type of Online Gambling

When the findings are examined in terms of the online gambling types preferred by the participants; it is seen that the online gambling types preferred by the participants on the internet are mostly slot ($f = 22$) and betting/match ($f = 16$). These are followed by casino ($f = 6$), betting ($f = 4$), sweet bonanza ($f = 4$),

Table 3.
Preferred Technological Device and Legality of Preferred Websites for Online Gambling

Theme	Sub Theme and Code	Participants	f
From Where	Unspecified	K1, K6, ..., K11, K13...K17, K20, K21, K24,..., K30, K33,..., K38	25
	Smartphone	K2...K5, K12, K18, K19, K22, K23, K31, K32, K39, K40	13
	Laptop	K4, K18, K19, K22, K23	5
Where	Unspecified	K2, K3, K4, K5, K6, K7, K11, K14, K16, K17, K21, K22, K23, K25,..., K28, K30, K32, K38, K39, K40	22
	Illegal websites	K8, K9, K12, K15, K18, K19, K20, K29, K31, K33, K35, K36, K37	13
	Legal websites	K1, K9, K10, K13, K15, K18, K20, K24, K34, K35, K36, K37	12

roulette (f=4), and blackjack (f=4). Table 4 shows the data of the findings.

In addition, the direct views of some participants, which support the data emerging within the scope of the themes and codes obtained in Table 4, are as follows:

- K2(F): "I usually play Slot and Casino games. I love Sweet Bonanza and Gates of Olympus. "Grandpa" and "multipliers" in Gates of Olympus game seem interesting to me. Slot gives better money than other games. This is why I choose slot."
- K5(F): "In general, we play slots, that is, casino games, illegally. My father used to play games such as horse racing, but I did not see him. I just always heard. Why am I playing the slot? Because my friends were playing Sweet Bonanza. I saw the game, the colorful fruits were exploding, I liked it very much. I liked it very much; it was almost sweet. Officially I was hypnotized looking at it. So, I can say I prefer that."
- K10(M): "I preferred İddaa and match betting. It was the one recommended to me by my friends and relatives. I used to bet at İddaa dealers. Then a friend of mine said, now you can do it online from your phone without going to the dealer.

I immediately downloaded the application. I place bets on live, instant matches."

- K16(M): "I prefer casino games and İddaa. I'm actually good at betting. I make money, but casino games are attractive. I'm tempted by the screenshots, the sounds, and the way the safe can hit a very high balance. Their screens have beautiful symbols, different icons, and faces. There are thousands of games inside the casino. This sounds nice. I especially like the ones with fruit and animal symbols. Also, the bonus event in the slot encourages me."

Findings on the Motivations for Online Gambling

Table 5 shows participants' online gambling motivations. Table 5 shows that participants gambled online for

easier (f=5), love of sports/soccer=1, encouragement of family/father (f=2), encouragement of boyfriend (f=3), social environment (f=18), entertaining (f=5), earning money (f=6), being in the market (f=1), less chance of cheating (f=2), paying more money (f=13), being called by the game (f=1), exciting (f=18), good sounds (f=5), immediate visibility of the results (f=9), including tactics (f=3), advertising the winners (f=1), good graphics (f=10), love of horses (f=1), desire to earn more money (f=18), making easy money (f=11), spending time (f=11), getting

Table 4.
Preferred Type for Online Gambling

Theme	Sub Theme and Code	Participants	f
Type	Slot	K2, K4, K5, K7, K8, K11, K14, K15, K16, K17, K18, K19, K20, K26, K27, K28, K29, K31, K32, K36, K39, K40	22
	Betting (İddaa)/Match	K6, K9, K10, K12, K13, K14, K15, K16, K18, K20, K25, K26, K34, K35, K37, K38	16
	Casino	K2, K5, K16, K19, K22, K32	6
	Blackjack	K7, K21, K23, K33	4
	Betting	K22, K24, K29, K36	4
	Sweet Bonanza	K2, K21, K26, K30	4
	Roulette	K7, K14, K21, K39	4
	Aviator	K4, K30	2
	Gates of Olympus	K2, K26	2
	Horse Racing	K1	1
	Allen Gator	K21	1
	40 Burning Hot	K15	1

