



The Impact of Ease of Digital Access on the Increase in Online Gambling Cases Among Students

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between ease of digital access and increasing online gambling participation among Indonesian university students. Through a quantitative descriptive approach involving 420 respondents from various universities, the research examines how technological advancement has influenced gambling behavior among students and its multidimensional consequences. The findings reveal a significant correlation between digital accessibility and gambling participation, with 43.3% of respondents having engaged in online gambling and 25.9% remaining active gamblers. Students with easy digital access were nearly three times more likely to gamble online compared to those with limited access. Demographic analysis showed higher participation rates among male students and those residing in urban areas with superior digital infrastructure. The research identified substantial negative impacts on participants, including psychological effects (76.4% experiencing stress and anxiety) and academic consequences (56.6% reporting decreased concentration). Despite 62% of students claiming moderate digital literacy, only 28% demonstrated true understanding of digital risks, revealing a critical gap between technical proficiency and risk awareness. The majority of gambling-involved students (67.2%) reported first encountering gambling through social media platforms, highlighting the influential role of digital marketing in normalizing gambling behavior. This study underscores the need for comprehensive interventions including enhanced digital literacy education, campus-based support services, strengthened regulatory frameworks, and innovative prevention campaigns targeting digital-native students. The research contributes to understanding how rapidly evolving digital ecosystems create unprecedented challenges in academic environments and offers strategic recommendations for institutional and governmental responses to protect student welfare and academic success.

Keywords: Digital accessibility, online gambling addiction, student academic impact, digital literacy gap, gambling prevention strategies

1. Introduction

The development of digital technology has provided various conveniences in everyday life, including in accessing entertainment and information online. One of the impacts that has emerged from this technological advancement is the increasing access to online gambling (Rock et al., 2024). The ease of digital access supported by high-speed internet and the use of increasingly sophisticated mobile devices has made online gambling increasingly accessible to various groups, including students. This phenomenon is a serious concern because online gambling can have a negative impact on various aspects of students' lives, from academics, social, to their financial condition (Amoah-Nuamah et al., 2023).

Students are a group that actively uses digital technology, both for academic and entertainment needs. With the internet available almost everywhere, they can access various online gambling sites with just a few clicks. Other factors such as aggressive promotions from gambling platforms, flexible payment systems, and interactive gaming experiences are also the main drivers of increasing student involvement in online gambling activities (Kolandai-Matchett and Wenden Abbott, 2022). In some cases, students who initially only tried to play for entertainment ended up getting caught up in a pattern of online gambling addiction that had an impact on their lives as a whole.

Ease of digital access also creates an environment that supports the growth of the online gambling industry. Unlike physical casinos that have geographical limitations and strict regulations, online gambling platforms can be accessed anytime and anywhere. In addition, many online gambling sites offer services in Indonesian and payment methods that are compatible with local banking systems, making it easier for students to join in this activity. Unfortunately, this

high accessibility is often not balanced with awareness of the risks and consequences of online gambling (Fahrudin et al., 2024).

One of the main factors that makes students vulnerable to online gambling is academic and financial pressure. Some students may try their luck on online gambling sites as a quick way to earn extra money, especially for those with economic limitations. In addition, pressure from the social environment, such as invitations from peers or growing trends in the student community, also contributes to increasing interest in online gambling. This shows that online gambling is not just an individual problem, but also a growing social phenomenon (Newall and Talberg, 2023; Rolando and Wardle, 2024).

In addition to economic and social factors, the low level of digital literacy in understanding the risks of online gambling is also a cause of the increasing number of gambling cases among students. Many of them are not aware of how the online gambling system is designed to benefit service providers and how gambling addiction can develop unknowingly. Some students even consider online gambling as a harmless form of entertainment, even though the long-term consequences can be very detrimental, including financial problems, mental disorders, and decreased academic performance (Hing et al., 2022).

Various studies have shown that students who engage in online gambling tend to experience negative impacts on their lives. A study conducted by Wardle and McManus (2021) found that students who gamble online have a higher risk of experiencing anxiety disorders and depression than those who do not gamble. In addition, URIEN (2025) study stated that online gambling can affect students' sleep quality, which ultimately impacts their academic performance. These findings indicate that online gambling is not just a recreational activity, but can also cause serious psychological and academic problems.

