

# Professionals' experiences as a guide to combating online gambling

## Online kumarla mücadelede bir rehber olarak profesyonellerin deneyimleri

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### Abstract

This study aims to develop interdisciplinary strategies to combat the phenomenon of online gambling, which has become widespread following digitalization. Utilizing a qualitative research method, interviews were conducted with 15 participants experienced in the field of gambling addiction. The findings reveal that controlling online gambling behavior has become increasingly difficult post-digitalization due to factors such as accessibility, anonymity, invisibility, continuous exposure to stimuli, and the virtualization of money. Regarding the intervention process, the need for a multidisciplinary approach that simultaneously considers various social dynamics, moving beyond individual interventions, was emphasized. In this context, various recommendations are detailed: expanding prevention and awareness-based education, strengthening treatment and rehabilitation services specific to gambling addiction, developing family and social support mechanisms, enacting legal and technological regulations, and increasing professional capacity. Consequently, this research presents an interdisciplinary roadmap for combating online gambling, offering a comprehensive perspective for practitioners and policymakers.

**Keywords:** Online gambling, digitalization, combating addiction, qualitative research

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### Öz

Bu çalışma, dijitalleşme sürecinin ardından yaygınlaşan sanal kumar olgusuna yönelik disiplinler arası bir yaklaşımla mücadele önerileri geliştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Nitel araştırma yöntemiyle yürütülen çalışmada, kumar bağımlılığı alanında çalışma deneyimi olan 15 katılımcıyla görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Erişilen bulgularda, dijitalleşme sonrasında sanal kumar davranışının erişilebilirlik, anonimlik, görünmezlik, sürekli uyarana maruz kalma ve paranın sanallaşması gibi unsurlar nedeniyle kontrolünün zorlaştırıldığını ortaya koymaktadır. Mücadele sürecinde ise bireysel müdahalelerin ötesinde çeşitli toplumsal dinamikleri aynı anda göz önünde bulunduran çok disiplinli bir yaklaşım ihtiyacı vurgulanmıştır. Bu kapsamda önleme ve farkındalık temelli eğitimlerin yaygınlaştırılması, kumar bağımlılığına özgü tedavi ve rehabilitasyon hizmetlerinin güçlendirilmesi, aile ve sosyal destek mekanizmalarının geliştirilmesi, yasal ve teknolojik düzenlemeler ve uzman kapasitesinin artırılması başlıklarında çeşitli öneriler detaylandırılmıştır. Bu yönüyle araştırma, sanal kumarla mücadelede disiplinler arası bir yol haritası sunmakta ve bu alanda politika yapıcılar ile uygulayıcılara kapsamlı bir perspektif kazandırmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sanal kumar, dijitalleşme, bağımlılıkla mücadele, nitel araştırma

## Introduction

Gambling is a type of game where the outcome depends on fate, and money or an object of monetary value is wagered as a stake (Ssewanyana & Bitanihirwe, 2018). Gambling behaviour may begin as a search for entertainment and excitement but can extend to pathological levels. Indeed, according to the American Psychiatric Association (2013), gambling disorder (formerly known as pathological gambling) is characterised by persistent and recurrent gambling behaviour unrelated to manic episodes, accompanied by significant functional impairment. This condition manifests itself in behaviours such as gambling with increasing amounts of money, an inability to limit or stop gambling, and an excessive preoccupation with gambling. Another definition describes problem gambling behaviour as a pattern of gambling that causes problems at the personal level and in family and work life (Raylu & Oei, 2004). The problems experienced can range from domestic violence (Shaw et al., 2007) to illegal activities (Potenza et al., 2000) and suicide (Petry & Kiluk, 2002). Therefore, gambling should be considered not merely as an individual form of entertainment or risk-taking behaviour, but as a multidimensional phenomenon with social, psychological, and economic consequences (Aka & Yaman, 2024). This multidimensional structure necessitates examining gambling behaviour both at the individual level, through addiction mechanisms, and at the societal level, through issues of control and regulation (Browne et al., 2017).