Table 5.
Motivations of Online Gambling

Theme	Sub Theme and Code	Participants	f
Motivation	Social Environment	K5, K6, K7, K9, K10, K13, K15, K16, K19, K20, K23, K25, K30, K31, K34, K38, K39, K40	18
	Exciting	K8, K9, K15, K20, K21, K22, K23, K24, K26, K30, K31, K32, K33, K36, K37, K38, K39, K40	18
	Desire to earn more money	K1, K2, K3, K4, K5, K9, K10, K12, K14, K16, K17, K20, K21, K27, K28, K29, K31, K32	18
	Giving more money	K2, K8, K12, K15, K16, K18, K19, K23, K26, K28, K31, K37, K39	13
	Making easy money	K4, K11, K14, K16, K18, K23, K24, K25, K27, K32, K40	11
	Spending Time	K5, K15, K19, K20, K21, K22, K29, K30, K35, K36, K39	11
	Good Graphics	K4, K5, K14, K16, K18, K19, K28, K30, K39, K40	10
	Immediate visibility of the results	K14, K15, K17, K18, K19, K27, K31, K32, K39	9
	Earning money	K3, K6, K7, K8, K10, K19	6
	Love of sports/soccer	K9, K13, K24, K25, K34, K38	6
	Entertaining	K3, K4, K6, K7, K11	5
	Good sounds	K4, K14, K16, K19, K39	5
	Easier	K1, K6, K8, K10, K27	5
	Being a student	K2, K4, K10, K20	4
	Including tactics	K15, K20, K21	3
	Encouragement of boyfriend	K2, K4, K12	3
	Encouragement of family/father	K22, K26	2
	Less chance of cheating	K33, K37	2
	Being called by the game	K16	1
	Advertising the winners	K22	1
Being in the market	K1	1	
Getting rid of negative thoughts	K6	1	
Love of Horses	K1	1	

rid of negative thoughts ($f=1$) and being a student ($f=4$) sub-themes and codes are seen to come to the fore.

In addition, the direct views of some of the participants supporting the data obtained in Table 5 are as follows:

- K21(M): "I play games like Roulette, Blackjack (21), Sweet Bonanza, and Allen Gator. It would be much better if I used the money elsewhere. But playing these games has become a habit. After a while, like a cigarette, it started to give pleasure. It's nice to watch and spend time with. It was good for my free time. It gets too exciting because the money in my pocket will either run out or get more. Sweet Bonanza makes money. Blackjack (21) is much more enjoyable because it is necessary to play more statistically."
- K31(F): "I want to earn a lot of money, and instant money makes me happy and gives me pleasure. Also, I love the excitement, but the waiting time scares me and makes me nervous. I can't take this exciting event as much as gambling from other things in life. There are many economic reasons why I play; I want to live in luxury. I don't want to think about my money when I go somewhere, and when I earn money from the slot, I say that now I can eat my food,

drink my coffee, and travel as I want, but otherwise I must calculate. It is also fun to play with friends; we have fun, we exchange ideas, and we get excited."

- K40(M): "Easy money. I play because I don't have money. Besides, it's easier to make money like this than to deal with something. It has to do with the economy. For example, I can't buy anything, even with 200 TL in my pocket. For example, I go into gambling, I earn money from gambling, I go and buy it comfortably."

Findings on the Life Effects of Online Gambling

As the final findings of the study, the themes and codes obtained in terms of the effect of online gambling on the lives of university students are shown in Table 6. When Table 6 is examined, there are 18 codes and sub-codes under the theme of the effects of online gambling on life. These are stress ($f=7$), shame ($f=1$), anxiety ($f=2$), nervousness ($f=1$), misuse of energy ($f=1$), and debt-related social isolation ($f=3$), ambition to win ($f=3$), hiding from family ($f=16$), hiding from mother ($f=1$), putting the family in a difficult position in society ($f=1$), negative impact on family relationships ($f=2$) physical effects (chin tremor, head tingling, sleep, hair pulling/loss, dreams, crying, smoking, focusing, increase in smoking/alcohol use, not doing sports) ($f=20$), loss of

