

# Digital Dice: Unpacking the Psychological and Sociodemographic Predictors of Online Gambling Among University Students\*

Dijital Zarlar: Üniversite Öğrencileri Arasında Çevrim İçi Kumar Davranışlarının Psikolojik ve Sosyodemografik Yordayıcılarının Analizi

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the psychological, sociodemographic, and value-based correlates of online gambling addiction among university students. Specifically, the research explores how material values (happiness and success), psychological resilience, and behavioral experiences influence the "addiction" subdimension of the Online Gambling Addiction Scale (OGAS). A total of 415 undergraduate students participated in the study using a convenience sampling method. Data were collected via self-report instruments including the OGAS, the

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Material Values Scale (MVS), and the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS). Descriptive statistics, non-parametric tests, Spearman's correlation, and multiple linear regression analyses were performed. The results revealed that motivation and negative psychological states were the strongest predictors of online gambling addiction. While the "happiness" subdimension of material values had a weak but significant predictive effect, the "centrality and success" dimension and psychological resilience were not significant predictors. Furthermore, male gender, smoking and alcohol use, and having close social contacts involved in online gambling were associated with higher addiction scores. The findings suggest that online gambling among university students is reinforced not only by individual psychological vulnerabilities but also by value orientations and environmental factors. This study offers insights for the development of targeted psychoeducational and preventive interventions that address material values and enhance emotional resilience.

**Keywords:** Online gambling addiction, Material values, Psychological resilience, University students

## ÖZ

Bu çalışma, üniversite öğrencileri arasında çevrim içi kumar bağımlılığının psikolojik, sosyodemografik ve değer temelli ilişkilerini incelemektedir. Özellikle, maddi değerlerin (mutluluk ve başarı), psikolojik dayanıklılığın ve davranışsal deneyimlerin Çevrim İçi Kumar Bağımlılığı Ölçeği'nin (ÇKBÖ) "bağımlılık" alt boyutunu nasıl etkilediği araştırılmaktadır. Araştırmaya kolayda örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak toplam 415 lisans öğrencisi katılmıştır. Veriler, ÇKBÖ, Maddi Değerler Ölçeği (MDÖ) ve Kısa Psikolojik Dayanıklılık Ölçeği (KPDO) dahil olmak üzere öz-bildirim araçları yoluyla toplanmıştır. Betimleyici istatistikler, parametrik olmayan testler, Spearman korelasyonu ve çoklu doğrusal regresyon analizleri gerçekleştirilmiştir. Sonuçlar, motivasyon ve olumsuz psikolojik durumların çevrim içi kumar bağımlılığının en güçlü yordayıcıları olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Maddi değerlerin "mutluluk" alt boyutu zayıf fakat anlamlı bir yordayıcı etkiye sahipken, "merkezilik ve başarı" boyutu ile psikolojik dayanıklılık anlamlı yordayıcılar değildir. Ayrıca, erkek cinsiyet, sigara ve alkol kullanımı ile çevrim içi kumara karışmış yakın sosyal ilişkilerin bulunması daha yüksek bağımlılık puanlarıyla ilişkilendirilmiştir. Bulgular, üniversite öğrencileri arasında çevrim içi kumarın yalnızca bireysel psikolojik kırılganlıklarla değil, aynı zamanda değer yönelimleri ve çevresel etkenlerle de pekiştirildiğini göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, maddi değerlere yönelik müdahaleleri ve duygusal dayanıklılığı artırmayı amaçlayan hedefe yönelik psiko-eğitsel ve önleyici müdahalelerin geliştirilmesi için içgörüler sunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Çevrim içi kumar bağımlılığı, Maddi değerler, Psikolojik dayanıklılık, Üniversite öğrencileri

## INTRODUCTION

Gambling is defined as the act of risking significant resources based on the belief that a certain gain will be obtained. Online gambling addiction, on the other hand, is a psychiatric disorder characterized by a progressive increase in gambling behavior over time and the continuation of such behavior despite unsuccessful attempts to quit (Gainsbury, 2012). According to the World Health Organization, gambling addiction has shown a rapid global increase in recent years and has become a rapidly spreading public health issue, particularly among young individuals (WHO, 2024). In line with global statistics, there is growing concern in the literature that gambling behavior is rising in Türkiye (Salamzade & Kovan, 2025; Kovan, 2024). This prevalence is primarily driven by technological advancements, digitalization, and the ease of access to online gambling platforms (Gainsbury, 2012; Gainsbury et al., 2013).