With the rapid advancement of technology, gambling behaviour has shifted to the digital realm, giving rise to the concept of online gambling, or online gambling. Online gambling refers to various betting and gaming activities offered through internet-connected devices, including computers, smartphones, tablets, and digital televisions (Gainsbury, 2015). Digitalisation has led to gambling moving away from traditional venues and into individuals' daily lives and personal devices. This has not only made gambling more accessible, but has also increased the invisibility of the behaviour, weakening control mechanisms (Ghelfi et al.,

2024). This transformation has also led to new risk areas, particularly targeting young people, which blur the lines between gaming and gambling through elements such as "loot boxes" and virtual item betting (Wardle & Zendle, 2021). Factors such as social isolation, boredom, and financial uncertainty, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, have led to a marked increase in online gambling behaviour (Lugo et al., 2021). Indeed, the closure of physical casinos and the suspension of sporting events during lockdown led land-based gamblers to turn to digital environments (Hodgins & Stevens, 2021). The fact that this shift, beginning after the pandemic, has become permanent shows that online gambling is now a widespread rather than an exceptional behaviour.

Online gambling carries different risk factors compared to traditional gambling. The ability to place high-stakes bets, the opportunity for uninterrupted play, rapid feedback loops, and instant access to numerous betting options increase the risk of excessive gambling online (Gainsbury & Wood, 2011; Monaghan, 2009). Furthermore, the interactive and immersive nature of the internet can distort individuals' perception of time and money, leading to a loss of control and detachment from reality. Online gamblers may underestimate their losses within the anonymity of the online environment and perceive money as an abstract value. This dissociative condition contributes to the reinforcement of gambling behaviour and the strengthening of the addiction cycle (Griffiths, 2003; Monaghan, 2009; Corney & Davis, 2010). On the other hand, online gambling behaviour is associated with depression, anxiety, poor mental health (Dowling et al., 2014), alcohol use, and risky gaming habits (Marmet et al., 2021). In this sense, online gambling is not merely an individual choice or form of entertainment but is considered a new form of social addiction intertwined with the access, anonymity, and financial mechanisms offered by the digital age.

Within the framework of these elements, gambling addiction today has become a multidimensional field of struggle that requires a joint contribution from psychology, sociology, social work,

technology, law, and economics, beyond the scope of clinical or individual intervention. This study aims to compile recommendations regarding this new field of struggle brought about by digital transformation. In this sense, it aims to make an assessment with a multidisciplinary approach to combating online gambling, while also offering a series of current and practical recommendations for combating gambling in the digital process as an original contribution.

## Method

This study presents a new and comprehensive set of recommendations for combating online gambling addiction. It primarily seeks to answer the question: 'How should online gambling addiction be addressed in the wake of the digital transformation?' To this end, it draws upon the experiences of experts with a background in gambling addiction research. At this point, the study was conducted using qualitative research methods, which are a tool for examining phenomena in a detailed and comprehensive manner (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Qualitative research primarily focuses on conducting in-depth and multidimensional assessments of a phenomenon (Punch, 2005). In addition, it is appropriate for a phenomenological research design in terms of addressing the experiences of individuals working with gambling addiction from their own professional perspectives.

Phenomenological research is based on understanding a concept or phenomenon through the individual experiences of participants (Creswell, 2021). This study is also consistent with the phenomenological research design, as it reflects the experiences related to combating online gambling through the professional experience and perspectives of relevant experts.

## Participants

The study group reached within the scope of this research was formed in accordance with the purposive sampling method frequently used in qualitative research. Purposive sampling refers to accessing information-rich and important data sources for the effective use of limited data resources (Yağar & Dökme, 2018). Accordingly, the participants included in the study were selected from individuals working in the field of addiction treatment and having at least two years of specific work experience with gambling. This work experience encompasses the prevention, research, and treatment dimensions of gambling addiction treatment. Demographically, of the 15 participants included in the study, ten were female and five were male. In terms of age, the youngest participant was 26 years old, and the oldest was 38 years old. The average age of the participants was determined to be 29.6. In terms of professions, seven social workers, six psychologists were included in the study, along with one recovery counsellor and one academic.