Table 6.
Effects on Life of Online Gambling

Theme	Sub Theme and Code	Participants	f
Effects on Life	Physical effects (chin tremor, tingling in the head, sleep, hair pulling/shedding, dreams, crying, smoking, focusing, increased smoking/alcohol use, not doing sports)	K1, K4, K9, K10, K11, K12, K14, K15, K16, K17, K20, K21, K23, K28, K29, K30, K32, K33, K38, K39	20
	Hiding from family	K1, K2, K4, K6, K7, K10, K12, K15, K18, K20, K21, K30, K31, K33, K36, K38	16
	Being sad/depressed when losing	K7, K12, K14, K18, K20, K22, K23, K24, K25, K29, K31, K32, K37, K40	14
	Negative effect on friendship relations	K5, K8, K10, K11, K19, K21, K29, K30, K32, K33, K34, K39, K40	13
	Being so happy/hopeful when winning	K5, K6, K12, K17, K19, K22, K24, K25, K26, K40	10
	Stress	K1, K4, K5, K8, K17, K31, K39	7
	Negative impact on lessons	K5, K6, K20, K21, K29, K30	6
	Loss of Money	K2, K14, K19, K21	4
	Anxiety	K14, K15	2
	Negative impact on family relationships	K37, K39	2
	Debt-related Social Isolation	K10, K16, K23	3
	Ambition to win	K1, K2, K6	3
	Misuse of energy	K27	1
	Hiding from mother	K3	1
	Putting the family in a difficult position in society	K16	1
	Shame	K10	1
	Nervousness	K39	1

money ($f=4$), negative impact on lessons ($f=6$), being so happy/hopeful when winning ($f=10$) and being sad/depressed when losing ($f=13$).

Supporting Table 6, some of the opinions of university students on online gambling in terms of its impact on their lives are as follows:

- K5(F): "I mean, sometimes I sit with my friends. They say give me 200 TL. I say ok. But I don't want to play at all. At that moment, we are losing. I'm bored and I'm taking a trip right away. There is some resentment between us. If I win, I am very happy, and we share it with friends. I'm going to buy something right away. My family knows, even my mother sometimes gives me money so that I can double the money, and she never gets angry with me. It doesn't affect my lessons either because I play in my spare time. But if we bet in class, it's a big distraction. I totally follow the game. We even made a lot of money in the class once and left the class right away. We went for coffee. When I lose, I feel nervousness and regret. Why did I have to? My money is gone and now I can't seem to get what I want."
- K16(M): "I once had many friends. Over time, when I couldn't help playing too much and started to get into debt, my friends abandoned me. People started to have trust problems with me. People's point of view towards me is changing and has changed. I put the family in a very difficult situation because I have no property of my own. The family has assets.

My father always paid off my debts. If I have lost 1 million TL, it is my father's money. Without my father's support, I would be in a very difficult situation; all the family ties would also be severed. For example, I have a sister who is at odds with my father over this issue because, while I was supported so much by my family, she resented being marginalized. My sister's relationship with me is bad, and rightfully so. I spent all the money on gambling. My father's reputation in his circle was also hurt because of me. His relationships were dealt a blow. Sports have also affected my life. Because you are sleep deprived. The order of life is disrupted. You go to the football field; your mind is always in debt, always in the game. There are problems with focus."

- K32(M): "I think the biggest problem is insomnia. I am both studying and working. But I need to sleep. But when I start the game, I lose track of time; suddenly it is 3 o'clock (night). When I lose, I feel a bit low. This affects my concentration at work. No problems at school. The lessons are easy. Of course, there are some problems in my social life. There's school, there's work, and there's gambling. There is no time for sociality. Sometimes I place bets on off days when I'm not going to work. I retreat to a cafe and play in a corner. It's better if I socialize, but I don't know; it's like passion. Even if my girlfriends invite me to a place, if there is a slot game, I can't go without finishing it."
- K33(M): "My family is unaware that I bet large amounts of money. But what's interesting is that my father is the

one who taught me poker. However, he doesn't bet large amounts either. It doesn't have any impact on my academic performance or grades. I have a general problem with sleep, but I don't think it's related to gambling. The late school hours also contribute to that. When I play with a friend who is not very knowledgeable about gambling or with whom I'm not very close, we can end up with arguments."

