



IMPACTS OF ONLINE GAMBLING ON TEENAGERS (Case of Teenagers in Sukasari District, Bandung City)

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ABSTRACT

Online gambling among teenagers has become an concerning phenomenon alongside the development of technology that facilitates access to gambling platforms via the internet. This study aims to analyze the factors influencing teenagers involvement in online gambling, its psychosocial impacts, economic effect and social effect also its efforts to reduce prevalence. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study in Sukasari District, this research identifies a lack of parental supervision, peer influence, and thrill-seeking tendencies as key drivers of this behavior. Negative impacts include addiction, declining academic performance, psychological stress, and social isolation. The study also provides recommendations such as early prevention education, strengthening the role of families, and stricter regulatory enforcement. Understanding the complexities of online gambling behavior among teenagers requires collaboration from various stakeholders to protect them from harmful social and mental consequences.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology in recent decades has brought major transformations in various aspects of life, including in the fields of entertainment and gambling. One form of gambling that has become increasingly popular among teenagers is online gambling. Online gambling refers to gambling activities conducted through the internet, such as sports betting, casino games, or virtual slot machines. With the ease of access through mobile devices and computers, online gambling has become more accessible to anyone, including teenagers who are still in a stage of psychosocial and emotional development that makes them particularly vulnerable (Rafiqah & Rasyid, 2023).

The phenomenon of online gambling among teenagers has become a critical issue, considering the negative impacts it can have on their mental health, social relationships, and academic performance (Ikhsan, 2015). Teenagers involved in online gambling face a high risk of addiction, financial problems, and declining academic performance, all of which can affect their future. Furthermore, online gambling often involves manipulative elements, such as bonuses or promotions designed to attract young people, as well as the influence of peer groups, which further exacerbate this behavior.

Although several studies have been conducted to understand this phenomenon, there are still many aspects to explore regarding the factors that drive teenagers to engage in online gambling, as well as the psychosocial and socio-economic impacts it brings. Therefore, this article aims to examine the phenomenon of online gambling, focusing on the underlying causes, the resulting impacts, and the steps that can be taken to reduce its prevalence (Makarin & Astuti, 2023). With a better understanding of this issue, it is desired that effective solutions can be found to address the spread of online gambling among teenagers and protect them from further negative impacts.

According to a report from the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs (Menko Polhukam) Hadi Tjahjanto, the number of online gamblers in West Java is estimated to reach 535,644 people, with a total transaction value of IDR 3.8 trillion. "West Java is one of the provinces heavily affected by online gambling, with 535,000 individuals involved and a total transaction value of IDR 3.8 trillion," stated Herman Suryatman, the Regional Secretary of West Java Province, referencing information from the Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Center (PPATK), as quoted in an official statement on Sunday, July 7, 2024. Other provinces with high numbers of online gamblers include DKI Jakarta, with 238,568 participants and a total transaction value of IDR 2.3 trillion; Central Java with 201,963 players and transactions amounting to IDR 1.3 trillion; Banten with 150,302 players and a transaction value of IDR 1.02 trillion; and East Java with 135,227 participants and a transaction value of IDR 1.05 trillion (databoks, 2024). This indicates that online gambling has become a significant trend, involving a substantial amount of transactions.

In 2015, at least 360 online gambling sites were blocked by the Criminal Investigation Department (Bareskrim) in collaboration with the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Susanti, 2021). Seven years later, in 2022, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kementerian Kominfo) blocked access to 118,320 online gambling content, from January to August 22, 2022 (Kominfo, 2022). This reflects the consequences of technological advancements, which make it increasingly easier for people to engage in various activities, including online gambling. In fact, slot machines have become one of the most popular games in casinos, accounting for up to 70% of casino revenue (Wibisono, 2022).

Bandung, the capital city of West Java Province, is also one of the most iconic cities in the region. Located approximately 180 kilometers southeast of Jakarta, Bandung is known as a major center for education, commerce, fashion, and culture in Indonesia. Bandung as research location has been selected aims to explore the phenomenon of online gambling in the city, particularly focusing on slot games. As a metropolitan city, Bandung has rapidly embraced the flow of technological advancements, making it a hub for modern developments, including the widespread accessibility of online gambling.