**Table 1: Demographic Information of The Participants**

Participant Code	Age	Gender	Occupation	Occupational Experience	Experience Working in the Gambling Field
P1	27	Female	Social Worker	4 years	3 years
P2	27	Female	Social Worker	5,5 years	5,5 years
P3	26	Female	Social Worker	3 years	3 years
P4	31	Male	Social Worker	6 years	4 years
P5	33	Male	Social Worker	9 years	5 years
P6	34	Male	Academician	8,5 years	5 years
P7	36	Male	Clinical Psychologist	9 years	9 years
P8	28	Female	Clinical Psychologist	8 years	3 years
P9	39	Male	Recovery Counsellor	9 years	9 years
P10	27	Female	Social Worker	4 years	3,5 years
P11	29	Female	Clinical Psychologist	2,5 years	2,5 years
P12	32	Female	Clinical Psychologist	3 years	3 years
P13	28	Female	Psychologist	4 years	4 years
P14	26	Female	Psychologist	4 years	4 years
P15	30	Female	Social Worker	5 years	5 years

The participants' average experience in working with addictions was determined to be 5.6 years, with an average of 4.5 years of this experience corresponding to working with gambling.<sup>1</sup>

### Data Collection

The primary data collection tool used in the study was a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher. Semi-structured interviews are open-ended question forms that allow the researcher to explore the relevant topic in depth due to their standardised yet flexible structure (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The semi-structured interview form used in the study contained a total of 10 questions and included a variety of topics, comprehensively covering suggestions for combating online gambling addiction. The interviews were conducted online with experts working in the field of gambling addiction. These interviews were conducted via applications such as Google Meets/Zoom. The interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and later transcribed for analysis.

### Data Analysis

The data from this study were examined using descriptive analysis methods. The main purpose of descriptive analysis is to present the obtained data to the reader by organising it according to the researcher's interpretation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). This analysis process is generally carried out in four stages: framework creation, data processing according to the thematic framework, identification of findings, and interpretation (Altunışık et al., 2010). In this study, the obtained data were also organised through the researcher's reinterpretation and presented to the reader. For this process, the data shaped within the relevant semi-structured form were organised in sequence; themes and sub-themes categorising the organised data were determined; the final thematisation to be used in the text was established, and relevant quotations were

identified and presented to the reader with the researcher's reinterpretation.

### Results

The data obtained within the scope of the study has been compiled under two main themes: 'Factors Complicating the Combat Against Online Gambling' and 'Recommendations Regarding the Combat Against Online Gambling'.

#### Factors Complicating the Combat Against Online Gambling

Before detailing the recommendations, it is crucial to outline the new challenges introduced by digital transformation. Participants' assessments regarding these challenges are grouped under five sub-headings:

**Spread and Normalisation:** Digitalisation has expanded gambling beyond traditional venues, seamlessly integrating it into everyday digital practices such as virtual shopping, gaming, and entertainment platforms. This integration, alongside an observed increase in female clients, marks a significant threshold in the normalisation and spread of gambling behaviour.

*"We are also seeing a gradual increase in applications from female clients." (P14)*

*"... Even on shopping sites that we might call innocent, gambling is being simplified and offered through methods such as spinning wheels... all of this further integrates gambling into our lives." (P12)*

#### Accessibility and Rapid Impulse Gratification:

Digitalisation has made gambling independent of time and place, making it instantly accessible via smartphones and bank accounts. The removal of physical barriers significantly reduces the gap between the individual's urge to gamble and the act

<sup>1</sup> These statistics are based on participants' declarations.

itself. This immediate gratification not only increases the frequency of gambling but also deepens the addictive behaviour.

*“Whereas a person previously had to go to a betting shop after feeling the urge to gamble, they can now convert that urge into action very quickly through digital means.”* (P11)

*“When you download these apps to your phone, you can play very easily and in a very short time.”* (P15)

**Concealability and Invisibility:** Online gambling leaves no physical signs, making it a highly concealable addiction that is difficult for both families and specialists to detect. Consequently, the gambling behaviour typically only becomes apparent when severe debts accumulate or serious crises occur.

*“Alcohol or drugs can be detected by smell, etc., but gambling is difficult to observe.”* (P3)

*“...with these losses, there will be debts. To cover these, there will be credit cards, loan sharks, etc. When the problem reaches its peak, it becomes a little more visible, but until then, there is no visible, noticeable situation...”* (P5)

**Continuous Exposure to Stimuli:** Digitalisation constantly exposes users to triggering content. Individuals are incessantly targeted by messages, email notifications, and advertisements from gambling platforms. Furthermore, visual effects and gamification techniques act as significant triggers for relapse.