Regulations regarding online gambling in Indonesia are actually quite strict, but there are still many loopholes that allow students to continue accessing online gambling platforms. Some online gambling sites operate illegally using virtual private networks (VPNs) or payment systems that are difficult for authorities to track (Lin and Shih, 2024). In addition, the lack of supervision from family and educational institutions also makes students increasingly free to access online gambling without fear of the consequences. Therefore, a more comprehensive approach is needed in dealing with this problem, both in terms of regulation, education, and social intervention.

Efforts to prevent and treat online gambling addiction among students require collaboration from various parties, including the government, universities, and the community. One step that can be taken is to improve students' digital literacy so that they better understand the dangers of online gambling and how to avoid it (Savolainen et al., 2022). In addition, educational institutions can provide counseling services for students who experience gambling addiction problems, as well as hold seminars or campaigns that discuss the negative impacts of online gambling.

On the other hand, the government needs to tighten supervision of online gambling sites and increase blocking of platforms that operate illegally. Cooperation with internet service providers to limit access to gambling sites can also be one solution to reduce student involvement in online gambling. In addition, there needs to be a stricter policy in cracking down on online gambling promotions that often target young people through social media and other digital platforms.

With the increasing cases of online gambling among students, this study becomes increasingly relevant to provide deeper insight into the factors that drive student involvement in online gambling and its impact on their lives. This study aims to analyze how easy digital access contributes to the increase in cases of online gambling in academic environments, as well as provide strategic recommendations to address this problem. It is hoped that the results of this study can be a reference for related parties in designing more effective prevention policies and programs to protect students from the dangers of online gambling.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Online gambling and ease of digital access

Online gambling is a gambling activity carried out via the internet, either through a website or a mobile application. Advances in digital technology have provided easier and faster access for individuals to participate in online gambling, including students. According to Liu et al. (2021), the main factors driving the growth of the online gambling industry are anonymity, 24/7 service availability, and ease of financial transactions. In the context of students, high accessibility to mobile devices and a stable internet network are important factors that increase their likelihood of engaging in online gambling.

The change in gambling patterns from conventional to digital is also accelerated by the development of electronic payment systems. Several online gambling sites accept payment methods via digital wallets, credit cards, and even bank transfers, making it easier for students to make deposits and withdrawals. Kamalludin (2024) highlighted that the increase in the number of digital transactions that are easy to do without parental or regulatory supervision increases the risk of students getting caught up in uncontrolled gambling activities.

2.2. The impact of online gambling on students

Several studies have identified the negative impacts of online gambling on students. These impacts include academic, psychological, and social aspects. According to Amoah-Nuamah et al. (2023), students who are active in online gambling tend to experience decreased concentration in studying, increased stress levels, and difficulty in managing their finances. As a result, many of them experience academic difficulties, even being threatened with dropping out due to their inability to manage their time and academic responsibilities.

From a psychological perspective, students who are addicted to online gambling are more susceptible to anxiety disorders and depression. A study by Manu et al. (2024) showed that individuals who frequently engage in online gambling are more likely to experience feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, and stress due to the financial pressures they face. Feelings of guilt and the inability to control gambling habits also contribute to more serious mental health problems.

2.3. Factors that encourage students to get involved in online gambling

There are several factors that encourage students to get involved in online gambling, including social pressure, the desire to make money quickly, and low financial literacy. In the campus environment, many students are exposed to online gambling through recommendations from friends or communities that are already involved. A study by Mbiriri (2023) found that social factors play a significant role in shaping gambling behavior patterns among students. Those who have friends or acquaintances who gamble are more likely to try online gambling than those who do not have such exposure.

In addition to social factors, students' economic conditions also influence their decision to gamble. Students who face financial pressures, such as high tuition fees and living costs, often see online gambling as a quick way to earn extra money. However, as Delic and Delfabbro (2024) noted, the expectation of profit from online gambling is often not in line with reality, and instead causes them to experience greater financial losses.