Online gambling, which has become increasingly prevalent among teenagers in Sukasari District, Bandung, is now raising growing concerns. One of the favorite places they gather is Café X, located on Jalan Gegerkalong, Bandung. There, players often meet from 11:00 PM until 4:00 AM to engage in online gambling. Therefore, this study intends to analyze the factors influencing online gambling practices among adolescents and the impact it has on their social life patterns in the city of Bandung, particularly in Sukasari District.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Online Gambling Behavior According to Edwin Sutherland's Social Deviance Theory

2.1.1 Deviant Behavior

According to Walgito, human behavior is significantly influenced by both individual conditions and the surrounding environment (Sapara et al., 2020). Furthermore, he elaborates on behavior in his work, distinguishing between reflective and non-reflective behavior. Reflective behavior is a spontaneous response to a specific stimulus, while non-reflective behavior is regulated by the center of consciousness or the brain.

On the other hand, Skinner also stated that behavior can be categorized into two types: innate behavior and operant behavior. Innate behavior includes actions that are present from birth, such as reflexes and instincts, while operant behavior is the result of a learning process. Operant behavior can be modified through learning because it is trained and can be controlled (McLeod Saul, 2018). Therefore, each individual exhibits a variety of behaviors that can be observed either directly or indirectly; furthermore, changes in behavioral patterns can occur through interactions with others throughout their life.

In the perspective of sociology, deviant behavior among students occurs due to deviations from various social rules or from the values and norms that apply both in educational institutions and in society. Deviant behavior can be seen as a source of problems because it can threaten the stability of the social system. Edwin Sutherland, a renowned sociologist, proposed the Differential Association Theory, which serves as a foundation for understanding social deviant behavior in society (Matsueda, 1982). This theory posits that deviant behavior or social deviation does not occur solely due to individual factors, but also as a result of social interactions with groups that possess norms and values different from the prevailing social norms in society (Ii & Kriminologi, 2021; SMUSHKIN, 2019; Timasheff et al., 1955).

2.2 Concept of Teenagers

2.2.1. Definition of Teenagers

Teenagers is a term that refers to a period in a person's life between childhood and adulthood, although this definition may slightly vary depending on cultural and social contexts. Teenagers is also understood as a transitional development period between childhood and adulthood, encompassing biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes (Aldyano et al., 2013). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), teenagers is the

age period from 10 to 19 years (WHO, 2024). The United Nations (UN) defines the age of teenagers between 15 and 24 years. Meanwhile, according to The Health Resources Services Administration Guidelines of the United States, teenagers are divided into three stages: early teenagers (11-14 years), middle teenagers (15-17 years), and adolescence (18-24 years) (Septiani & Ervina, 2022). During teenagers, individuals are often filled with curiosity and frequently experiment with things they have not yet encountered, which ultimately helps define their identity (E. A. I. Jamiel, 2022). Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that teenagers is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, spanning ages 11 to 23 years, and is a period of developmental transition involving biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes. In this thesis, the term "teenagers" refers to individuals aged 15-18 years, also known as middle teenagers. Specifically, the teenagers in this study are junior high school and senior high school students.

2.3 Deviant Behavior of Online Gambling Among Teenagers

In the context of online gambling behavior among teenagers, this theory can be used to explain how interactions with peer groups or friends who support gambling behavior can encourage teenagers to engage in such activities.

Sutherland explains that social deviance occurs through a learning process, where individuals learn deviant behaviors through their relationships with those around them. In this case, teenagers involved in online gambling tend to learn from their peers or groups that view gambling as an acceptable or even profitable activity. Factors such as group norms, accepted values within the group, and the frequency and duration of interactions with that group play a crucial role in the learning process of gambling behavior.

