

Online Gambling as an Economic Escape: A Qualitative Study of the Community in Serang City

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ABSTRACT

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The phenomenon of online gambling has seen significant growth in Indonesia, including in Serang City, particularly amid economic pressures. This study aims to explore in depth how the people of Serang City use online gambling as an economic escape. A qualitative approach was employed with a case study method, involving in depth interviews with 15 participants who actively engage in online gambling. The results indicate that online gambling is seen as an economic alternative due to financial pressures, limited job opportunities, and easy access to technology. The study also reveals the presence of addiction cycles and social vulnerability resulting from this practice. These findings are interpreted through the lens of Strain Theory (Merton) and Rational Choice Theory, which explain individual actions in response to economic constraints. The implications of this research suggest the need for strengthened digital literacy, law enforcement, and community-based interventions.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In recent years, online gambling has seen a significant rise in Indonesia, including in Serang City. The easy access to digital technology, widespread internet penetration, and the availability of various mobile-based gambling applications have created new avenues for gambling activities. According to the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2023), internet penetration in Indonesia has reached 79.5% [1], with Banten province, where Serang is located, showing a notable increase in internet users.

On the other hand, economic pressures have become a dominant factor driving individuals to seek "shortcut" methods to fulfill their daily needs [2]. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) for Serang City in 2023 reports an open unemployment rate of 9.41%, which is higher than the provincial average for Banten. Furthermore, the Poverty Depth Index (P1) increased from 1.17 in 2022 to 1.38 in 2023, indicating a deepening economic gap in the region .

The worsening economic situation has prompted some members of the community

to turn to online gambling as a quick economic escape. Online gambling is perceived as an easy way to make money in a short period without requiring specific skills. A study by found that individuals with lower levels of education and economic difficulties are more likely to engage in online gambling, particularly when access to formal employment opportunities is limited.

Additionally, the proliferation of advertisements and promotions for online gambling on digital platforms has strengthened its appeal. These ads often emphasize narratives such as "big wins" and "financial freedom" that can supposedly be achieved quickly, despite the reality that most participants end up facing losses. This phenomenon aligns with Merton's Strain Theory (1938), which posits that individuals experiencing social strain due to the gap between their goals and available means are more likely to resort to alternative, often unconventional actions, such as gambling.

In the context of Serang City, online gambling is no longer merely a form of entertainment but has become a "survival strategy" in the face of economic pressure. Preliminary findings from this study also indicate a correlation between the increase in online gambling activity and rising prices for basic necessities, educational costs, and unemployment levels.

This phenomenon is concerning, as it not only results in personal financial losses but also generates other social issues, such as family conflicts, child neglect, and criminal activities to cover gambling losses. A study by suggests that online gambling also increases the risk of digital addiction, stress, and depression, particularly among lower-income communities with limited access to mental health services.

Therefore, this study is crucial for gaining a deeper understanding of how the people of Serang City perceive online gambling as an economic escape, as well as how this practice is reshaping the social structure of the community. This research aims to contribute empirical evidence that can help formulate more effective and community-based strategies for addressing this issue.

1.2. Research Questions

Based on the background outlined above, there is a complex set of issues underlying the rise of online gambling as an economic escape among the residents of Serang City. This phenomenon is not only related to economic factors but also intersects with social, psychological, and digital cultural dimensions.

Considering the preliminary findings from previous studies and the local context of Serang City, the research questions for this study are formulated as follows:

1. How do the residents of Serang City construct the meaning of online gambling as an economic escape?
2. What are the primary factors driving the people of Serang City to engage in online gambling?
3. How do online gambling behaviors evolve within the community of Serang City, and what are the social and economic impacts on the individuals involved?

1.3. Objectives and Scope

1.3.1. Research Objectives

This study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of online gambling as an economic escape among the residents of Serang City. The primary focus is on gaining a holistic understanding of the motivations, behaviors, and the social and economic impacts resulting from this practice.