*“The thing our clients complain about most is this: receiving messages and emails from gambling sites.”* (P2)

*“Clients who we thought would never relapse can say after a few sessions, “I was triggered even by the colours there.”* (P3)

*“Gamification techniques and bonuses play a triggering role...”* (P7)

**The Virtualisation of Money Perception and Loss of Reality:** Digitalisation reduces money to mere numbers on a screen, stripping it of its tangible value. This virtualisation distorts the perception of spending and loss; since virtual transactions are

not perceived as 'spending real money,' it frequently leads to uncontrolled gambling behaviour.

*“When we hand over 10,000 TL in cash, our hands tremble, but transferring it to a gambling site is very easy.”* (P14)

*“In games like casinos and slots, we often hear things like: ‘I didn’t realise I was spending money because it was in a virtual environment, and I only understood that what I was spending was physical money when I had to pay.’ The virtual nature of it can be misleading in this way.”* (P12)

### **Recommendations Regarding the Combat Against Online Gambling**

The recommendations for combating online gambling are organised under five sub-themes: “Development of Prevention and Awareness-Based Approaches”, “Development of Treatment and Rehabilitation Services”, “Development of Family and Social Support Mechanisms”, “Legal and Technological Regulations” and “Development of Expert Capacity and Interdisciplinary Approach”.

**Prevention and Awareness-Based Recommendations:** Raising public awareness, primarily through education, is considered a crucial step in combating online gambling. Currently, the public often misinterprets gambling merely as a game or entertainment, which significantly hinders prevention efforts. Furthermore, a substantial lack of knowledge exists among families regarding hidden gambling content in digital games and shopping apps, a risk exacerbated by insufficient parental monitoring. To address these issues, comprehensive awareness programs should be integrated into schools, families, and workplaces. Implementing public service announcements in the media and enhancing both digital and financial literacy are also highly recommended to help individuals recognise risks and financial losses earlier.

*“There is definitely a need for awareness about digital gambling because people do not label it as an addiction... Especially in middle school and high school, people do not consider betting three or five*

liras as gambling and may see it as entertainment.” (P6)

“As time goes by, young people can be educated about what games of chance are, the misconceptions surrounding them, and the probabilities involved... Perhaps these could be included in the curriculum.” (P7)

### **Recommendations Regarding Treatment and Rehabilitation Services:**

Improving treatment services for online gambling addiction requires both structural and content-based enhancements. There is a critical need for gambling-specific treatment models, particularly inpatient services. Furthermore, tailored intervention plans must be developed to facilitate treatment participation for specific groups, such as security and law enforcement personnel, who may face unique occupational barriers. Psychotherapy and rehabilitation services should be diversified to expand individual therapy, group sessions, and ex-user support networks. Integrating financial literacy, money management, and stress-coping skills into the treatment process is essential for strengthening long-term recovery. This should be coupled with post-treatment employment and rehabilitation support to ensure successful social reintegration. Finally, addressing the severe shortage of specialists in this field requires the immediate development of targeted training programs and professional supervision networks.

“Financial management, bringing the issue of financial literacy to the forefront, and rebuilding trust are actually issues that need attention... It is important for ex-users, i.e., former gamblers who have recovered, to be involved in the process. Increasing group therapy and sharing groups is extremely important.” (P7)

“And inpatient treatment options are a bit challenging in gambling addiction... I think that if specific units, hospitals, and inpatient services dedicated to gambling addiction are established, progress could be made more quickly.” (P15)

### **Recommendations Regarding Family and Social Support Systems:**

Families play a central role in both the preventive and therapeutic processes against online gambling. A significant lack of digital parenting awareness often leaves children exposed to uncontrolled gambling content, as parents cannot effectively supervise or model healthy behaviour for technologies they do not thoroughly understand. Furthermore, when families discover the addiction, they often face significant crises. Attempting to cover gambling debts out of guilt or a desire to protect the individual only reinforces the addictive behaviour. Consequently, families require psycho-education on appropriate intervention methods rather than mere information. Actively integrating families into treatment programs is vital for long-term success.