2.4. Digital literacy and risk awareness

Digital literacy plays an important role in helping students understand the risks associated with online gambling. Students who have a better understanding of digital security, gambling algorithm systems, and the legal consequences of online gambling are more likely to avoid this activity. According to research by Reste (2021), digital literacy education that includes aspects of financial and digital ethics can help students develop a more critical attitude towards online gambling promotions that are often misleading.

Some initiatives that have been carried out to raise awareness of the dangers of online gambling include anti-gambling campaigns carried out by universities and social organizations. In some countries, these policies have even been integrated into higher education curricula to equip students with the skills to recognize and avoid online gambling traps.

3. Methods

This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach with a survey method to examine the extent to which ease of digital access affects the increase in online gambling cases among students. This approach was chosen because the main focus of the study is to identify patterns, driving factors, and the impacts of online gambling activities based on empirical data collected directly from respondents. Through this approach, researchers can obtain a clear and measurable picture of the prevalence, characteristics, and tendencies of students in accessing and engaging in online gambling practices. The stages in this study can be seen in Figure 1.

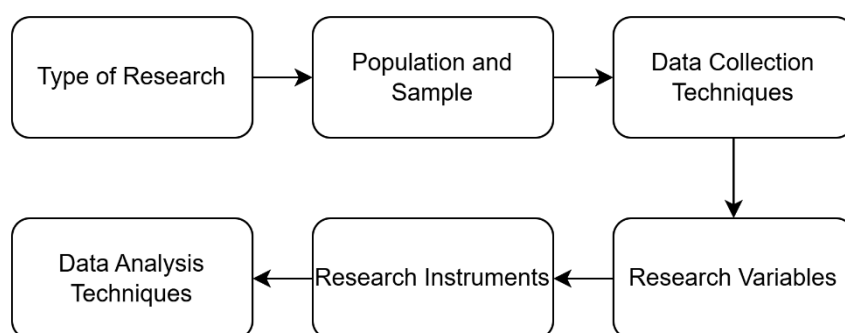


Figure 1: Research Flow

3.1. Type of research

This study uses a quantitative descriptive approach that aims to describe the phenomenon of increasing cases of online gambling among students as a result of easy digital access. This approach was chosen because it is able to present relevant empirical data in explaining the extent to which the use of digital technology such as smartphones, fast internet networks, and electronic transaction systems affects student involvement in online gambling activities. By using a quantitative approach, this study can also measure how much influence each variable such as economic pressure, the influence of the social environment, and digital literacy has on students' tendency to gamble online.

3.2. Population and sample

The population in this study were all students who were studying for higher education in Indonesia and had access to digital devices and the internet. Students are considered the group most vulnerable to digital influences, including in terms of using technology for negative activities such as online gambling. The research sample was taken purposively, namely by selecting respondents who met certain criteria such as actively using the internet, having or currently gambling online, and living in a college environment. Samples were taken from several universities in urban and suburban areas to see differences in exposure and digital habits of students from various backgrounds.

3.3. Data collection techniques

Data collection was carried out using three main methods, namely distributing questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and literature studies. The questionnaire was prepared in an online form using a survey platform so that it was easily accessible to students. Questions in the questionnaire covered aspects of gambling frequency, motivation, environmental influences, and perceived impacts. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with several students who had filled out the questionnaire and stated their willingness to be interviewed further. The purpose of the interview was to explore personal experiences and in-depth perceptions regarding online gambling habits. In addition, literature studies were used to collect secondary data from journals, reports, and relevant scientific articles as a theoretical basis and comparison for research results.

3.4. Research variables

In this study, there are several variables used to support the analysis. The main independent variable is the ease of digital access which includes ownership of digital devices, stability of internet connection, and ease of conducting electronic transactions. The dependent variable is the level of student involvement in online gambling and its impact on their academic, psychological, and social lives. In addition, there are control variables that include economic pressure (such as tuition fees and living expenses), social influence (peers who also gamble), level of digital literacy, and awareness of the risks of online gambling. The relationship between these variables will be analyzed to understand the behavioral patterns of students towards online gambling.