There are numerous factors that increase the addictive potential of games played over the Internet. Chief among these are the platforms' 24/7 accessibility, the ability to facilitate rapid money transfers, the provision of anonymity, the fast-paced, real-time, and interactive design of the games, and their reliance on behavioral learning principles such as intermittent reinforcement (Zhong et al., 2024; Hing et al., 2022; Gainsbury et al., 2013). In addition, structural factors that reinforce addictive behavior include legal loopholes, the normalization and legalization of online gambling, intensive advertising efforts, and

the transformation of the gambling industry into a large-scale global market (Zhong et al., 2024; Garzola, 2024; Chóliz, 2016). Research has also shown that online gambling leads to addiction more quickly and severely than traditional forms of gambling (Zhong et al., 2024; Ghelfi et al., 2024; Gainsbury, 2012). However, findings regarding the extent to which individual attitudes and psychological variables play a role in this process are not yet sufficiently systematic (Moreira et al., 2023).

University students constitute a high-risk group for online gambling due to factors such as the widespread use of the Internet, spending considerable time in digital environments, and a developmental tendency toward risk-taking (Moreira et al., 2023; Manian et al., 2024). Recent studies have revealed significant associations between online gambling addiction and various demographic variables. Being male, younger in age, single, having a lower level of education and income, having children, or being in the early stages of marriage are among the prominent risk factors (Ghelfi et al., 2024; Manian et al., 2024; Garzola, 2024; Moreira et al., 2023). Moreover, strong correlations have been reported between online gambling addiction and psychological variables such as impulsivity, smoking, alcohol and substance use, depression, anxiety, self-harming behavior, attention deficit, and hyperactivity disorder (Wirkus et al., 2024; Ghelfi et al., 2024).

The importance individuals place on material values is also a noteworthy psychosocial factor in relation to gambling behav-

ior. In particular, the association of happiness and success with material gain can lead to the perception of gambling as a legitimate means to achieve such outcomes (Eyzop et al., 2018; Houghton et al., 2019). In a study conducted in Türkiye on materialism and sport betting, it was reported that individuals with higher levels of materialistic values and monetary motivation showed significantly greater betting severity (Su Topbaş & Uzdil, 2025). However, studies that specifically examine the relationship between individuals' perceptions of material values and online gambling behavior are quite limited (Eyzop et al., 2018).

On the other hand, some studies on gambling have identified significant associations between gambling behavior and mental health problems (Van der Maas, 2016; Scholes-Balog & Hemphill, 2012). Consistent with this, Kovan and Yıldırım's (2025) study in a Turkish sample, demonstrated robust associations between online pathological gambling, stress and emotional reactivity. Psychological resilience refers to an individual's capacity to cope with difficulties and maintain psychological adaptation in the face of stressful life events. Psychological resilience is frequently emphasized in the literature as a potential protective factor against the development of addiction. Nevertheless, studies that directly explore the relationship between this variable and online gambling addiction are also scarce. Some studies in the literature (Çelik et al., 2022; Duran et al., 2024; Mishra et al., 2019; Sirola et al., 2023; Şiran, 2020) have mainly focused on general gambling addiction and do not specifically address addictive behaviors related to gambling conducted online. This points to a significant research gap in clarifying the role of psychological resilience in the context of online gambling addiction.

In this study, not only psychological constructs but also individuals' behavioral experiences related to online gambling were evaluated. Participants were asked specific questions regarding whether they had engaged in online gambling, their membership status on gambling websites, whether they had experienced monetary gains or losses, environmental influences, whether they had received gambling invitations, and their average daily duration of gameplay. In this respect, the study incorporates not only scale-based scores but also data derived directly from individuals' lived experiences.