Specifically, the objectives of this research include:

1. Exploring the construction of meaning among the people of Serang City regarding online gambling as an economic escape.
2. Identifying the key factors driving the residents of Serang City to engage in online gambling.
3. Analyzing the patterns of online gambling behaviors in Serang City, including frequency, types of games played, and methods of financial involvement.
4. Investigating the social and economic impacts of online gambling on individuals' personal lives, families, and social environments.
5. Assessing the level of risk awareness among the people of Serang City regarding their involvement in online gambling activities.

1.3.2. Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is designed to be focused yet comprehensive, ensuring both the depth of analysis and relevance to the social context of Serang City. The scope includes:

1. Geographical Area: This study is focused on the administrative region of Serang City, Banten Province, specifically targeting sub-districts with relatively high levels of poverty and unemployment, such as Kasemen, Walantaka, and Cipocok Jaya.
2. Respondent Characteristics:
 - Individuals of productive age (20–50 years) who have been actively involved in online gambling for at least the past six months.
 - Respondents from lower to middle economic backgrounds, particularly those who turn to online gambling as a means of generating additional income or escaping economic pressures.
 - Both male and female participants who use online gambling platforms, either mobile applications or websites.
3. Types of Online Gambling Examined: The study focuses on forms of online gambling involving real-money transactions, including:
 - Online slots
 - Sports betting
 - Online card games involving money (e.g., poker, domino QQ, etc.)

4. **Social and Economic Context:** This research is concentrated on individuals facing genuine economic pressures, such as unemployment, layoffs, debt, and high living costs (e.g., educational expenses for children, basic necessities).
5. **Time Frame of the Study:** Field data will be collected over a six-month period, from January to June 2025, to capture the dynamics of gambling behavior in real time.
- 6.

2. Literature Review

The phenomenon of online gambling as an economic escape has become an increasingly important area of study, particularly in the context of rising internet access and the digitization of financial systems.

2.1. Related Research

Several studies have examined the factors that drive individuals to engage in online gambling, focusing on psychological, economic, social, and cultural aspects. The following are some relevant studies referenced in this research:

2.1.1. Online Gambling as an Economic Escape

A study by found that online gamblers tend to come from economically pressured groups, such as the unemployed, informal workers, or those with low incomes. They view online gambling as a "shortcut" to improving their financial situation. The study revealed that over 60% of online gamblers are motivated by financial reasons rather than recreation or entertainment.

This finding is supported by, who researched the relationship between financial difficulties and online gambling in the UK. The study concluded that financial strain is a key factor driving individuals to engage in online gambling, with those experiencing financial hardship being 2.5 times more likely to participate in online gambling compared to individuals without financial pressure.

2.1.2. Psychological Factors in Online Gambling

Griffiths & Parke (2003) discussed the psychological mechanisms that make online gambling particularly appealing, including its high accessibility, time flexibility, and the privacy it offers[3]. Online gambling allows individuals to play anytime and anywhere [4], which indirectly increases gambling frequency, particularly among those experiencing economic depression.

A study by also identified cognitive distortions among gamblers, where they believe they have control over the outcomes of games, even though gambling results are entirely based on chance (Nasional et al., n.d.).

2.1.3. Social Impacts of Online Gambling

In research by in Australia, it was found that the social impacts of online gambling affect not only the participants but also their family members. Gamblers often experience domestic conflicts, mental health issues, and social isolation. Those involved in online gambling also tend to have higher levels of stress

compared to non-gamblers [5].

2.2. Research Gaps

With the growing academic interest in the phenomenon of online gambling in Indonesia, several previous studies have examined different aspects of online gambling, such as legal, economic, psychological, and technological dimensions. However, studies specifically addressing online gambling as an economic escape in urban communities, particularly in the local context of Serang City, remain scarce.

2.3. General and Global Focus of Previous Research

Most prior studies have focused on online gambling at a national or general level, without delving into the local dynamics of smaller urban areas or peripheral metropolitan regions like Serang City. For instance, research by Kurniawan & Nugroho (2022) explored the relationship between economic pressure and online gambling behaviors in major cities like Jakarta and Surabaya [6]. However, these studies did not specifically address how local contexts such as the unique social and economic culture of Serang City shape gambling behaviors.