3.5. Research instruments

The main instruments in this study were questionnaires and interview guides. The questionnaire was compiled based on indicators of gambling behavior including duration, frequency, and amount of money wagered. In addition, the questionnaire also measured motivating factors such as social pressure, the desire to make money quickly, and perceptions of risk. The interview guide was designed to explore in depth the experiences of students who had gambled online, including how they were first exposed, the impacts they felt, and how they responded to warnings or information related to the dangers of gambling. All instruments were validated first to ensure the clarity and consistency of the question content.

3.6. Data analysis techniques

The data obtained from the questionnaire will be analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, averages, and frequency distributions to determine the general picture of student involvement in online gambling. This analysis is carried out using statistical software such as SPSS or Excel. Meanwhile, data from interviews will be analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis techniques. Each interview transcript will be read and coded to identify key themes related to student motivation, impact, and attitudes towards online gambling. The results of these two analyses will then be compared and synthesized to gain a comprehensive understanding.

3.7. Research procedure

This research began with the preparation of research instruments in the form of questionnaires and interview guides. After that, the questionnaire was distributed online through social media and campus networks. Respondents who meet the criteria and are willing to be interviewed will be contacted to conduct an interview session via video call or in person. All data collected will be coded, inputted into the system, and analyzed according to predetermined techniques. Furthermore, the results of the analysis will be compiled in the form of a research report containing important findings, data interpretation, and strategic recommendations to prevent the spread of online gambling among students.

3.8. Research ethics

This research was conducted in accordance with strict research ethics principles. All respondents were given clear information about the purpose of the study, the data collection process, and their right to refuse or discontinue participation at any time. Consent to participate was collected in writing through an informed consent form. Respondents' personal data was kept confidential and used only for research purposes. Respondents' identities will not be mentioned in the research report to maintain anonymity. In addition, the interview approach was conducted with empathy and non-judgment, especially since the topic of gambling can be sensitive for some individuals.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

This study involved 420 respondents who were active students from various universities in Indonesia. Respondents were spread across two main areas, namely urban and suburban, and consisted of two genders, namely male and female. The complete distribution is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic distribution of respondents

Category	Urban (%)	Suburban (%)	Total (%)
Male	31.4	21.7	53.1
Female	28.3	18.6	46.9
Total	59.7	40.3	100

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that the proportion of male respondents is higher than female, with a difference of around 6.2%. This is important to note, considering that several previous studies have shown that men tend to have a higher tendency towards risky behavior online, including online gambling.

In addition, the majority of respondents came from urban areas (59.7%), while the rest came from suburban areas (40.3%). This reflects the dominance of students who live in environments with more adequate digital and technological access. Fast and continuous internet access in urban areas allows students to be more easily exposed to various forms of digital entertainment, including online gambling.

In terms of age, although not shown in the table, the majority of respondents are in the 18–22 age range, which is the age group with the highest level of digital technology usage. This age group is included in the digital native generation who are closely tied to mobile devices, social media, and other digital platforms that are often used as a medium for promoting or accessing online gambling.

This demographic condition provides an important context in understanding the patterns of student involvement in online gambling activities. Differences based on gender and area of residence can affect how much exposure they experience to gambling platforms, as well as how they respond to the ease of digital access available. Thus, these demographic characteristics provide a strong basis for analyzing the relationship between ease of digital access and the increase in online gambling cases among students.

4.2. Trends in student involvement in online gambling

This study shows that student involvement in online gambling activities has experienced a significant upward trend in recent years. Based on data from 420 respondents, as many as 182 students (43.3%) admitted to having tried gambling online, and of that number, 109 people (25.9%) stated that they were still actively gambling in the past month.

Table 2: Status of student involvement in online gambling

Engagement Status	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Never Gambled	238	56.7
Ever Gambled (No Longer Active)	73	17.4
Still Gambling	109	25.9
Total	420	100

The results in Table 2 indicate that more than half of the students who have tried online gambling, ultimately continue the habit, making online gambling no longer just a short experiment, but a permanent habit. When viewed based on the frequency of gambling activities, of the respondents who are still active, most admitted to gambling 1-3 times a week (58.7%), while 24.8% gamble almost every day.

