

The paradox influence of peer groups on online gambling behavior of students at the Islamic university in Indonesia

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<p><i>Keywords:</i></p> <p>peer group</p> <p>online gambling</p> <p>social learning theory</p> <p>Albert Bandura</p> <p>university students</p>	<p>The prevalence of online gambling among college students is increasing due to its accessibility and the significant influence of the social environment. One important element that can both encourage and discourage people from participating in this activity is peer groups. Previous research has tended to focus on only one aspect of peer group influence, and there aren't many studies that thoroughly address the multiple roles that peers play in students' online gambling decisions. Using Albert Bandura's social learning theory, this study attempts to examine how peer group social dynamics influence college students' online gambling behaviors. Using a qualitative approach, this study conducted in-depth interviews with 28 Islamic university students from different social contexts and observed their online gambling activities. The results showed that students in the peer group who gambled experienced a process of observation, retention, reproduction, and social reinforcement that increased their engagement. In contrast, students in the non-gambling peer group received negative reinforcement and social support to refrain from the behavior. These findings support the importance of peer-based prevention strategies. Therefore, campuses and stakeholders need to strengthen student communities that instill anti-gambling values and provide positive and educational alternative activities.</p>

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Introduction

Due to its easy accessibility and potential for instant financial gain, online gambling has become a social phenomenon that is becoming more and more common among university students in Indonesia (Hariyadi et al., 2023). They are part of the circulation of gambling money, which is estimated at 600 trillion rupiah, with an average transaction of 100 thousand rupiah (Pusat Pelaporan dan Analisis Transaksi Keuangan [PPATK], 2024). There are 440,000 people between the ages of 10 and 20 participate in these gambling transactions, including students. As a result, there is emergence of social problems since there are changes in the behavior of this young generation (Amoah-Nuamah et al., 2023), from addiction because of the fantasy of always wanting to win (Chóliz et al., 2021), or to commit a crime in the form of stealing money (Curnow, 2021). Because of this fact, the social elements that influence students' desire to gamble online still require further investigation. One important social element that can both encourage and discourage people participating in this activity is peer groups (Savolainen et al., 2019).

Peer group is a group of individuals with the same age range, who have intense social interactions and are often the main environment in the socialization process after the family (Lee & Lee, 2020). In previous studies, peer groups have been linked to a person's propensity to engage in particular activities through social interactions and group norms. Students' gambling behavior is reinforced by peer group communication intensity and social media exposure to online gambling advertising (Savolainen et al., 2021). On the other side, morally upright peer groups can also act as social agents that discourage gambling behavior (Lozano & Rodríguez, 2022). This demonstrates the dual function of peer groups in influencing students' gambling decisions. Therefore,

more thorough research is required to understand the way social interactions influence people's online decisions and the way peer group social mechanisms function in both situations.

Based on this research gap, the article seeks to answer two main questions: how do peer groups influence college students' decisions to engage or not in online gambling and how do this process analyze by social learning mechanism theory? The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the social dynamics within peer groups that may encourage or discourage college students' involvement in online gambling. By understanding the social processes that occur within these two types of peer groups, this research can provide deeper insights into how social interactions contribute to individual decisions regarding risky behaviors.

To answer this research question, the article uses Albert Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes that individuals learn behaviors based on "social models" around them through observation, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1969: 213; Ozer, 2022). Bandura explains that observation is the process of observing the behavior of others, including attention to important details; retention involves the ability to recall the observed behavior through visual or verbal recall; reproduction is the process of imitating the behavior, depending on the physical skills and abilities of the individual; motivation is the drive to perform the behavior, influenced by factors such as rewards, punishments, or personal values (Bandura, 1969; Khozin et al., 2024). These four components are interrelated, indicating that learning does not only occurs through direct experience, but also through observation of the social environment.

If bringing the theory into the context of online gambling, we can see that students who are members of peer groups who gamble

will experience a learning process through intense social interactions with their friends, which encourages them to imitate this behavior. On the other hand, students who are in peer groups that reject online gambling will experience negative reinforcement that strengthens their anti-gambling attitudes and reduces the likelihood of their involvement in the activity.

The role of peer groups is indeed significant in shaping a person's behavior and social values. Through interactions that occur in peer groups, individuals can internalize the norms, values, and behaviors that apply in the group, both in the form of positive and negative behavior (Gavrilets & Richerson, 2017). When the role is categorized as a social agent, this peer group function can be grouped into four functions in shaping student social behavior. The first is the provision of social identity. Here the peer group functions as a mirror for students so that those who are members of a peer group will make it a reflection so that they will adjust to the norms and values of the group, which shapes their identity and behavior patterns (Filade et al., 2019). The second is the provision of social support. This means that peer groups function as a place to share experiences, motivate each other, and provide psychological encouragement that can influence individual choices in various aspects of life (Järvenoja et al., 2025), including online gambling. The third is social conformity. Peer groups function as recognition organizations whose processes occur through social interaction: individuals tend to follow the behavior of their group to gain social acceptance, including in terms of online gambling. If the peer group supports gambling behavior, individuals in the group will be more encouraged to try or even be actively involved (Savolainen et al., 2019). The last function is as an agent of social control. This means that peer groups can

also function as social controls that inhibit deviant behavior (Hing et al., 2023).