2.4. Lack of Qualitative Studies Exploring the Subjective Perspectives of Participants

Most previous studies have used quantitative methods, which tend to emphasize statistical data on behavior or prevalence rates, rather than exploring in-depth the motivations, perceptions, and subjective experiences of gamblers. For example, research by Sulistyowati (2023) focused on the correlation between online gambling and stress and depression, but did not explain how gamblers consciously perceive online gambling as an economic strategy or life escape [5].

In the context of urban communities such as Serang City, which experience social and economic inequality, a phenomenological qualitative approach is crucial for understanding the meanings that individuals attach to this practice.

2.5. Research Gap on Economic Behavior Patterns in Online Gambling in Mid-Sized Urban Areas

Studies revealing the economic behavior patterns of online gamblers such as how they mobilize capital, manage gambling outcomes, and develop coping strategies for losses are still rare, particularly in second-tier cities like Serang.

Many studies focus on gambling as a social deviance or a legal violation, but fail to comprehensively analyze online gambling as a "deliberate economic strategy" chosen by low-income communities.

2.6. Lack of Integrated Studies on Digital, Economic, and Social Factor

The phenomenon of online gambling in the digital era requires an interdisciplinary approach; however, research combining economic, social, and technological perspectives simultaneously is still quite rare. Previous studies tend to focus on a single aspect, such as:

- Economic studies: Online gambling as a factor contributing to debt.
- Legal studies: Analysis of regulations and law enforcement.

- Psychological studies: Addiction to online gambling.

This research aims to fill this gap by adopting a holistic approach that integrates economic factors (poverty, unemployment), social factors (norms, social relations), and digital factors (internet access, gambling applications), particularly in Serang City.

2.7. Lack of Studies Focusing on Participants' Risk Awareness

Most previous studies do not highlight the level of risk awareness among online gamblers. However, understanding this awareness is crucial to grasp why individuals continue to gamble despite knowing the potential consequences.

This study specifically investigates the extent to which online gamblers understand the economic, legal, and social risks associated with their activities, and how this awareness shapes the gambling behavior cycle they engage in.

Table 2.2. Research Gaps

Aspect	Previous Research	Gap Addressed by This Study
Geographical Focus	General, major cities	Local focus on Serang City
Approach	Predominantly quantitative	In-depth qualitative approach (phenomenological)
Perspective	General (social deviance, legal)	Online gambling as an economic escape
Integration of Factors	Fragmented	Interdisciplinary: economic, social, and digital factors
Risk Awareness	Minimally discussed	Special focus on risk awareness among participants

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach using phenomenological methods, aiming to deeply explore the experiences, meanings, and subjective constructions of the community in Serang City regarding online gambling as an economic escape. Phenomenology is used to uncover the life world of participants, which cannot be explained through statistics, but requires an understanding of the participants' personal perspectives in their entirety.

3.1. Data Collection

The study employs three primary techniques to gather rich and in-depth data:

a. In-Depth Interviews

The main method in this research is semi-structured in-depth interviews, which are flexible and exploratory. These interviews are designed to explore:

- The main motivations for engaging in online gambling.

- The decision-making process regarding gambling.
- The construction of meaning of online gambling as an economic escape.
- Personal experiences while engaging in online gambling, both positive and negative.
- The perceived impacts, whether economic, social, or psychological.
- The participants' awareness of the risks associated with online gambling.
- A minimum of 12 participants will be involved, with the following criteria:
- Aged 20-50 years.
- Actively engaged in online gambling for at least the past 6 months.
- From a lower-middle-income background.
- Residing in Serang City.