Discussion

This qualitative study examined university students' online gambling activities, motives, and life effects. Male participants predominated. However, few women, especially slot machine players, participated. This conclusion matches the most linked study participant groupings. Kairouz et al. (2012) found that most internet gamblers were male students. Wood and Williams (2011) revealed that Canadian men gambled online more often and were younger. Turkish studies have indicated that men are more likely to engage in compulsive internet gambling than women (Dinc et al., 2020). Research suggests that women with psychological distress are more likely to engage in online gambling (Håkansson & Widinghoff, 2020; McCarthy et al., 2019), contradicting these findings. In this study, which does not attempt to find gender differences in online gambling severity, both men and women engage in online gambling, notably in universities, with easier and more extensive involvement. According to the perspectives of the participating university students, many of their friends gamble online. Thus, internet gambling is more likely to occur among youth (Griffiths & Barnes, 2008; Nowak & Aloe, 2014).

Nearly 23% of university students (9) said they bet daily online. The following shows that many university students bet online 2–3 days a week. Many university students gamble online 4–5 or 1–2 days a week. Interesting: 12.5% of research participants (5) said they would gamble if they had money. These data suggest some university students engage in problematic internet gambling. When asked about the length of time university students spend gambling online, 23% (n = 9) said they gambled for 1-2 hours a day, while 23% said it depends on the situation. They believe this variety is due to running out of betting money or winning a lot. Following these findings, several students reported gambling online for 3–4, 2–3, or 5–6 hours a day. Another study of Turkish teens found that 28% spend at least 107 minutes a day on gambling websites, and 8% spend more than 3 hours (Aricak, 2019). Another study by Dinc et al. (2020) found that everyday gaming leads to online gambling addiction. In this context, 23% of university students in the survey are at high risk of online gambling addiction due to its frequency and length. In addition, beyond these addiction risk and behavioural patterns, online gambling disorder not only impairs the individual's functioning but also puts the individual, family, and society at risk, with the individual engaging in numerous undesirables socially unacceptable behaviours in professional and social life and even taking part in illegal activities (Fong, 2005).

More than half of students did not specify a preferred technical gadget for online gaming. It was then found that smartphones and computers dominate online gambling. The students who spoke preferred smartphones for online gambling anytime and anywhere. Access to online gaming quickly allows habitual

gambling, which increases the risk of compulsive gambling addiction (Chóliz, 2016). Smartphones, which young people consider an extension of their body (Gezgin et al., 2019), can harm university students economically, physically, and psychosocially (Koc et al., 2023) if used improperly because they contain harmful apps like online gambling and make it easy to access them. Another sub-theme was that students gamble in student residences using laptops, which they prefer. This result, in parallel with the results in the literature on mobile gambling (James et al., 2017; Whelan et al., 2021), shows that young people in Turkey can access casino games in an easier and faster way and with a few taps on a mobile device. The study found that smartphones, which play online gambling easier for university students, may increase online gambling frequency. Moreover, the increasing frequency of online gambling on smartphones paves the way for young people to develop both smartphone and gambling addictions.

More than half of university students did not wish to indicate their preferences for online gambling websites or apps. One sub-theme is university students gambling on illicit websites. University students bet on legal sites, another viewpoint sub-theme. University students are reluctant to discuss this topic because roulette, slots, and casino games are illegal in Turkey and incur legal repercussions. Even if university students favor slots, illicit websites are nevertheless utilized for gambling more often. The rising popularity of internet gambling in Malaysia despite its illegality shows that unlawful sites are used worldwide (Rathakrishnan & George, 2021). A survey of Turkish teens found that 19.3% had VIP memberships on betting sites (Aricak, 2019). Turkey offers legal internet gambling, including government-sanctioned betting and İddaa, in addition to slots and casino games. However, some students favor illicit sites for their superior odds and diversity of bets. A study found that university students frequently utilize legal sites like nesine.com, which offers İddaa and sports betting under government control. According to these statistics, university students who favor unlawful online gambling sites face legal penalties due to Turkey's gaming legislation. Additionally, university students are subject to cyber fraud and illicit site attacks.