“The family is not involved in this process, but involving the family significantly increases the recovery rate.” (P7)

“Increasing families’ awareness is very important. Because, as you know, the biggest risk in gambling is money. What we observe most often in families is the person paying off their debt, making wrong interventions, not accepting it as an illness, and supporting lying behavior. We actually work with families on these topics.” (P15)

Regarding social support, the weakening of social bonds is a decisive factor in both the development and continuation of online gambling addiction. Prolonged gambling frequently strips individuals of their social lives, environmental relationships, and productive activities. Therefore, the rehabilitation process must focus on reorganizing social life and empowering the client, particularly through social service-based models. Structuring leisure time with activity-focused content and implementing anti-stigma practices are essential steps to facilitate successful reintegration into society and complement the clinical treatment.

“We need to talk to the individual about the possibility of rebuilding their social life because they have spent a long time gambling and there is nothing else.” (P6)

“Making good use of young people’s free time... young people currently have no hobbies. Without

that, alcohol, substance, technology, and gambling addiction come first.” (P15)

“Actually, replacing it with something else, making good use of free time, can be effective for us.” (P15)

**Recommendations Regarding Legal and Technological Regulation:** Existing regulations are inadequate in combating online gambling, and prohibition policies alone are ineffective against its cross-border nature. Furthermore, the existence of state-guaranteed “legal” betting sites inadvertently legitimises gambling, transforming it from a risky behaviour into an “acceptable” form of entertainment. To counter this, legal frameworks must evolve beyond mere punitive measures. Integrating regulations with financial systems to restrict money transfers via banks is a critical preventive step. Additionally, since technical barriers like access bans are easily circumvented using VPNs, technology must be leveraged proactively rather than just restrictively. Implementing mandatory “responsible betting” limits, utilising algorithms for early warning systems based on user behaviour, and enforcing strict filters against trigger-based advertisements are essential. Ultimately, establishing an effective combat model requires multi-stakeholder coordination involving legal, corporate, and policy-level experts.

“For example, there shouldn't be such a thing as legal online betting... When it's called legal, it can be normalized... People can say, ‘It's not gambling, it's legal.’ This perception is very important.” (P12)

“In terms of legal regulations...a legal regulation through banks could actually be effective. Because people can actually transfer money to a site very easily there... access to money really needs to be restricted at some point.” (P14)

“Some pages have something called ‘responsible gambling’... the person's behavior is monitored... maybe it could be controlled in this way or people could set such a limit.” (P5)

**Developing Expert Capacity and Interdisciplinary Approaches:** Effective intervention and treatment in online gambling addiction necessitate

strengthened expert capacity and a robust interdisciplinary approach. Because gambling treatment is a long-term, gradual process, establishing multidisciplinary teams—comprising psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and counselors—is imperative. Specialists must maintain up-to-date knowledge encompassing not only clinical practices but also the evolving digital dynamics, cultural patterns, and socio-psychological dimensions of gambling. This requires institutionalizing continuous education and professional competency measurement systems. Furthermore, professionals treating addiction frequently encounter severe emotional burdens. To mitigate this, continuous supervision, peer sharing, and professional solidarity mechanisms must be structurally integrated into institutions. Ultimately, successfully combating online gambling depends on a comprehensive framework that synergizes individual clinical expertise with continuous training, supervision, and multi-agency coordination.

“In the field of addiction, what we call counter-transference can be much more intense for the specialist's own emotional processes... It is very important to proceed with supervision and share with peers.” (P12)

“There are many different schools of therapy and training. Therefore, specialists in the field need to constantly keep themselves up to date.” (P15)

## Discussion

This research reviews how to combat online gambling behavior following digital transformation. The data first highlights the elements that digitalization complicates in this combat: spread, privacy, invisibility, normalization, rapid gratification, constant triggering, and the virtualization of money. These findings align with the literature; digital platforms facilitate addiction by offering 24/7 access, anonymity, and unlimited variety, making online gambling significantly more accessible than offline forms (Liu et al., 2021; Monaghan & Blaszczyński, 2009). This accessibility causes the behavior to be societally normalized while making its harmful effects invisible (Lancet, 2017). Furthermore, rapid