2.3.1 Factors That Drive Online Gambling Behavior According to Sutherland's Theory:

The Differential Association Theory identifies several factors that contribute to social deviance, including online gambling. These factors include:

- **Frequency of Interaction with Deviant Groups:** Teenagers who frequently interact with peers who are accustomed to gambling or who view online gambling as normal are more likely to become involved in such activities. In this case, deviant groups can have a strong influence on the formation of individual behavior.
- **Duration of Interaction:** The longer the duration of interaction with a group that engages in gambling behavior, the greater the likelihood that teenagers will adopt the same behavior. Prolonged interactions provide more opportunities for group norms to be accepted by the individual.
- **Intensity of Interaction:** The more intense the interaction with individuals or groups that support gambling behavior, the stronger their influence in shaping teenagers' attitudes and behaviors toward online gambling.
- **Priority of Group Values and Norms:** Groups that hold values or norms that support online gambling will encourage individuals to view such behavior as acceptable or even admirable. This often occurs among teenagers who are seeking recognition or influence from their peers.

2.3.2 The Influence of Online Gambling on the Formation of Deviant Behavior:

According to Differential Association Theory, individuals who continuously interact with groups that hold norms or views supporting gambling will learn to perceive gambling as an acceptable and legitimate behavior. In this case, teenagers who are consistently exposed to online gambling, either through direct interactions with peers who gamble or through social

media and gambling advertisements, are likely to develop a positive attitude toward gambling.

Other factors that may reinforce online gambling behavior among teenagers according to this theory include:

- **Easy Access Availability:** Easy access to online gambling sites through smartphones or personal computers makes gambling behavior easier to practice. In this context, online gambling becomes increasingly accessible to teenagers, who may not have strict supervision from parents or authorities.
- **Normalization of Gambling on Social Media:** The influence of peers who gamble through social media or other communication platforms can also accelerate the learning process of gambling behavior. Therefore, teenagers learn that gambling is a common activity within their group, even if it is considered illegal or inconsistent with broader social norms.
- **Feelings of Dissatisfaction and Sensation Seeking:** teenagers who feel bored or dissatisfied with their daily lives often seek excitement and entertainment through risky behaviors, including online gambling. If this behavior is supported by peer groups already involved in online gambling, teenagers are more likely to engage in it.

2.3.4 Implications of Sutherland's Theory in Addressing Online Gambling:

From the perspective of Differential Association Theory, addressing the issue of online gambling among teenagers requires an approach that emphasizes changing the social interactions they experience. Some steps that can be taken based on this theory include:

- **Education on the Dangers of Online Gambling:** Providing clear education and information about the dangers of online gambling to teenagers, and teaching them to recognize the negative impacts of gambling on their lives.
- **Strengthening Parental Supervision:** Parents need to be more involved in monitoring their children's online activities, as well as teaching them healthier values in social relationships.
- **Enhancing the Role of Positive Groups:** Encouraging teenagers to interact with groups that hold positive values, such as extracurricular activity groups or communities focused on meaningful activities.
- **Stricter Regulations:** Authorities need to tighten regulations and oversight of online gambling sites, and suggest a ban on teenagers access to gambling platforms.

Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how online gambling behavior among teenagers has potential to construct through social interactions with groups that support gambling norms and values. By increasing understanding of these social dynamics, it is hoped that effective ways to prevent and reduce online gambling behavior among teenagers can be found.

3. METHOD

In this study, the researcher employs a qualitative approach. The reason for using a qualitative method is to allow the researcher to directly observe deviant behavior carried out by teenagers involved in online gambling practices. The research method used in this study is a case study method. By using this case study approach, the researcher hopes to obtain a detailed picture of the activities of teenagers who have fallen into online gambling, as well as how the teenagers are stirred after becoming involved in online gambling. The data collection techniques used include observation and in-depth interviews with teenagers involved in

online gambling in Sukasari District. The location and informants chosen for this study are based on the area with the highest number of online gambling users among the districts in Bandung City, namely Sukasari District. As for the informants in this study, the researcher divides them into two groups: the first group consists of teachers and community leaders from the district, and the second group consists of teenagers involved in online gambling and their peers.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Deviant Social Behavior in the Practice of Online Gambling

The Phenomenon of Online Gambling among Sukasari Teenagers In Sukasari, an area located in a rapidly developing region, the phenomenon of online gambling is increasingly felt among teenagers. Easy access to the internet through smart smartphones or computers, coupled with the rapid spread of information through social media, has made online gambling increasingly attractive to teenagers. Many gambling platforms can be accessed through apps or websites without any clear restrictions, so teenagers can easily access them. The desire to feel the sensation of quick and easy profit is often the main reason for teenagers to try online gambling. In addition, many of them are exposed to gambling advertisements that utilize attractive bonuses or prizes, which further strengthens their interest. Peers also often play an important role in the socialization process towards gambling behaviour. Groups of friends who are already involved in gambling can influence other teenagers to participate, arguing that gambling is an exciting and profitable activity.