Snowball sampling will be employed to identify hard-to-reach participants due to the secretive nature of gambling [7]

b. Non-Participant Observation

The researcher will also conduct non-participant observation of the social environments of gamblers to understand:

- Communication patterns among gamblers (e.g., in coffee shops, gathering spots).
- Interactions between gamblers and their families or communities.
- The locations where gambling typically takes place (homes, internet cafes, workplaces).

Field notes will be systematically compiled.

c. Digital Documentation

The documentation of digital materials will include:

- Screenshots of online gambling applications or websites used by participants.
- Online conversations related to gambling practices.
- Local data or news regarding online gambling activities in Serang City.

This documentation will support data triangulation.

3.2. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in this study will follow Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), with the following steps [8]:

a. Interview Transcription

All interviews will be recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy.

b. Repeated Reading (Immersion)

The researcher will read the transcriptions multiple times to absorb the overall meaning and understand the context of the participants' experiences.

c. Initial Coding

Initial themes emerging from the participants' narratives will be identified, such as:

- Economic motivations.

- Addiction patterns.
- Gambling strategies.
- Expectations and disappointments.

d. Thematic Mapping

Initial themes will be grouped into larger, interconnected categories. The main focus will be on:

- The construction of meaning of online gambling.
- Economic and social motivations.
- Economic and social impacts.
- Risk awareness.

e. Deep Interpretation

The researcher will provide a deep interpretation to formulate the “essence” or essence of the participants' experiences.

3.3. Data Validation

To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, this study applies the following validation strategies:

- a. Source Triangulation: Combining data from interviews, observations, and documentation to check the consistency of the information obtained.
- b. Member Checking: The transcripts and preliminary findings will be confirmed with participants to ensure the accuracy of the narratives and interpretations.
- c. Peer Debriefing: Discussions with other researchers or experts in qualitative methodology will be conducted to test the coherence and consistency of the analysis.
- d. Audit Trail: All stages of the research process, from data collection to analysis, will be documented in detail to maintain transparency in the research process.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Key Findings

This section presents the main findings from the research regarding the phenomenon of online gambling as an economic escape in Serang City. Based on in-depth interviews with online gambling participants and field observations, several key findings emerged that illustrate the motivations, socio-economic conditions, psychological impacts, and the gambling behavior dynamics within the community.

4.1.1. Motivation as a Primary Driver

The main finding from the interviews reveals that most participants are driven to gamble due to economic pressure. Many of them perceive online gambling as the fastest and easiest way to make money, even though they are aware of the potential for significant losses.

For instance, Hendra (pseudonym) (35, online motorcycle taxi driver)

shared that he started gambling online due to financial difficulties after losing his permanent job:

"I started gambling online because of my situation. I used to work in a factory, but I got laid off. At that time, I didn't know what to do, debts were piling up, expenses were high, and at the same time, I had to feed my wife and kids. So, I started trying online gambling. They said it could make quick money."

This reveals how financial pressure becomes a strong motivator for Hendra and many others to view online gambling as a temporary solution.

4.1.2. Perception of Online Gambling as an "Alternative Business"

Or many participants, online gambling is not just a form of entertainment but an "alternative business" that is expected to provide quick profits. They view it as a supplementary income source, although in practice, many end up facing losses.

Siti (pseudonym) (28, office worker) stated:

"I have tried all sorts of ways to increase my income, but it's exhausting. Then, a friend invited me to play online gambling, saying you could win big. At first, I didn't believe it, but eventually, I gave it a try just for fun. But now, I'm playing constantly."

In this case, Siti reveals a shift in her perception, from trying it out casually to becoming more serious about online gambling as a short-term solution to her financial problems.

4.1.3. Social and Psychological Impacts

The interviews also revealed that online gambling has significant impacts on the social relationships of participants. Many reported tensions in their relationships with family, particularly with spouses and children, due to gambling losses. Psychologically, participants often experience anxiety and stress, especially after losing large sums of money.

"I have lost a lot before. It made me stressed, even bringing that feeling home. My kid asked, 'Dad, why do you look so tired?' And my wife often complains, 'Why do you always spend money on gambling?' I think this is destroying my family, but sometimes it's hard to stop."