Slot machine simulation apps are the first sub-theme of university students favored online gambling sorts. University students also prefer sports betting. While less popular than slots and sports betting, casino games, blackjack, and betting games are also preferred. The gambling inclinations of teenagers and young adults were also studied. It showed that scratch cards, slot machine gambling, and lottery gambling grew while card, skill, and sports gambling decreased (Winters et al., 2002). Another study found that teens gambled on scratch cards, instant tickets, sports betting, skill games for money, lottery tickets, slot machines, and dice games in order of predominance (Petry & Gonzalez-Ibanez, 2015). Griffiths and Barnes (2008) found that sports bets were most popular, followed by poker, casino games, horse racing, the lottery, scratch cards, and slot machines. A Canadian study found that online poker (59.7%), lottery (23%), sports betting (16.7%), casinos (7.6%), horse racing (5.2%), and bingo (2.4%) were preferred. Badminton and football (especially the Premier League) are popular in Malaysia (Rathakrishnan & George, 2021). Teen patti, rummy, and poker—"games of skill"—are becoming popular online in India (Vijayakumar & Vijayakumar,

2023). A Turkish thesis indicated that university students chose the national lottery and internet betting (Siran, 2020). As seen in the literature, different investigations have varied outcomes. This may be due to participants' demographics, online gambling activity, and country-specific addiction levels. Even though their frequency varies, teens and young adults like sports betting and slot games. University students also preferred slots and sports betting in our survey. Slot games' minimal effort, lack of strategy, belief in larger rewards, and simplicity of play contribute to this. Finally, slot games' looks and noises may appeal to university students (Gainsbury, 2015), and their opinion that they resemble conventional games (Siran, 2020) may increase their popularity over time. Online gambling in Turkey is anticipated to grow, especially owing to e-slots. The expansion of e-slots choices and their addictive nature predict that they will become the most harmful type of gambling in the near future (Chóliz, 2023). On the other hand, it has been reported in the literature that pathological gamblers are more likely to bet on sports, which remains especially popular among university students (Caldeira et al., 2017), compared to other forms of gambling (Kessler et al., 2008). In other words, those who gamble on sports are exposed to a higher risk of experiencing gambling-related problems compared to participants engaging in other gambling activities (Kessler et al., 2008; Martin et al., 2010). However, the finding that sports betting ranked behind slot machines in terms of preference in this study may suggest a shifting trend. This shift underscores the rising appeal of slot games, potentially due to their simplicity, sensory engagement, and perceived resemblance to traditional games, marking a transformation in gambling preferences among university students.

University students' motivation for online gambling is primarily influenced by their peer groups. This finding aligns with Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), which highlights the role of social influences, observational learning, and perceived self-efficacy in shaping behavior. Peer influence has been shown to play a crucial role in motivating social casino game players to gamble online, as evidenced by a Canadian study involving 21 participants (Kim et al., 2017). Similarly, Arıcak (2019) observed that Turkish teenagers often learn about internet gambling from their peers, relatives, siblings, and even parents. University students are increasingly using online gambling as a method of socialization and amusement (Bayindir, 2018). The study further reveals that university students often gamble with pooled money at cafés and student houses, as well as through online platforms. This underscores the risk that frequent peer influence and gambling as a tool for socialization may contribute to the growing prevalence of such behaviors within peer groups. Following this, many university students find online gambling intriguing, as it offers a combination of excitement, the potential for significant financial gain, and an accessible platform for entertainment and social interaction. Among the top motivations for online gambling are the desire to earn money quickly, the chance to achieve significant winnings, and the aspiration to make substantial financial gains. In addition, online gambling site signup bonuses have been identified as another key factor influencing gambling behaviors (Kim et al., 2017). Social media also plays a pivotal role, directly and indirectly promoting online gambling. Gambling advertisements on social media platforms, along with the desire to emulate celebrities, particularly among women, further encourage university