Deviant behavior exhibited by online gamblers includes a range of actions considered to violate prevailing social norms. One example of behavioral disruption is gambling addiction, which refers to an individual's inability to control their urge to gamble, despite its negative impact on their personal life, financial situation, and relationships. Additionally, individuals with deviant gambling tendencies may exhibit aggressive or threatening behavior in response to losses or when experiencing high levels of stress related to their gambling activities. This deviant behavior is reflected in the increasing dependence on gambling games. Some individuals may struggle to stop their gambling habits, even when faced with a series of losses. When individuals are driven by the desire to recover their losses and find pleasure in gambling, they tend to prioritize these efforts over their daily responsibilities. Mood swings may also be a distinguishing characteristic of deviant behavior among individuals engaged in online slot gambling. Players will experience euphoria and happiness when achieving conquest. However, when facing defeat, emotions such as anxiety, stress, and frustration are common (Sriyuni et al., 2022).

These changes have the potential to impact the psychological well-being of players and their overall standard of living. Additionally, this deviant behavior has significant financial consequences. Some individuals may neglect their financial responsibilities, such as paying bills or meeting basic needs, because they continuously allocate their funds to gambling. As a result, individuals may face significant financial challenges and become burdened with unmanageable debt. The variety of online gambling games currently available offers individuals multiple options to explore this form of gambling. The influence of the surrounding environment is considered a strong factor in attracting individuals to engage in online gambling.

Based on the research findings, three forms of introduction can be identified: introduction through hanging out with friends, introduction through coworkers, and introduction through advertisements on websites. It is widely acknowledged that peers can have a significant influence on an individual's behavior and actions. The phenomenon of peer influence can have a major impact on the modification of an individual's behavior. As social beings, humans are often influenced by their interactions with others, especially with their peers.

Afterward, in terms of enjoyment, there are three main factors why someone perceives online slot gambling as enjoyable. The first reason is that individuals perceive online slot gambling as an entertainment experience. Slot games also have a high appeal in terms of the possibility of winning and make it easy for anyone to participate in the online gambling game. The third reason is that online slot gambling is easily accessible through smartphones or computers. Due to its easy access, online gambling is quite convenient to play anywhere and anytime. The research findings show that certain behavioral patterns, such as financial needs and excessive curiosity, can trigger an individual to get involved in online slot gambling. The behavior that occurs after getting introduced to online slot gambling is marked by addiction, where an individual becomes fixated on the game and experiences difficulty in controlling the urge to keep playing. Slot gambling addiction can lead to various negative impacts on an individual, including physical, mental, emotional, social, and financial consequences. Excessive involvement in slot gambling can cause various physical disorders, such as sleep deprivation, loss of appetite, and other health complications due to prolonged stress. Individuals who show signs of addiction to online slot gambling often tend to spend a lot of time playing, neglecting their other responsibilities and obligations. As a result, they may experience a decline in productivity in their daily lives.

One of the factors contributing to the popularity of online gambling is the presence of various driving factors.