Ari (pseudonym), 35 years old, factory worker

"When I lose, I sometimes feel worthless. On the outside, I seem fine, but inside, I feel like a failure because I've spent so much money. It stresses me out a lot, and it often causes problems with my wife."

Rudi (pseudonym), 40 years old, small business owner

The quotes from Ari and Rudi illustrate how stress and anxiety are common psychological effects of online gambling, which frequently affect their family relationships and worsen their emotional state.

4.1.4. Limited Risk Awareness

Most participants admitted to being aware of the risks associated with online gambling, both financial and legal, but continued their activities due to a strong desire for quick profits. Some participants also stated that they tended to ignore or underestimate the potential losses they might incur.

Fahmi (pseudonym) (33, daily laborer) shared:

"Sometimes I think, this is dangerous. If I keep losing, I could go bankrupt. But then again, I feel like I could make money quickly here. If I compare it to working hard outside, online gambling feels more worth it, even though I know the risks are huge."

Fahmi's statement reveals the limited awareness of the risks involved, which is rooted in economic uncertainty, forcing participants to continuously seek quick solutions despite the risks.

4.1.5. Gambling Patterns and Coping Strategies

Many participants have developed specific strategies to manage their gambling. Some prefer to start with small bets, hoping to accumulate capital before placing larger bets, while others rely on strategies of luck.

"For me, I usually start small. I place small bets first, waiting to feel lucky before betting bigger. But if I lose a lot, I get more desperate. It feels like I have to win to recover the losses. Sometimes, I end up spending all my money trying to get back to break-even." Ari (pseudonym).

This pattern illustrates how online gamblers attempt to control their losses by starting with small bets but often find themselves trapped in a cycle of desperation to recover their losses, ultimately worsening their financial condition.

4.2. Interpretation of Results

This section deepens the analysis of how the findings from the interviews and observations can be understood in a broader context (Hasanah, 2016), and explores the social, economic, and psychological implications of online gambling as an economic escape in Serang City. The interviews with online gambling participants provide a more complex picture of the motivations, behaviors, and impacts of gambling, which are not only related to financial gains but also tied to the social and mental conditions of the participants.

4.2.1. Online Gambling as an Economic Solution

In-depth findings reveal that for many individuals involved in online gambling, it is not merely a form of entertainment but an instant solution to their economic problems. In the context of Serang City, where the economy largely depends on the informal sector and daily wage workers, many online gamblers feel trapped in a cycle of financial uncertainty. They face difficulties in meeting basic needs, such as paying off debts, funding their children's education, or supporting their families.

As Hendra shared, he viewed online gambling as a shortcut to earning money quickly after losing his permanent job. Most participants feel pressured by their economic situations and regard online gambling as a quicker opportunity compared to other methods they find ineffective.

However, while online gambling provides the illusion of quick profits, it

does not last long and often leads to more losses. This dependency arises from the tendency to seek instant solutions, which psychologically worsens their mental state. Deep economic hardship becomes the main reason why online gambling becomes so tempting, and at the same time, it adds psychological burdens for the participants.

4.2.2. Cycle of Addiction and Loss of Control

One recurring pattern in the interviews is the strong cycle of dependency on online gambling. Many participants admitted that they became addicted after experiencing a few wins. Despite recognizing the losses, they continued gambling in the hope of winning back the money they had lost, or "breaking even." This creates a vicious circle where they lose more money but remain attached to the hope of a big win that could change their financial situation.

The examples of Ari and Rudi, who repeatedly faced significant losses, demonstrate how anxiety and stress permeate their involvement in gambling. They feel as if they are trapped in a psychological trap that they cannot escape, leading to feelings of low self-worth and failure.

Although the participants were aware of the high risk of losing, they continued gambling. This can be explained by the concept of distorted cognition in gambling psychology, where gamblers believe they can beat the odds or get lucky by betting larger amounts. This psychological influence is what keeps them engaged in gambling, despite the overwhelming risks involved.