students to gamble online in pursuit of purchasing expensive clothing or makeup (Gainsbury et al., 2016). Global and domestic economic challenges, including inflation and rising consumer goods prices, have emerged as significant factors influencing gambling behaviors. In Turkey, these economic pressures affect key motivations for gambling, such as earning money, making easy money, and achieving financial stability. Many Turkish university students report that these challenges hinder their ability to maintain their desired lifestyle, leading them to perceive online gambling as a quick and simple solution to their financial struggles. Furthermore, the illegal status of casino games in Turkey has not deterred university students from engaging in online gambling activities, as peer influence and exposure to online gambling advertisements continue to shape their behaviors. The findings of a study conducted in Italy further underscore these dynamics. Between 2014 and 2017, traditional games such as scratch-offs, instant lotteries, lotto, and bingo were more popular among wealthier individuals. However, a shift in preferences has been observed, with less affluent individuals favoring newer generation games such as sports betting, slot machines, and Texas hold'em. This shift reflects the growing income inequality over time, contributing to the rising popularity of these "pro-poor" gambling activities (Resce et al., 2019). As these games represent the largest contributors to both the growth in gambling revenue and the prevalence of gambling disorders, the findings suggest that a disproportionate share of the social costs associated with gambling is borne by less affluent and potentially more vulnerable members of society. Ultimately, these findings reveal that university students engage in online gambling not only as a form of socialization but also as a means of addressing financial challenges and enhancing their quality of life. However, the intersection of peer influence, social media advertising, and economic hardship highlights the need for targeted interventions to mitigate the risks associated with these behaviors.

University students primarily highlighted the physical consequences associated with online gambling. Reported symptoms included jaw tremors, head tingling, sleep disturbances, hair pulling or loss, nightmares, emotional outbursts such as crying, increased smoking, difficulty concentrating, heightened cigarette and alcohol consumption, and a lack of physical activity. Beyond these physical effects, students expressed feelings of needing to conceal their gambling behaviors from their families, fear of being discovered, and difficulty coping with feelings of despair following financial losses. Despite these adverse effects, some students also reported moments of satisfaction and exhilaration when earning money through online gambling. These findings are consistent with the literature. Wong (2010) identified financial difficulties, sleep disruptions, physical health problems, declining academic performance, strained family relationships, and work-related issues as common consequences reported by internet gamblers, listed in decreasing order of prevalence. Similarly, Petry and Gonzalez-Ibanez (2015) found that online gamblers experienced increased school absenteeism, family conflicts, and heightened anxiety levels. McBride and Derevensky (2009) further noted that problem gamblers were more likely to use mobile phones for gambling, spend larger amounts of money, gamble under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and experience greater financial losses online. Collectively, the literature and the current study underscore the multifaceted risks associated with online

gambling for university students, including physical, psychological, social, and familial harms.

Nowadays, online gambling among university students is growing alarmingly. Online gambling's addiction and high losses raise this concern (McCormack & Griffiths, 2012). Online gambling, especially when it becomes compulsive, endangers young people's lives, health, and mental well-being (Koivula et al., 2022). Due to their structural vulnerabilities, young people in Turkey, like the rest of the world, are at risk of gambling, especially online gambling, which has become more accessible, affordable, anonymous, and convenient due to technology (Hubert & Griffiths, 2018). Due to technology, internet gambling threatens Turkish youth just as much as anywhere else.

The findings of this study reveal that economic challenges significantly influence Turkish university students' motivations for online gambling. Key motives include the desire to earn money quickly, the aspiration for financial stability, and the opportunity for substantial financial gains. These motivations are shaped by broader economic difficulties, such as inflation and rising consumer goods prices, which hinder students' ability to maintain their desired lifestyle. Consequently, online gambling emerges as a perceived quick and simple solution to these financial struggles. In addition to economic factors, socialization and peer influence play a critical role in shaping students' online gambling behaviors. University students often gamble as a means of connecting with peers, with social pressure and encouragement from friends further reinforcing these behaviors. Male students, in particular, are more likely to engage in online gambling than their female students, reflecting gender-based differences in gambling tendencies. Among the types of games preferred, students reported a strong inclination toward slot machines, sports betting (such as "İddaa"), and online casino games, which provide both a sense of thrill and the prospect of substantial financial rewards. The study also highlights the social, psychological, and physical repercussions of online gambling among university students. Participants reported issues such as sleeplessness, heightened anxiety, strained family relationships, and a compulsion to hide their gambling behavior from others. Despite these adverse effects, students also acknowledged feelings of exhilaration and satisfaction when earning money through online gambling, reflecting its dual nature as both a source of harm and a temporary reward. These findings underscore the growing threat of online gambling, which, due to its accessibility, anonymity, and convenience facilitated by technology, poses significant risks to young people worldwide, including in Turkey (Hubert & Griffiths, 2018). The results also fill a critical gap in the literature by providing evidence of the intersection between economic vulnerability, peer influence, socialization, and online gambling behaviors in the Turkish context, an area that remains underexplored.