1. **Economic Factors:** With numerous economic challenges, such as the difficulty of finding employment, rising food prices, inflation, and low average income, people find it hard to meet their basic needs. The factors that drive individuals to engage in online gambling are the main causes behind this. Players are motivated to gamble online because it offers an easier way to make relatively simple sacrifices in hopes of earning a large amount of money.
2. **Technological Advancements:** Due to technological progress, it has become easier for criminals to access websites that offer online gambling. Although many sites are shut down, gambling operators are not hesitant to open new online gambling sites using various methods to avoid detection by the authorities. Additionally, the advancement of financial technologies, such as mobile banking and electronic wallets, has made it easier for online gamblers to complete transactions in the online gambling arena. It has become increasingly difficult for authorities to gather evidence of online gambling transactions conducted by individuals due to the data protection policies in the financial technology industry.
3. **Environmental Factors:** An individual decisions and behavior are influenced by the environment in which they are situated. People may be encouraged to try gambling by their friends or by being in an area where there is a high concentration of online gambling activities. This is one of the challenges driving the growing number of gambling transactions, fueled by widespread media promotions and even openly supported by influencers offering tempting rewards, which has become a significant issue pushing this trend forward.

Social and Psychological Effects of Online Gambling Participants

Just like any action that has an impact, online gambling also has negative effects not only on those involved in it but also on society as a whole.

1. Psychological Impact

- a. Players who are eager to win the next game are more likely to continue gambling because they are highly motivated by the possibility of winning. This curiosity leads to addiction to the game, making it increasingly difficult for them to stop playing.
- b. Online gamblers may experience negative effects such as tension, anxiety, and even depression. Addiction to gambling is at the root of this issue. When someone constantly loses, they experience feelings of anxiety, stress, and even depression. This is because gambling creates such emotional responses. Additionally, stress and depression are caused by other behaviors, such as using other people's money to continue playing in the hope of winning, but the result is often further loss, which brings a mental burden to bear the responsibility for one's actions, leading to stress and sadness.

2. Economic Impact

Gamblers addicted to online gambling employ various strategies to obtain the funds needed to continue playing, one of which is borrowing money. Even though they suffer losses from losing the game, they still hold on to the hope that they will win in the next round. In reality, however, they experience losses in a short period. As a result, they get entangled in debt, and their financial situation becomes insecure.

3. Social Impact

- a. Increased Criminal Activity: Online gambling not only poses significant risks to individuals but also contributes to the rise in criminal activities. Numerous cases have been reported where money, both from individuals and companies, is stolen and used as capital for online gambling by the offenders.
- b. Social Isolation: Gambling addiction causes individuals to withdraw from social interactions with their closest friends and family. Moreover, online gambling addiction can also damage relationships with others, either due to debt or because of the personality changes that occur in the individual (Bakhtiar & Adilah, 2024).

Analysis of Differential Association Theory in Deviant Behavior in Online Gambling Practices

This study aims to analyze the relationship between Differential Association Theory and deviant behavior that emerges in online gambling practices in Sukasari District, Bandung City.

1. Online Gambling through Social Environment

Online gambling among teenagers in Sukasari is heavily influenced by social interactions within peer groups. Edwin H. Sutherland's Differential Association Theory posits that deviant behavior, such as gambling, is not only learned through personal experience but also through social relationships with individuals or groups already engaged in such behavior. In the context of online gambling, teenagers who first encounter these activities are generally introduced to it by peers who are already familiar with or involved in online gambling practices. Most adolescents involved in online gambling in Sukasari reported that they initially became aware of gambling through their friendships and interactions with peer groups who

were already engaged in the activity. Peers with prior experience often serve as a source of information, teaching others how to play and introducing them to specific gambling sites or apps. In this sense, peer groups function as agents of behavior formation, transmitting values and norms that support gambling behavior.

A social environment that is saturated with peer groups who view gambling as a casual or even profitable activity can foster an atmosphere that encourages deviant behavior. Adolescents who are not involved in online gambling may feel socially isolated or "out of touch," and the pressure from peers can ultimately lead them to try gambling and, in many cases, become entangled in it. Moreover, the phenomenon of online gambling often takes place in hangout spots or cafés that serve as meeting points for teenagers, such as Café X in Sukasari. At such places, teenagers gather in social groups that either endorse or even actively encourage online gambling practices. This learning process about gambling is further reinforced through discussions among peers, where they exchange experiences, tricks, and tips for engaging in online gambling.