4.2.3. Economic Uncertainty and the Desire for Quick Profits

economic uncertainty faced by Serang's population greatly contributes to why online gambling appears to be a promising option for some. Many participants expressed that their daily jobs were insufficient to meet their family's needs or to cover mounting debts.

As Fahmi explained, the perception that online gambling offers a quick solution is a major factor that attracted him. His desire to make quick profits with a small initial investment, without the need to deal with long working hours, made online gambling an appealing choice. Although he rationally understood the risks, the urge to improve his economic condition quickly outweighed the awareness of the potential negative consequences.

This is supported by previous research, which found that in conditions of economic uncertainty, individuals tend to seek alternatives that they believe can offer fast and tangible results, even with high risks (Cheng, 2017). Many online gamblers likely have traumatic experiences related to their economic struggles, making them more vulnerable to taking higher risks in pursuit of quick outcomes, even if it means sacrificing mental and social stability.

4.2.4. Overlooked Social Impacts

Socially, online gambling also brings significant negative impacts, especially in interpersonal relationships. As seen in the interview quotes from Ari

and Rudi, many participants feel that gambling interferes with their relationships with family and partners. Domestic tensions arise from the financial losses incurred through online gambling, creating stress and frustration in everyday life. These conflicts are often exacerbated by the reluctance to quit gambling, leading to further deterioration in relationships.

Although online gambling is viewed as a personal escape, it indirectly worsens social tensions surrounding the participants. They become more withdrawn, often avoiding discussions about their gambling losses, and frequently hide their gambling activities from their spouses or families. The recurring cycle of financial failure affects the well-being of the family, and the inability to cope with these social impacts often worsens the participants' mental health.

4.2.5. Influence of Social Environment and Gambling Socialization

The interviews also showed that peer influence and the social environment play a significant role in encouraging individuals to engage in online gambling. Some participants mentioned that they started gambling due to invitations from friends or information received from others who suggested that online gambling could be a quick way to make money. Once they joined the online gambling community, they increasingly felt that gambling was a social norm, even though they were aware of its high-risk nature.

This reflects the theory of social reinforcement, where individuals are more likely to engage in activities that are supported or normalized by their social environment, even if those activities have long-term negative consequences.

The results from these interviews provide a clear picture of how online gambling is perceived as an economic escape by residents of Serang City, who are struggling with financial hardships. The desire for quick profits overrides the awareness of long-term risks, which is why many participants become trapped in an addictive gambling cycle. Moreover, there are significant social impacts, both in familial relationships and the quality of life for the participants. Dependency on gambling worsens their mental health, while social influence further strengthens their gambling behaviors. Therefore, this study highlights the importance of interventions that not only focus on educating people about the risks of gambling but also provide more stable economic alternatives to reduce the public's reliance on online gambling.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study will be analyzed in greater depth in relation to existing theories and compared with previous research. We will also identify the limitations of this study and provide recommendations for further, more comprehensive research. This discussion aims to offer further insights into the social, economic, and psychological dynamics underlying the behavior of online gambling as an economic escape in Serang City.

5.1. Comparison with Previous Research

Based on the results of this study, there are several similarities and differences with previous studies that examine online gambling phenomena, both from social-

economic and psychological perspectives.

5.1.1. Economic Motivation as the Primary Driver

Previous studies, such as those by Korn & Shaffer (2015), indicate that one of the main motivations for online gambling is the desire to improve financial conditions quickly [9]. The findings of this study also confirm that, in the midst of economic difficulties experienced by most participants, online gambling becomes a promising option for making fast money. Hendra (35 years old), who experienced job termination, described how online gambling became an "economic escape" that seemed to offer new hope.

However, research by Griffiths & Parke (2003) emphasized that while there is a desire for financial gain, many participants eventually fall into patterns of addiction [4]. This study also found that most participants struggle to control their behavior despite being aware of the associated risks. These findings are similar to previous studies showing that gambling is not only linked to economic issues but also to psychological dependence.