This high level of involvement cannot be separated from the various driving factors that have been identified in this study. One of the most dominant is the ease of access to gambling platforms, where 85.2% of respondents said that they access online gambling via smartphones, which are almost always available and connected to the internet. This is reinforced by a fast and anonymous digital transaction system, as well as promotions via social media that are very

aggressive and target the young segment. The data shows that there is a tendency for higher involvement in students from urban areas compared to suburban areas. This is closely related to digital infrastructure and greater exposure to information in urban areas. In addition, male students also show a higher proportion of involvement than female students, especially in the active user category.

This trend confirms that online gambling has become part of a fairly common digital activity among students. Lack of supervision, low digital literacy, and the perception that online gambling is a regular entertainment activity are factors that strengthen the normalization of this habit. If not handled seriously, this phenomenon has the potential to have serious implications for mental health, academic achievement, and financial stability of students in the future.

4.3. Correlation of ease of digital access with involvement in online gambling

One of the main focuses of this study is to examine the extent to which ease of digital access contributes to the level of student involvement in online gambling activities. The results of the analysis show that there is a significant relationship between the availability of digital media and gambling habits among students. Fast internet access, smartphone use, and the existence of easily accessible gambling platforms are factors that greatly influence this behavior.

A total of 361 out of 420 respondents (85.9%) stated that they can easily access the internet from personal devices such as smartphones or laptops. Of this group, 172 people (47.6%) were proven to be active or had been involved in online gambling. Conversely, of the 59 respondents who stated that their internet access was limited, only 10 people (16.9%) had ever been involved in online gambling.

Table 3: Correlation between digital access and online gambling involvement

Easy Digital Access	Ever/ Actively Gambling	Never Gamble	Total Respondents
Yes	172 (47.6%)	189 (52.4%)	361
No	10 (16.9%)	49 (83.1%)	59
Total	182	238	420

The results in Table 3 show that the easier digital access a person has, the greater the chance of involvement in online gambling practices. These conveniences include not only connectivity, but also factors such as an attractive gambling application user interface, a practical digital transaction system (such as e-wallet and mobile banking), and a promotional algorithm that adjusts user interests based on their digital activities.

Another interesting fact is that most students who actively gamble admitted that they first tried online gambling after seeing advertisements or invitations on social media (67.2%). This shows that the ease of access to digital information not only facilitates but also encourages psychological involvement, through visual stimuli and persuasive promotions.

In other words, digital convenience is not only a technical means, but also a factor that strengthens students' exposure to the risks of addictive behavior, such as gambling. This emphasizes the importance of digital literacy and stricter regulations in limiting online gambling promotions, especially those targeting young users and students.

4.4. Psychosocial and academic impacts

Students' involvement in online gambling not only has financial impacts, but also gives rise to various significant psychosocial and academic consequences. Based on survey data, a number of respondents who have or are currently gambling online reported changes in behavior, decreased mental health, and disruptions in lecture activities.

Psychosocially, as many as 139 out of 182 respondents (76.4%) who admitted to having been involved in online gambling stated that they experienced stress, anxiety, or guilt after gambling. These symptoms mainly appear when they experience defeat, lose large amounts of money, or are unable to control the urge to gamble. Then, 93 respondents (51.1%) of them admitted to starting to withdraw from the social environment, avoiding interaction with friends or family because they feel ashamed or do not want their gambling activities to be known.

Table 4: Psychosocial impacts of online gambling on students

Psychosocial Impact	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Stress and anxiety	139	76.4%
Guilt and shame	117	64.3%
Withdrawal from social environment	93	51.1%
Sleep disturbance	72	39.6%
No significant impact	43	23.6%

On the academic side, the most dominant impact is decreased concentration and motivation to learn. Of the total 182 students involved in online gambling, 103 (56.6%) stated that they had difficulty focusing during lectures or doing assignments. Meanwhile, 89 respondents (48.9%) admitted that they had missed classes or neglected academic obligations because they were too busy gambling, especially when they were in a "winning phase" or hoping to "recoup their capital" from previous losses.