### The Present Study

The aim of this study is to examine the relationships between university students' online gambling behaviors and their emphasis on material values, levels of psychological resilience, and certain sociodemographic characteristics (such as gender, income level, smoking and alcohol use). Rather than analyzing the overall score of the Online Gambling Addiction Scale, the study specifically focused on the "addiction" subdomain, which reflects symptoms such as loss of control, inability to quit, and impairment in functioning. Additionally, the effects of behavioral variables such as environmental influences (e.g., the presence of individuals in the participant's close circle who engage in online gambling) and smoking/alcohol use on addiction levels were also evaluated. This preference is based on the

notion that not all dimensions of addiction may be equally influential, and that certain symptoms may more directly reflect addictive behavior. Similarly, evaluations of material values were considered not as an overall tendency but were separately examined in terms of the importance placed on happiness and success, while psychological resilience was assessed as a holistic construct.

In this regard, the study contributes to the existing literature from several perspectives. First, it is among the few studies that simultaneously address psychological, sociodemographic, and value-based variables associated with online gambling addiction by employing multivariate models. Secondly, it allows for a more detailed evaluation of the relationship between individuals' attitudes toward material values by separately examining the dimensions of happiness and success. Third, it assesses the potential impact of a protective factor—psychological resilience—within the context of online gambling addiction. Lastly, by not limiting itself solely to scale-based measurements and incorporating behavioral data related to individuals' direct experiences with online gambling, the study enhances its originality and practical relevance. The findings may contribute to a better understanding of the factors that increase or decrease the risk of online gambling addiction among university students. The results are expected to inform the design of psychoeducational, counseling, and prevention programs, particularly those based on material values and psychological resilience. Furthermore, these findings may also guide policy development processes concerning risky behaviors in digital environments among university students—especially in shaping strategies for early detection, regulation of digital platforms, and prevention of behavioral addictions.

## METHOD

### Research Design

This study was designed in line with the quantitative research paradigm and employed a relational survey model. The relational survey model provides a framework for identifying the presence, direction, and degree of relationships between two or more variables (Karasar, 2008).

### Participants

The population of this study consists of all associate and undergraduate students aged 18 and over who were enrolled at Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University during the 2023–2024 academic year. According to the university's current data, the total number of students during this period was 34,413. For a population of this size, the minimum required sample size was determined to be at least 386 individuals, based on Sekaran's (2003) sample size tables (as cited in Coşkun et al., 2017). Within the scope of this study, data were collected from 415 students, which was deemed sufficient in terms of sample size. The sample was selected using a non-probability sampling method—specifically, the convenience sampling technique. This method was preferred due to the practicality of reaching the target population through both face-to-face and online data collection procedures.

The inclusion criteria for participation in the study were: being at least 18 years of age, actively enrolled as an associate or undergraduate student at Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University, and voluntarily agreeing to participate in the study. Students who met these conditions were deemed eligible and were included in the data analysis process.

### Data Collection Process

Ethics committee approval of the study was obtained from Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University Human Research Ethics Committee, with the official letter dated 02.02.2024 and numbered 447. The data collection process was conducted between 14 February 2024 and 28 March 2024 through both face-to-face and online survey administration. In the face-to-face survey procedure, participants were read an informed consent statement and were included in the study only if they voluntarily agreed to participate. For online participation, individuals could access the survey content only after reading and confirming their consent through the digital consent form provided at the beginning of the questionnaire link.

### Data Collection Tools

**Sociodemographic Information Form:** In this study, a Sociodemographic Information Form was developed by the researchers to assess participants' basic demographic characteristics and their experiences with online gambling. The form includes questions regarding demographic variables such as age, gender, academic year, monthly household income, and personal income, as well as individual habits such as smoking and alcohol consumption. Additionally, it contains items related to gambling behavior, including experiences with online gambling, environmental influences, membership status on gambling platforms, experiences of winning or losing money, and the amount of time spent playing. The form consists of both closed-ended (yes/no) and open-ended questions, allowing for an objective evaluation of participants' responses.