Practical implications of this research suggest that universities have a vital role in combating the rise of online gambling among students. Institutions should incorporate addiction education into their curricula to raise awareness of the risks associated with gambling and online betting (Akca, 2019). Additionally, enhancing university sports and social facilities to align with students' interests can promote healthier leisure activities and reduce the appeal of online gambling as a form of entertainment. Moreover,

universities should provide greater economic support to students to address the financial pressures that often drive them toward gambling. Initiatives such as increasing the availability of scholarships, offering financial aid, and creating opportunities for part-time work under fair conditions can help students manage their economic challenges more effectively (Adu-Akoh & Kwarteng-Nantwi, 2023). By addressing the root causes of financial stress, these measures can reduce the reliance on gambling as a perceived solution to monetary difficulties, thereby contributing to a healthier and more balanced student. Establishing Addiction Research Centers within universities is also imperative. These centers can provide psychological support to students, enabling the early identification of problematic gambling behaviors and offering targeted interventions, such as group and individual therapy (Siran, 2020). Such measures can mitigate the progression of gambling-related pathologies and foster a supportive environment for affected students. To further advance the field, future research should include longitudinal studies with larger and more diverse samples to track pathological and social gambling patterns over time. This approach will provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of online gambling, particularly the role of peer influence, socialization, economic problems, and gender differences, and inform the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies (National Research Council, 1999).

Limitations

Two components of the study are limited. First, discovering and enlisting research volunteers is tough. Apart from government-regulated internet gambling (sports betting, lottery, etc.), casinos and slots are illegal and punishable in Turkey. Some university students did not participate in the survey owing to security concerns since they gambled online on unlawful websites or apps. The second restriction is the study's self-reported character. Thus, student-opinion-based research raises questions about its validity.

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

Ethics Committee Approval: Ethics committee approval was received from Trakya University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee for the study (Session No: 2022/03, Decision No: 2022.03.14 and, Decision Date: 23.03.2022).

Informed Consent: Written informed consent was obtained from the participants who agreed to take part in the study.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

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Geniřletilmiř Özet

Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Çevrimiçi Kumar Davranışları, Motivasyonları ve Olumsuz Etkilerine İliřkin Görüşlerinin İncelenmesi: Bir Nitel Analiz Çalışması

Giriř

Bu çalışma, üniversite öğrencilerinin çevrimiçi kumar davranışlarını, bu davranışların nedenlerini ve öğrenciler üzerindeki olumsuz etkilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çevrimiçi kumar, internetin yaygınlaşmasıyla birlikte gençler arasında artan bir eğilim haline gelmiştir. Özellikle üniversite öğrencileri, bu tür riskli davranışlara daha yatkın olabilmektedir. Çünkü genellikle üniversite öğrencileri ailelerinden uzakta yaşarlar, sosyal çevrelerinin etkisine daha fazla maruz kalırlar ve ekonomik zorluklarla başa çıkma konusunda sınırlı kaynaklara sahiptirler. Günümüzde çevrimiçi kumar hem yasal hem de yasadışı platformlar aracılığıyla kolayca erişilebilir hale gelmiştir ve bu durum, genç bireylerin kumar alışkanlıklarının gelişmesine zemin hazırlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, çevrimiçi kumarın üniversite öğrencileri üzerindeki psikososyal etkilerini incelemek hem bireyler hem de toplum için önemli sonuçlar doğurabileceği düşünülmektedir.