and continuous interaction in the digital environment, combined with a fast reward cycle, triggers impulsive behaviors and accelerates the addiction cycle (Griffiths & Barnes, 2008; Clark & Zack, 2023). The privacy and anonymity of these platforms also lower the participation threshold by reducing the fear of social stigma, leaving individuals distant from social control and making it difficult for them to perceive the risks of their behavior (Silva & Reed, 2015; Vijayakumar & Vijayakumar, 2023; Ghelfi & Velasco, 2024). In addition, constant exposure to triggers (advertisements, instant notifications, bonus offers etc.) reinforces the urge to gamble and ensures the continuity of risky behavior (Hing et al., 2014; Challet-Bouju et al., 2020). Moreover, the virtualization of spending perception due to the invisible flow of digital money delays loss recognition. This abstract perception weakens the individual's behavioral control and disconnects the gambling experience from financial reality (Ceravolo et al., 2019; Swanton et al., 2024). Therefore, these elements demonstrate that digitalization increases the risk of addiction within psychological, social, and neurobiological frameworks.

Raising public awareness is a primary step in combating online gambling, as perceiving it merely as an activity of chance or entertainment normalizes the behavior and lowers risk awareness at the societal level (Monaghan & Derevensky, 2008; Fiedor et al., 2025). Therefore, prevention strategies must transcend individual responsibility and adopt a public health approach that addresses the social, structural, economic, and media dimensions of gambling (Blank et al., 2021). Furthermore, parental awareness regarding hidden gambling elements in digital environments is crucial. Parents must actively monitor their children's digital behaviors—particularly in gaming and shopping applications—because inadequate digital guidance paves the way for risky behaviors (Fidan & Seferoğlu, 2021). Ultimately, proactive parental attitudes and family awareness are essential for both the prevention and early detection of adolescent gambling behavior (Canale et al., 2016).

Regarding educational institutions, the study notes that current awareness-raising efforts about

gambling addiction remain insufficient. This finding is crucial given research indicating that school-based prevention programs reduce youth gambling frequency, correct cognitive distortions, and strengthen risk perception (Donati et al., 2018; Monreal-Bartolomé et al., 2023). Furthermore, repeatedly implemented education programs increase knowledge levels and reduce risky gambling behaviors (Donati et al., 2022; Kara, 2025). Moreover, participants' suggestions for public service announcements are supported by literature showing that media-based campaigns successfully raise youth awareness about gambling risks and legal limits, reduce peer pressure and stigma, and encourage responsible behavior (Younes & Hronis, 2023; Ngalesoni et al., 2024; Muzakir et al., 2025). Similarly, the study's emphasis on digital and financial literacy aligns with research indicating that developing these skills builds cognitive resistance to online gambling propaganda and reduces risky behavioral tendencies (Siricharoen, 2024; Septanto et al., 2024; İli, 2025). Ultimately, these findings demonstrate that prevention and awareness-based education programs are vital for building protective factors across family, school, and community levels, extending beyond mere individual knowledge acquisition.

Another prominent recommendation is to improve both the structure and content of treatment services for online gambling addiction. This aligns with the Turkish Green Crescent's (2025) "Türkiye Gambling Report," which advocates for developing specialized treatment and rehabilitation services. Because addiction treatment involves addiction-specific dynamics (Grasman et al., 2016), tailored approaches are essential. Indeed, Kovan (2024) highlights a significant lack of evidence-based interventions specifically designed for gambling addiction in Türkiye, further supporting the rationale for this study's recommendations. Furthermore, a multidisciplinary approach incorporating group therapies, psychoeducational interventions, and social skills training has proven effective (Dodig Hundric et al., 2025). Additionally, developing specialized residential services allows individuals to

distance themselves from triggers and focus entirely on the restructuring process (Roberts et al., 2020; Dodig Hundric et al., 2025). Beyond traditional psychotherapy, integrating ex-user support is also well-supported in the literature. Particularly in alcohol and substance addiction, ex-user support effectively fosters identification, motivation, and role modeling (Nixon, 2020; Joung et al., 2024); this study suggests these elements can be similarly applied to online gambling addiction. Finally, addressing treatment barriers for specific professional groups highlights the critical need for confidentiality during the help-seeking process. Consequently, literature increasingly recommends online therapy and counseling for gambling addiction due to their enhanced accessibility and privacy (Rodda et al., 2013; Boumparis et al., 2023).