**Online Gambling Addiction Scale (OGAS):** The Online Gambling Addiction Scale (OGAS) was developed by Karabrahimoğlu et al. (2021) and consists of 21 items grouped under three subdimensions. It employs a 5-point Likert-type response format and includes the following subscales: Motivation (10 items), Addiction (6 items), and Negative Psychology (5 items). Total scores on the scale range from a minimum of 21 to a maximum of 105, with higher scores indicating a greater risk of online gambling addiction.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) conducted as part of the scale's validation process showed that the model explained 65.44% of the total variance. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results demonstrated acceptable model fit indices ( $\chi^2/df = 4.25$ , RMSEA = 0.041, CFI = 0.958, TLI = 0.961). The scale has high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculated at 0.92. OGAS was specifically developed to assess individuals' online gambling behaviors and addiction levels, and it can be effectively applied to a wide audience, particularly university students and young adults.

**Material Values Scale (MVS):** The Material Values Scale (MVS) was originally developed by Richins (2004) and later adapt-

ed into Turkish by Anlı (2020). The scale consists of 8 items grouped under two subdimensions: Centrality and Success (5 items) and Happiness (3 items). It employs a 5-point Likert-type response format and is designed to measure individuals' attitudes toward material values and their tendency toward material possession.

Higher scores on the scale indicate a greater emphasis on material values. Within the scope of validity and reliability studies, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated at 0.77. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results demonstrated that the scale exhibited a good model fit (CFI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.05).

**Brief Resilience Scale (BRS):** The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) was developed by Smith et al. (2008) and was adapted into Turkish by Doğan (2015). The scale consists of 6 items and is used to assess individuals' levels of psychological resilience—that is, their capacity to recover from stressful and challenging life events. It employs a 5-point Likert-type response format and demonstrates a unidimensional structure. Items 2, 4, and 6 are reverse-coded.

Higher scores on the scale indicate higher levels of psychological resilience. In validity and reliability analyses, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated at 0.83. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) showed that the scale explained 54.66% of the total variance. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results supported the unidimensional structure of the scale, with strong model fit indices (CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.05). The BRS is a valid and reliable instrument for measuring psychological resilience and has been widely used with university students and adult populations.

### Statistical Analysis

The data obtained from the study were analyzed using SPSS version 25.0. The normality of scale scores was assessed through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, skewness and kurtosis coefficients, Q-Q plots, and histograms. All these analyses indicated that the scale scores did not conform to a normal distribution. Therefore, non-parametric tests were preferred to examine the relationships between variables. To assess differences in scale scores according to sociodemographic variables, the Mann-Whitney U test was used for dichotomous variables, and the Kruskal-Wallis test was employed for variables with three or more categories. Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis was conducted to determine relationships among the scales. To investigate the predictive relationships between the scales, linear regression analysis was performed. However, due to the non-normal distribution of the dependent variables, a logarithmic transformation was applied before conducting the analysis. Model assumptions—including the normality and homoscedasticity of residuals—were checked with the transformed data, and the regression model was deemed appropriate. Alternative non-parametric regression approaches were considered; however, linear regression was preferred due to its interpretability and widespread use in similar studies. Given the adequacy of the sample size, the statistical power of the analyses was considered sufficient. The significance level for all statistical analyses was set at  $p < .05$ .

## RESULTS

In this section, the sociodemographic characteristics of the university students who participated in the study, their experiences related to online gambling behavior, descriptive statistics regarding the scores obtained from the measurement scales used in the study, and the relationships among variables are presented.