Table 5: Academic impact of online gambling on students

Academic Impact	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Decreased concentration in learning	103	56.6%
Absent from lectures	89	48.9%
Decreased academic grades	76	41.8%
Delaying academic tasks and work	85	46.7%
No academic impact	56	30.8%

Table 5 shows that online gambling activities on students have complex and damaging impacts not only from a psychological and social perspective, but also on the quality and continuity of their education. The combination of emotional stress, guilt, and decreased academic performance becomes a cycle of problems that are difficult to break, especially if there is no adequate intervention or support from the campus environment or family.

Thus, student involvement in online gambling needs to be a serious concern because of its multidimensional implications, and is not merely viewed as a moral violation, but also as a symptom of a psychosocial and academic crisis that requires holistic treatment.

4.5. Student digital literacy level

The level of student digital literacy is one of the important factors in understanding the extent to which they are able to use information technology wisely and responsibly. In this context, digital literacy not only includes technical skills in using digital devices and the internet, but also includes evaluative, critical, and ethical aspects of digital content, including risks such as online gambling.

The survey results showed that the majority of respondents claimed to have moderate to high levels of digital literacy, with 217 out of 350 respondents (62%) stating that they were quite capable of sorting and evaluating digital information. However, interestingly, only 98 respondents (28%) truly understood the hidden risks of digital content, including links to illegal sites, hidden gambling advertisements, and manipulation of social media algorithms.

Table 6: Student digital literacy level

Digital Literacy Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
High (critical, ethical, evaluative)	98	28.0%
Medium (basic technical & selective)	217	62.0%
Low (only passive users of technology)	35	10.0%

Table 6 shows that a small proportion of students are accustomed to verifying sources of information and recognizing digital marketing strategies used by high-risk sites such as gambling platforms. This indicates that although students are accustomed to using technology, not all of them truly have a thorough understanding of digital security and the ethics of its use.

The gap between high technology usage and low understanding of its risks is a factor that has the potential to increase students' vulnerability to the negative influences of the digital world, including involvement in illegal activities such as online gambling. In follow-up interviews, several respondents even admitted to accessing gambling sites without realizing that it was an illegal act, because the promotions they encountered seemed normal and often appeared on social media or gaming platforms. This shows the need for comprehensive digital literacy education interventions in the campus environment, which not only emphasize technical skills but also instill critical understanding and ethical awareness. Strong digital literacy can be an initial bulwark in preventing students from getting caught up in online activities that are detrimental to themselves and their academic environment.

4.6. Discussion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that easy digital access plays a crucial role in increasing student involvement in online gambling activities. This is in line with the uses and gratification theory, which states that individuals use digital media to meet certain needs, including entertainment and escape from stress. The data shows that most students involved in online gambling do so via personal devices such as smartphones, with unrestricted and private access. This condition makes it difficult to monitor the activity, both by family and educational institutions.

The level of student involvement in online gambling also shows a worrying trend. Although most respondents are aware that online gambling is an illegal and risky activity, there is a significant proportion who continue to do it, mainly due to factors of easy access, social encouragement, and aggressive advertising and promotion through social media. This strengthens the assumption that legal awareness is not always in line with real action, especially in the context of an increasingly complex and tempting digital environment.

Involvement in online gambling does not stand alone, but is closely correlated with psychosocial and academic impacts. Students involved in this activity show a tendency to experience decreased learning motivation, impaired concentration, excessive anxiety, and decreased academic grades. Several respondents also admitted to experiencing social conflict, both with family and peers. This finding confirms previous studies that state that online gambling, although often considered a light activity or entertainment, has quite serious multidimensional consequences, especially for productive age groups such as students.

In terms of digital literacy, although the majority of students admit that they are quite capable of using technology, critical literacy towards digital risks is still relatively low. Only a small number of them are able to recognize the hidden dangers of manipulative and misleading digital content, including hidden gambling advertisements. This shows a gap between technical skills and evaluative skills in using technology. Weak digital literacy makes students more vulnerable to the negative influences of the digital world, including online gambling traps.

These results indicate that improving digital literacy comprehensively, strengthening digital supervision, and establishing regulations that are more adaptive to technological developments are important steps in responding to this phenomenon. Universities and educational institutions are expected to not only focus on academic aspects, but also develop digital education and intervention programs that can help students build critical awareness and ethics in the use of information technology.