Strengthening family and social support systems is a decisive factor in both preventing and treating online gambling addiction. Research highlights that parental unawareness regarding technology and digital games exposes children to uncontrolled gambling content (Fidan & Seferoğlu, 2021; Türen & Bağçeli Kahraman, 2025). Therefore, developing robust digital parenting skills is essential. Because families often recognize the addiction only during a crisis, frequently resorting to protective but dependency-reinforcing behaviors like paying off debts. Therefore psycho-educational programs must go beyond simply providing information and actively teach practical intervention skills (Griffiths et al., 2002; Chan et al., 2016). Furthermore, family-based treatment models reportedly reduce relapse risk and enhance treatment adherence by improving communication dynamics (Smith et al., 2015). At the societal level, stigmatization significantly hinders help-seeking; specifically, shame and the fear of exclusion profoundly delay treatment initiation (Hing et al., 2016; Dąbrowska & Wieczorek, 2021). Therefore, implementing community-based programs that increase family involvement, bolster social support networks, and mitigate stigma is crucial. This necessity is strongly corroborated by the "Digital Gambling in Türkiye" research report (Enstitü Sosyal, 2026). Ultimately, this approach provides a

comprehensive framework that supports clinical recovery while promoting sustainable social reintegration.

Participants' assessments that current legal and technological regulations are insufficient in combating online gambling are well-substantiated in the literature. Research demonstrates that prohibitive policies alone are ineffective due to the cross-border and uncontrollable nature of digital gambling; instead, regulatory, preventive, and technologically supported multi-layered approaches are necessary (Beem & Mikler, 2011; Li, 2024). A paradigm shift from a purely punitive model to a public health-oriented, prevention-focused approach is thus required (Fiedler, 2018). Regulating bank transfers and restricting platform access serve as concrete initial steps to control both user behavior and industry risks (Kuzmenko et al., 2022; Egerer & Marionneau, 2024). Because anonymous payment methods continue to facilitate illegal activities (Xue et al., 2022), these technical measures must extend beyond simple restrictions to include early warning and behavior monitoring algorithms. Integrating responsible gambling warnings further increases user awareness and mitigates addiction risks (Auer & Griffiths, 2016). Establishing a comprehensive legal and technological framework, therefore, requires moving beyond mere restrictions to integrate proactive supervision and responsible protocols.

Finally, this study highlights the urgent need to strengthen expert capacity and foster an interdisciplinary approach to combating online gambling addiction. Consistent with existing literature, effective interventions are best achieved through the seamless coordination of multidisciplinary teams (Yücel et al., 2017; Aymedov et al., 2024). Because navigating this complex landscape requires mastery of the cultural, socio-psychological, and technological dimensions of digital gambling alongside clinical knowledge. For this reason, continuous professional training is essential (McDowell et al., 2020). Moreover, establishing continuous supervision and professional solidarity mechanisms is critical for practitioners to maintain their development and mitigate emotional burnout

(Iosim et al., 2021). Cultivating a culture of continuous learning that bolsters professional resilience and ethical decision-making further ensures both individual competence and overall intervention efficacy (Patel, 2012). In conclusion, effectively combating the escalating threat of online gambling addiction requires transcending isolated individual expertise. It demands the cultivation of a robust professional ecosystem that integrates continuous education, supervision, and interdisciplinary coordination, ultimately providing a comprehensive and sustainable framework for future policies and interventions.

## Declarations

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**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflicts of interest related to this study.

**Ethical Approval:** Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Bartın University Rectorate Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee at its 17th meeting held on September 10, 2025, with protocol number 2025-SBB-0862.

**Informed Consent:** Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the interviews. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. Permission was also obtained to record the interviews for research purposes.

**Data Availability:** The data supporting the findings of this study consist of interview recordings and transcripts obtained from professionals working in the field of gambling addiction. Due to ethical considerations, confidentiality commitments, and the potential identifiability of participants, these data are not publicly available. De-identified data may

be made available by the author upon reasonable request and subject to ethical considerations.

**AI Disclosure:** *The scholarly content of this work—including research questions, theoretical framework, methodology, analyses, and results—was entirely generated by the author(s). In the preparation process of this work, artificial intelligence-based tools [ChatGPT 5.2 and Gemini3] were utilized to a limited extent only for the purposes of literature review, language editing, improving expression fluency, and formal checks. The generated AI outputs were carefully reviewed and verified by the author(s). AI-based tools were strictly not used in this study for the purposes of data collection or generation, statistical analysis, or citation/reference generation.*

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