2. The Influence of Positive and Negative Reinforcement from Peer Groups

In the context of online gambling among teenagers in Sukasari, both positive and negative reinforcements from peer groups play a significant role in reinforcing gambling behavior. According to Edwin H. Sutherland's **Differential Association Theory**, deviant behavior is learned and maintained through the social interactions individuals have with those who support or promote such behavior. Peer groups, therefore, serve as powerful sources of reinforcement, either encouraging or deterring participation in activities like online gambling.

Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement refers to the rewards or benefits that teenagers receive from their involvement in online gambling. In the case of online gambling, the most apparent form of positive reinforcement is the **potential for monetary gain**. Teenagers who win while gambling online often experience a sense of excitement, validation, and social recognition within their peer group. These positive outcomes reinforce the idea that gambling is a rewarding and acceptable behavior, encouraging them to continue participating.

Peers who have already gained experience with online gambling often share their success stories with others, highlighting the thrill of winning and the monetary rewards involved. This creates a social dynamic where gambling is seen as not only an enjoyable activity but also a means of achieving financial success or social status within the group. This form of positive reinforcement strengthens the desire to continue engaging in online gambling, as teenagers are motivated by the rewards, both tangible and intangible, that gambling can bring.

Negative Reinforcement

On the other hand, **negative reinforcement** plays a key role in perpetuating gambling behavior, especially when teenagers feel compelled to conform to the expectations of their peer group. In this context, negative reinforcement occurs when teenagers feel pressure to continue gambling to avoid being **ostracized** or rejected by their peers. For example, those who hesitate to join in may face ridicule, exclusion, or teasing, which can motivate them to engage in gambling to avoid social isolation. This pressure can be particularly potent when a group of peers actively participates in online gambling, making it seem like a norm or an expectation for social belonging.

In some cases, teenagers may also experience negative reinforcement in the form of **avoidance of unpleasant emotions** such as boredom, stress, or anxiety. Online gambling offers a temporary escape from these negative feelings, and the more adolescents use gambling as a coping mechanism, the more they are reinforced to continue the behavior. This reinforcement mechanism can create a cycle where gambling becomes a regular part of their coping strategies, further embedding the behavior into their social and emotional lives.

The Interplay of Positive and Negative Reinforcement

Both forms of reinforcement—positive and negative—work together to sustain the practice of online gambling. Positive reinforcement, such as the stimulation of winning or the prestige of being an experienced gambler within the peer group, makes the activity attractive and desirable. Meanwhile, negative reinforcement, such as avoiding social rejection or escaping from negative emotions, compels teenagers to continue gambling even when the initial excitement wanes. This combination of factors ensures that gambling becomes a persistent behavior, further normalized within the peer group.

3. The Influence of Physical and Social Environment on Adolescents

The physical and social environment surrounding teenagers plays a significant role in shaping their involvement in online gambling in Sukasari. From a physical perspective, places such as cafés and other public spaces serve as gathering points for teenagers, facilitating their access to electronic devices like smartphones and laptops, which are commonly used for online gambling. Cafés like Café X have become popular spots for teens to congregate late at night, often engaging in online gambling until the early hours of the morning. Moreover, the easy access to digital devices in these spaces enables teenagers to gamble with minimal supervision from parents or authorities. Socially, peer groups play a crucial role in introducing and reinforcing gambling behaviors. Teenagers are highly influenced by the norms and values that emerge within their peer groups, where gambling is often seen as a normal or even enjoyable activity. Discussions about winnings or gambling strategies among friends further solidify the perception that gambling is an accepted and common practice within their social circle. Thus, the interplay between a physical environment that facilitates access to gambling and a social environment that supports the behavior creates an ecosystem that reinforces teenagers engagement in online gambling.

5. CONCLUSION

The practice of online gambling among teenagers in Sukasari is the causes of intense social interaction among peers. Social factors, such as peer influence, interaction intensity, and the reinforcement of values within their environment, contribute to the spread of this deviant behavior. Online gambling is also influenced by the ease of technological access, economic factors, and a lack of supervision from families and authorities. The negative impacts of online gambling extend beyond psychological issues such as addiction, stress, and depression, to economic problems like unmanageable debts and social isolation. Teenagers involved in online gambling tend to experience behavioral changes, a loss of productivity, and strained social relationships.

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