5.1.2. Psychological and Social Impacts

Several studies, such as those conducted by Ladouceur & Walker (1996), highlight the psychological impacts of gambling, including stress, anxiety, and depression, which align with the findings of this study. The participants interviewed expressed frustration and anxiety after losing substantial amounts of money in gambling. Ari and Rudi described how gambling led to feelings of failure, which worsened their mental state. This study acknowledges the direct connection between socio-economic pressure and mental health, which in turn exacerbates the social dynamics within their households.

In previous research by Smith et al. (2013), it was found that individuals who engage in online gambling are often socially isolated and more vulnerable to experiencing social anxiety [10]. Similar findings were found in this study, where participants experienced tension in their social relationships, especially with their partners and families. Siti and Ari revealed how they avoided discussing their gambling losses with their families, which created emotional distance in their household relationships.

5.1.3. Limited Risk Awareness

Research by Slutske et al. (2010) also showed that although many gamblers are aware of the potential for significant losses, they tend to ignore or downplay these risks [11]. Fahmi (33 years old) admitted that despite knowing gambling could result in severe losses, he continued gambling due to economic pressure. This reflects the phenomenon of distorted cognition, where individuals believe they have more control over gambling outcomes than they actually do.

This study also demonstrated a limited awareness of risks, often influenced by a mindset focused on luck or instant gratification, which underlies their decision to continue gambling. These findings align with research by Dowling et

al. (2018), who noted that gambling addiction often arises from emotional and cognitive influences that obscure a rational understanding of the consequences of gambling [12].

5.2. Limitations

While this study provides significant insights into the phenomenon of online gambling as an economic escape, there are several limitations that should be noted:

5.2.1. Sample Limitations

This study used interview techniques with online gambling participants in Serang City, allowing for an in-depth understanding of local experiences. However, the limited sample size may not be representative of the entire population involved in online gambling, either demographically or socio-economically. Therefore, the results of this study may not fully reflect the patterns of online gambling in other cities or across different age groups.

5.2.2. Subjective Perspective Limitations

Although in-depth interviews provide rich information about the personal perceptions of online gamblers, these findings tend to rely on subjective narratives. Despite efforts to minimize bias, individual experiences may vary based on personal and social factors. Thus, the findings are qualitative in nature and may not be fully generalizable to the broader population of online gamblers.

5.2.3. The Influence of Time and Changing Dynamics

The phenomenon of online gambling can change rapidly over time, especially with technological developments and regulatory changes. This study was conducted over a specific period, so it is possible that there have been changes in gambling trends or the accessibility of online gambling platforms that are not covered by this research. The rapidly growing digital gambling trends in society may have a greater impact in the future, warranting further research.

5.3. Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several directions for future research can be proposed:

5.3.1. Quantitative Research

A broader, quantitative study is needed to explore the causal relationships between economic and psychological factors that influence online gambling behavior. By involving a larger, more representative sample of online gamblers, future research could delve deeper into how economic conditions influence gambling intensity, as well as factors such as risk perception and addictive behaviors.

5.3.2. Intervention and Prevention

Research focused on strategies for intervention and prevention to help online gamblers overcome their addiction should be conducted. This study found that many online gamblers struggle to quit even though they are aware of the

negative impacts, so developing psychological counseling programs and economic empowerment initiatives is crucial.

5.3.3. Regional Comparisons

Further research could compare different regions to explore whether the phenomenon of online gambling as an economic escape occurs in other cities with different socio-economic characteristics. This would provide a deeper understanding of how social and economic contexts influence gambling tendencies at the broader regional level.

This study demonstrates that the phenomenon of online gambling as an economic escape in Serang City is heavily influenced by the socio-economic pressures of the community. While these findings align with many previous studies, they also open avenues for further research into effective ways to prevent gambling addiction and provide better livelihood alternatives for those trapped in financial difficulties. Moreover, these findings emphasize the importance of social and economic policies in reducing individuals' vulnerability to online gambling.

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