### Participants' Sociodemographic Characteristics

The study sample consisted of 415 students, with a mean age of 21.14 (SD = 1.95), ranging from 18 to 35 years. Of the participants, 73.3% were female and 26.7% were male. In terms of academic year, the highest proportion of students were in their first year (30.8%), followed by second-year (27.5%), fourth-year (21.4%), and third-year (20.2%) students. Regarding household income, 48.2% of the participants reported a monthly household income between 0–20,000 TL, while 48.9% stated that their personal monthly income was 4,000 TL or above. Additionally, 30.6% of the students reported smoking, and 25.3% reported alcohol use (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants (n = 415)

Variable	N or Median (Min–Max)	% or Mean $\pm$ SD
Age (Years)	21.0 (18-35)	21.14 $\pm$ 1.95
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	304	73.3
Male	111	26.7
<b>Academic Year</b>		
1st Year	128	30.8
2nd Year	114	27.5
3rd Year	84	20.2
4th Year	89	21.4
<b>Monthly Household Income</b>		
0-20.000 TL	200	48.2
20,001-40,000 TL	135	32.5
40,001-60,000 TL	54	13
60,001 TL and above	26	6.3
<b>Personal Monthly Income</b>		
Between 0 and 2000 TL	76	18.3
Between 2001 and 4000 TL	136	32.8
4001 TL or more	203	48.9
<b>Smoking Status</b>		
Yes	127	30.6
No	288	69.4
<b>Alcohol Use</b>		
Yes	105	25.3
No	310	74.7

### Participants' Online Gambling Behaviors

A total of 19.5% of the participants reported having previously engaged in online gambling, but only 1.9% stated that they currently engage in this behavior regularly. Additionally, 10.4% indicated that they are members of an online gambling website. While 14.2% of the participants reported having gained money through online gambling, 5.5% reported experiencing substantial financial losses. The proportion of participants who had experience with gambling in face-to-face settings was 8.9% (Table 2).

### Correlations Among Variables

According to the results of the Spearman's Rho correlation analysis, moderate to strong positive and significant correlations were observed among the subscales of the Online Gambling Addiction Scale (motivation, addiction, and negative psychology) ( $p < .01$ ). A weak positive correlation was found between the happiness subdimension of material values and the addiction subscale ( $r = .126$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Psychological resilience did not show a significant relationship with addiction; however, it was weakly and negatively correlated with the centrality and success subdimension of material values ( $r = -.109$ ,  $p < .05$ ) (Table 3).

### Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted using the "Addiction" subscale of the Online Gambling Addiction Scale as the dependent variable. The results indicated that the model was statistically significant ( $F(5,409) = 111.238$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and that the predictor variables collectively explained 57.6% of the variance in addiction scores ( $R^2 = .576$ ). The strongest predictor was motivation ( $\beta = .636$ ,  $p < .001$ ), followed by negative psychology, which also contributed significantly to the model ( $\beta = .228$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The happiness subdimension of material values made a weak but statistically significant contribution ( $\beta = .109$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, psychological resilience and the centrality/success subdimension were not significant predictors (Table 4).

### Differences Between the "Addiction" Subscale of Online Gambling and Sociodemographic Variables

To examine the relationship between scores on the "Addiction" subscale of the Online Gambling Addiction Scale (OGAS-ADD) and certain sociodemographic variables, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 5.

According to the results of the analysis, variables such as gender, alcohol use, smoking status, and the presence of individuals in the close social circle who engage in online gambling had significant effects on the OGAS-ADD (Online Gambling Addiction Scale – Addiction subscale) scores. Male participants had significantly higher addiction scores than female participants ( $U = 12,603$ ,  $z = -7.709$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r = .38$ ). Similarly, participants who reported alcohol consumption had higher scores than those who did not consume alcohol ( $U = 14,380$ ,  $z = -3.484$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r = .17$ ). Smoking was also associated with significant-