Materyal ve Metot

Türkiye'deki bir devlet üniversitesinde öğrenim gören ve belirli sürelerde çevrimiçi kumar oynadığını belirten 40 üniversite öğrencisi araştırmanın katılımcılarını oluşturmuştur. Katılımcılar, yaş, cinsiyet, bölüm gibi demografik özellikler açısından çeşitlilik göstermektedir. Araştırmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden fenomenoloji yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Fenomenoloji, bireylerin belirli bir deneyimi nasıl anlamlandırdığını ve bu deneyimin onlar üzerindeki etkilerini derinlemesine anlamak için uygun bir yöntemdir. Veriler, içerik analizi yöntemiyle elde edilmiştir. İçerik analizi, nitel verilerin sistematik bir şekilde kategorilere ayrılmasını ve bu kategoriler aracılığıyla anlamlı temaların ortaya çıkarılmasını sağlar. Analiz sonucunda elde edilen kodlar, alt temalar ve temalar araştırma alt problemlerine göre hazırlanmış ve doğrudan alıntılarla yorumlanmıştır. Araştırmanın güvenilirliğini artırmak için, iki araştırmacı tarafından bağımsız olarak kodlama yapılmış ve ardından kodlar arasında uyum sağlanmıştır.

Bulgular

Çalışmada elde edilen bulgulara göre, katılımcıların en az haftada bir çevrimiçi kumar ortamlarında buldukları ve bu ortamlarda günde ortalama 1-2 saat geçirdikleri ortaya çıkmıştır. Katılımcılar, ilgili platformlara en çok akıllı telefonları aracılığıyla ulaştıklarını belirtmişlerdir; bu durum, mobil cihazların çevrimiçi kumar davranışlarını kolaylaştırdığına işaret etmektedir. Kumar türü olarak ise en fazla slot oyunları ve iddaa/maç bahisleri tercih edilmektedir. Katılımcıların bir kısmı yasal siteleri tercih ederken, diğerleri daha yüksek kazanç fırsatları sunduğu için yasadışı siteleri tercih etmektedir. Çevrimiçi kumar motivasyonlarının genellikle sosyal çevrenin etkisi, çevrimiçi kumarın verdiği heyecan ve çok para kazanma arzusu olduğu belirlenmiştir. Katılımcılar, çevrimiçi kumar oynarken sosyal ortamlarında daha fazla kabul gördüklerini hissettiklerini ve kumarın onlara günlük hayatın stresinden kaçma fırsatı sunduğunu da ifade etmişlerdir. Son olarak, çevrimiçi kumarın öğrencilerin yaşamları üzerindeki etkileri açısından fiziksel sorunlar (örneğin, uykusuzluk, stres), bu olumsuz davranış aileden gizleme zorunluluğu, yakalanma kaygısı, kayıplarda yaşanan üzüntü/mutsuzluk ve arkadaşlık ilişkilerine olumsuz etkiler çalışmada ortaya çıkan önemli temalar arasında yer almaktadır.

Tartışma

Çalışmanın bulguları, üniversite öğrencilerinin çevrimiçi kumar davranışlarının, sosyal çevrenin etkisi, heyecan arayışı ve hızlı para kazanma isteği gibi faktörlerden güçlü bir şekilde etkilendiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu durum, çevrimiçi kumarın üniversite öğrencileri arasında giderek yaygınlaşan bir sorun haline geldiğini göstermektedir. Katılımcıların çevrimiçi kumar oynarken yaşadıkları fiziksel ve psikolojik sorunlar, bu tür davranışların olumsuz sonuçlarının altını çizmektedir. Özellikle, bu davranışların gizlenmesi gerekliliği ve finansal kayıplarla birlikte gelen duygusal sıkıntılar, öğrencilerin sosyal ilişkilerini olumsuz etkileyebilmektedir. Çalışmanın sonuçları, giderek yaygınlaşan çevrimiçi kumarın genç bireyler üzerindeki etkilerinin daha fazla araştırılmasının ve bu sorunun önlenmesi için stratejiler geliştirilmesinin önemini vurgulamaktadır. Bu bağlamda üniversiteler ve diğer eğitim kurumları, bu konuda farkındalık yaratmak ve önleyici tedbirler almak için kritik bir role sahip olduğu bilinmelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler Çevrimiçi Kumar · Motivasyon · Kumar Davranışları · Üniversite Öğrencileri