4.7. Policy implications and strategic recommendations

The findings of this study provide a number of significant policy implications, particularly in the realm of higher education, digital surveillance, and regulations related to online platforms. The rampant involvement of students in online gambling facilitated by easy digital access indicates the need for a policy approach that is not only repressive, but also preventive and educative. Higher education institutions, in this case universities and colleges, need to take an active role in forming a support system that is able to prevent, detect, and handle deviant behavioral tendencies due to digital technology, including online gambling activities.

One of the most urgent strategic recommendations is the integration of critical digital literacy into the higher education curriculum, both through formal courses and accompanying programs such as seminars and training. Digital literacy should not stop at the technical ability to use devices, but must include the ability to identify risks, sort information, and reject manipulation of digital content. In this context, an interdisciplinary approach involving the fields of technology, psychology, and digital ethics becomes very relevant to adopt.

The government and internet service providers also need to strengthen policies to block illegal content more adaptively and in real time, including online gambling. Cross-sector collaboration between ministries, mobile operators, and platform providers is needed to build a system capable of detecting and prosecuting sites or applications that smuggle gambling content covertly. In addition, strengthening regulations on digital advertising must also be a priority, considering the many gambling promotions that target young people through social media and informal channels.

From the campus institutional side, the development of psychosocial service units that are responsive to student problems, including digital addiction and online gambling addiction, is needed. This service is not only curative, but also preventive through counseling approaches, group guidance, and student character development. This recommendation is based on the finding that student involvement in online gambling is often triggered by emotional stress, academic stress, and economic pressures, which can be reduced through appropriate assistance.

Public communication strategies also need to be adjusted to the information consumption patterns of the younger generation. Anti-online gambling campaigns must utilize social media, educational influencers, and creative content based on short videos so that prevention messages can be effectively received by the main audience, namely digital-native students and youth. In other words, efforts to address this problem can no longer rely solely on conventional methods, but must be innovative, inclusive, and sustainable, in line with the dynamics of the current digital era.

5. Conclusion

This research has demonstrated a significant correlation between ease of digital access and the increase in online gambling cases among students in Indonesia. The findings revealed that 43.3% of the 420 student respondents were engaged in online gambling activities, with 25.9% remaining active participants during the study period. The analysis clearly shows that students with easy digital access were nearly three times more likely to be involved in gambling compared to those with limited access, confirming that the widespread availability of smartphones, high-speed internet, and user-friendly gambling platforms has created an environment that facilitates gambling participation.

Demographic variations were evident in the research, with male students and those from urban areas showing higher gambling participation rates, likely due to greater digital exposure and infrastructure. More concerning are the substantial negative consequences experienced by gambling-involved students, including psychological effects such as stress, anxiety, guilt, and social withdrawal, as well as academic impacts including declining concentration, lecture absenteeism, and declining academic performance. These findings align with previous studies by Wardle and McManus (2021) and URIEN (2025), which identified similar psychological and academic consequences of online gambling.

A critical finding was the digital literacy gap among students. Despite 62% claiming moderate digital literacy, only 28% demonstrated true understanding of digital risks, exposing a disconnect between technical proficiency and critical evaluation ability that increases vulnerability to gambling participation. This vulnerability is further exploited through social media platforms, with 67.2% of gambling-involved students reporting their first exposure to gambling through advertisements or invitations on these platforms, highlighting how digital media serves as both a technical enabler and psychological influencer through targeted promotions.

The research indicates that addressing online gambling among students requires a comprehensive approach that includes integrating critical digital literacy into higher education curricula, developing campus-based psychosocial support services for digital addiction, strengthening regulatory frameworks for gambling content, fostering collaboration between government agencies and educational institutions, and implementing prevention campaigns that utilize formats appealing to digital-native students. As digital technology continues to evolve, educational institutions must adapt their approaches to better protect students from the risks associated with easy digital access, particularly in relation to online gambling. This study underscores the complexity of the issue, which transcends individual behavior to become a significant social phenomenon requiring multidimensional solutions across education, policy, technology, and community support systems.

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