**Table 2.** Distribution of Participants' Online Gambling Behaviors (n = 415)

Question	n or Median (Min–Max)	% or Mean ± SD
Are there individuals in your close social circle who engage in online gambling?		
Yes	197	47.5
No	218	52.5
Has anyone in your close social circle ever invited you to participate in online gambling?		
Yes	122	29.4
No	293	70.6
Have you ever engaged in online gambling?		
Yes	81	19.5
No	334	80.5
If yes, do you still engage in it regularly?		
Yes	8	1.9
No	73	17.6
I have never gambled online	334	80.5
If yes, how much time do you spend on online gambling daily (in hours)?	5.0 (1-6)	4.97±0.92
Are you currently a member of any online gambling website?		
Yes	43	10.4
No	372	89.6
Have you ever gained money from online gambling?		
Yes	59	14.2
No	356	85.8
Have you ever experienced what you consider to be significant financial losses through online gambling?		
Yes	23	5.5
No	392	94.5
Have you ever gambled in a face-to-face setting?		
Yes	37	8.9
No	378	91.1

ly higher addiction scores ( $U = 16,847$ ,  $z = -2.499$ ,  $p = .012$ ,  $r = .12$ ). Moreover, participants who had individuals in their close circle who gambled online had significantly higher addiction scores than those without such exposure ( $U = 18,304$ ,  $z = -5.073$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r = .25$ ).

## DISCUSSION

One of the main findings of this study is that the motivation subscale of the Online Gambling Addiction Scale (OGAS) emerged as the strongest predictor of addiction levels. This finding suggests that intrinsic motivations are associated with higher levels of online gambling addiction. The items in the motivation subscale (e.g., "I gamble to have a good time" or "I gamble to make a lot of money quickly") reflect the subjective meanings individuals attribute to gambling. These findings are

consistent with previous research emphasizing the reinforcing role of immediate rewards, accessibility, and structural characteristics of online gambling environments (Zhong et al., 2024; Gainsbury et al., 2013; Hing et al., 2022). From a social work perspective, this finding underscores the necessity of thoroughly assessing individuals' cognitive schemas and motivational sources in interventions targeting addictive behaviors.

Another significant predictor of online gambling addiction identified in the study was the "Negative Psychology" subscale. This finding indicates that higher levels of negative psychological experiences are associated with increased online gambling addiction scores. Ghelfi et al. (2024) emphasize that adverse psychological conditions, particularly stress, anxiety, depression, and emotional instability, are among the key individual risk factors for online gambling addiction. Similar-

**Table 3.** Correlation Results Among Variables (Spearman's Rho, n = 415)

		1	2	3	4	5	6
1. OGAS-MOT (Motivation)	r	1					
	p						
2. OGAS-ADD (Addiction)	r	.541**	1				
	p	<0.01					
3. OGAS-NP (Negative Psychology)	r	.398**	.511**	1			
	p	<0.01	<0.01				
4. MVS-CS (Centrality & Success)	r	.035	.014	0.005	1		
	p	>0.05	>0.05	>0.05			
5. MVS-HAP (Happiness)	r	.065	.126**	0.088	.574**	1	
	p	>0.05	<0.01	>0.05	<0.01		
6. BRS	r	-0.10	.040	-0.023	-0.109*	-0.135	1
	p	>0.05	>0.05	>0.05	<0.05	<0.01	

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (Spearman's Rho test, two-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (Spearman's Rho test, two-tailed).

**Table 4.** Regression Model Predicting the "Addiction" Subscale of the Online Gambling Addiction Scale (n = 415)

Predictor Variables	Simple Linear Regression							Multiple Linear Regression						
	B	SH	$\beta$	t	p	%95 CI		B	SH	$\beta$	t	p	%95 CI	
						Lower	Upper						Lower	Upper
OGAS-MOT	.620	.029	.723	21.245	<0.01	.562	.677	.545	.030	.636	18.367	<0.01	.487	.604
OGAS-NP	.246	.023	.466	10.703	<0.01	.201	.292	.121	.018	.228	6.580	<0.01	.085	.157
MVS-CS	.019	.028	.034	.692	>0.05	-.035	.074	-.039	.025	-.069	-1.566	>0.05	-.088	.010
MVS-HAP	.046	.022	.103	2.110	<0.05	.003	.089	.048	.020	.109	2.424	<0.05	.009	.088
BRS	.029	.033	.043	.875	>0.05	-.036	.095	.026	.023	.038	1.159	>0.05	-0.18	.070
Constant								.243	.105	-	2.308	<0.05	0.36	.450

CI: Confidence Interval, R= 0.759, R<sup>2</sup>= 0.576, F= 111.238, p<.001

**Table 5.** Mann-Whitney U Test Results (N = 415)

Variable	N	Mean Rank	Rank Sum	U	z	p	Effect Size (r)
<b>Gender</b>							
Female	304	193.96	58963	12603	-7.709	p<.001	0.38
Male	111	246.46	27357				
<b>Alcohol Use</b>							
Yes	105	226.05	23735	14380	-3.484	p<.001	0.17
No	310	201.89	62585				
<b>Smoking Status</b>							
Yes	127	219.35	27857	16847	-2.499	p<.05	0.12
No	288	203.00	58463				
<b>Presence of Online Gamblers in Close Social Circle</b>							
Yes	197	224.09	44145	18304	-5.073	p<.001	0.25
No	218	193.46	42175				

ly, Wirkus et al. (2024) found a strong relationship between negative psychological states and the risk of online gambling disorder. These findings are also supported by broader literature linking gambling behaviors with mental health difficulties (Van der Maas, 2016; Scholes-Balog & Hemphill, 2012). Taken together, these results highlight the importance of grounding intervention programs in comprehensive psychological assessment processes.

In the present study, the “Happiness” subdimension of material values was found to be a weak but statistically significant predictor of online gambling addiction. This finding suggests that individuals who associate happiness with material gain may report higher vulnerability to engaging in risky behaviors such as gambling. Richins (2004) argues that some individuals equate happiness with material possession. From this perspective, gambling behavior, particularly when framed by promises of high monetary rewards, may serve as a potential means of achieving emotional satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the study by Eyzop et al. (2018), which demonstrated that individuals with high levels of materialistic tendencies are more motivated to gamble for financial reasons. Similarly, Casey (2008) noted that working women, in particular, may be drawn to gambling through the ideal of a “better life” closely linked to material prosperity. In contrast, the “Centrality and Success” subdimension did not significantly predict gambling addiction, suggesting that the desire for material success does not necessarily trigger gambling behavior. Houghton et al. (2019) also emphasized that placing importance on material success does not always lead individuals to engage in risky financial activities. Likewise, Zaleskiewicz (2019) proposed that the accumulation of wealth may not contribute to happiness and could, in fact, hinder psychological satisfaction. Supporting this view, research conducted by Lo et al. (2025) revealed that materialistic forms of happiness are associated with a diminished sense of meaning in life, which negatively impacts overall well-being.

The study also found that psychological resilience did not significantly predict online gambling addiction. This result contrasts with some existing literature suggesting that resilience may buffer individuals from the risk of developing online gambling problems. Duran et al. (2024), for example, similarly reported no significant association between resilience and gambling behavior, although they acknowledged the presence of other studies that highlight the protective role of psychological resilience. Mishra et al. (2019) emphasized that components of resilience, such as mindfulness and self-efficacy, may function as protective factors in mitigating problematic gambling behaviors. These inconsistencies may be related to differences in measurement tools, sample characteristics, or the context-dependent nature of resilience. Another strength of this study lies in its ability to reveal participants’ direct behavioral experiences related to online gambling. The finding that 19.5% of participants reported having previously engaged in online gambling, and that 29.4% had received offers from people in their social circles to do so, suggests that social exposure may play a role in gambling-related behaviors. Chóliz (2016) and Hing et al. (2022) have pointed out that online gambling

is increasingly disseminated through digital content and social environments. In addition, young individuals are particularly vulnerable to such environmental influences, and social surroundings play a critical role in shaping gambling behaviors (Yeşilay, 2025). In this respect, the findings highlight the importance of considering environmental and social contexts alongside individual psychological factors. Furthermore, the findings highlight that male gender, alcohol and cigarette use, and social exposure to online gambling are key factors associated with elevated levels of gambling addiction. These results are largely consistent with findings from previous research (Manian et al., 2024; Wirkus et al., 2024) and provide important insights for early identification of risk Groups.

## CONCLUSION

This study addresses a significant gap in the literature by examining the psychological, motivational, and value-based factors influencing online gambling addiction through a multidimensional approach within a university student sample. In this respect, the study brings together psychological, value-based, and behavioral dimensions within a single analytical framework, offering a more integrated perspective on online gambling behavior. The findings reveal that addiction is not merely impulsive, but a meaning-laden behavior shaped by internal motivations and psychological challenges. The fact that the motivation subscale was the strongest predictor of addiction suggests that individuals engage in online gambling in pursuit of short-term pleasure, escape, and financial gain. Moreover, the significant contribution of negative psychological states highlights the importance of placing psychological assessment at the center of intervention strategies. In addition, the findings related to environmental influences and participants’ direct experiences with online gambling demonstrate that addiction is not solely an individual phenomenon but one that is socially reinforced—offering a unique contribution to the existing body of literature. The findings therefore support a multidimensional understanding of online gambling that includes psychological vulnerability, value orientations, and social exposure.

These results provide a basis for the development of preventive and therapeutic strategies in fields such as social work, psychological counseling, and digital addiction policy. Such strategies should be structured around young individuals’ value systems, psychological resilience, and social environments. The findings also indicate that university-based prevention programs can include psychoeducational content on emotional regulation, financial awareness, and value orientations, alongside early screening practices within counseling services. At the institutional level, universities can integrate behavioral addiction awareness into orientation processes and strengthen coordination between counseling services and academic units to address digital risk behaviors such as online gambling.

## Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. A non-probability, conve-

nience sampling method was employed, which limits the representativeness of the sample. As participants were drawn from a single university and voluntarily agreed to participate, the findings may not be generalizable to all university students or to broader populations. Use of self-report instruments may introduce response bias, including social desirability and recall errors. A cross-sectional design was employed, which prevents the establishment of causal relationships among the variables. Accordingly, findings should be interpreted as statistical associations rather than causal effects, and the identification of certain variables as predictors should not be taken as evidence of temporal order or causal influence. This design also limits the ability to examine how online gambling behaviors evolve over time and how psychological and environmental factors interact dynamically. The results therefore reflect relationships observed at a single time point. Although psychological resilience was not found to be a significant predictor in this study, this result may be influenced by sample characteristics or measurement limitations. Future research using probability-based sampling and longitudinal designs is recommended to increase generalizability and to better understand the developmental trajectories of online gambling behavior.

### Future Research

Future studies may enhance the generalizability of findings related to online gambling addiction by employing broader and more diverse samples. Moreover, the use of longitudinal designs could allow for a more detailed examination of the developmental trajectory of addiction. Future research should also examine psychological, behavioral, and environmental variables within the same model to better understand the complexity of online gambling behavior. In this context, mediation and moderation analyses can be used to explore the relationships among variables. In addition to individual variables such as psychological resilience, future research should also consider the influence of social support systems and environmental factors. Variables such as digital exposure, peer influence, impulsivity, and coping strategies may strengthen the explanatory power of future models. Lastly, to improve the effectiveness of intervention programs, it is recommended that holistic approaches targeting individuals' value systems be developed. Future studies can also evaluate the effectiveness of university-based preventive practices such as psycho-educational programs, early screening approaches, and brief counseling interventions. In the context of higher education, further research can examine how institutional practices such as awareness programs, campus policies, and coordination between counseling services and academic units influence students' exposure to online gambling and related risks.

### Statements and Declarations

**Ethical Approval:** All of the participants were informed about the research, and the research was carried out with their voluntary participation and a written consent was collected. Ethics committee approval of the study was obtained from Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University Human Research Ethics Committee, with the official letter dated 02.02.2024 and num-

bered 447. Participants provided informed consent and were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. No personal identifiers were collected.

**Consent to participate:** Written informed consent was obtained from the participants.

**Consent for publication:** Not applicable.

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