In this study, the role of peer groups as social agents is not only demonstrated in the context of facilitating engagement in online gambling, but also as a protective factor that prevents individuals from engaging in the activity. By providing a fresh viewpoint on this dualism of peer group impact in the setting of online gambling that hasn't been investigated in earlier research, this study adds to the body of literature. A more thorough grasp of how people influence their decisions about online gambling is also made possible by the qualitative approach, which enables a deeper investigation of the social mechanisms that take place in peer group interactions. Thus, this research not only enriches the study of sociology and social psychology but also provides practical implications for online gambling prevention efforts in the academic environment.

Method

This research used a case study approach to deeply understand individual experiences in different social contexts (Lim, 2024) specifically how peer group interactions influenced students' involvement in online gambling. A total of 28 student informants from Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, State Islamic University Jakarta were selected based on certain criteria, namely active students, those who are in an online gambling environment, students who are involved in gambling, and those who do not gamble. Of these, 10 were interviewed in person, while 18 were through online interviews. All names of informants were anonymized for ethical purposes (Dougherty, 2021). Data collection was conducted from March to May 2024 through in-depth interviews and observation of online gambling practices, such as slot games, parlay, roulette, online cockfighting gambling, and illegal lottery

(*toto gelap*). This observation aims to understand the patterns of social interaction formed during gambling.

Once the data was collected, qualitative analysis was conducted through interview transcription and thematic coding (Xu & Zammit, 2020) based on Bandura's social learning theory. Initial coding covered aspects of observation, retention, reproduction and motivation in gambling engagement. Key themes identified included the role of peer groups in encouraging or suppressing gambling behavior as well as college students' rationalizations in gambling decisions. The validity of the findings was tested through data triangulation by comparing interviews from various informants and direct observation. In addition, member checking was conducted by providing interview summaries to several informants to ensure the researcher's interpretations matched their experiences.

Results and Discussion

In this section, the categorization on the result part begins by the theme of students' social interaction patterns, then the theme of the role of peer groups in encouraging online gambling practices, and the role of peer groups in preventing this practice. The results are then discussed with Bandura's theory and recent research findings.

The pattern of social interaction among Islamic university students

The results show that the social interaction patterns of Islamic University students in the context of online gambling are influenced by three main factors: social environment, religious norms and values, and digital access. Although the campus has strict rules regarding gambling, some students continue to engage in this activity through more closed friendship networks.

Most students who engage in online gambling do not openly disclose their activities. They consider it a frivolous activity when hanging out with friends, whether at home, campus, or coffee shops, especially at night or during free time. This was conveyed by one of the informants, Dono:

In the hangouts, it's like having fun. One or two people play, the others watch. I'm just watching the team, it's fun...sometimes I saw the player lost, then someone gave a suggestion, try using this, so they were like sharing with each other (Interview with Dono).

This statement was corroborated by other informants, like Nabil, Adit and Irsyad. The range of money they spend to play online gambling ranges from Rp10,000 to millions of rupiah. Informant Nabil and Irsyad admitted that the most they lost was 200 thousand rupiah, while informant Adit suffered far more losses, namely up to two million.

In contrast, other students—especially women—said that the religious environment was a protective factor that prevented them from engaging in gambling. Lulu, for example, emphasized that family communication plays a big role: “We have been taught from our family that online gambling is not good.” Social support and an understanding of the negative consequences make them able to reject gambling despite being in a permissive environment.

The involvement of Islamic students in online gambling is also due to access to digital information and this accelerates the spread of online gambling practices. Social media and instant messaging applications are the main channels for disseminating information about betting opportunities and gambling sites. This information was conveyed by several informants such as Abduh and Nikmat who admitted that they were first introduced to online gambling

through advertisements on social media or recommendations from friends. Another informant, Adit, also said that *“The first time I got it was from being sent a link from my friend Nipi. It sounded good, so I tried it.”*

These findings can be analyzed using Albert Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes that individual behavior is formed through social interaction and observation (Bandura, 1969; Rumjaun & Narod, 2020). Students who witness their friends gambling tend to internalize the behavior and consider it a normal activity. Bandura calls this concept *vicarious learning*, where individuals learn through the example of others in their social environment (Bandura et al., 1963).

Previous research by Sanscartier et al., (2020) showed that individuals in social environments that are permissive of gambling are more likely to engage. This finding is in line with the results of this study, where students who have a social network that supports gambling are more prone to engage than those in a strong religious community.

From an economic perspective, gambling is often seen as an instant solution to financial pressure. This is expressed by Dono: *“I saw him win, wow I got some money from him, and after that I thought that playing online gambling was not bad, then I found out, I asked my friends, and finally I tried playing.”* This statement shows that gambling is not just entertainment but also seen as a quick way to earn money. This finding is reinforced by Lewiandy et al., (2024) which showed that individuals with economic limitations are more vulnerable to gambling, especially if they see it as a lucrative economic opportunity.

In addition, psychological factors such as academic stress also influences students' decisions to gamble. Informant Irsyad stated, *“when exams come, I feel very stressed. Playing online gambling for a moment makes me feel more relaxed”* (Interview with Irsyad). The

study by Buchanan et al., (2020) showed that individuals with high stress levels tend to use gambling as a stress release mechanism. In the context of university students, high academic pressure drives them to look for alternatives to reduce anxiety, and gambling is often perceived as a quick way out.

Although there are groups of students who are permissive towards gambling, resistance remains strong among students who have social networks based on religious norms. Several informants such as Eli, Hoki, Rina, and Farhat confirmed that their environment is very strict against gambling. Eli said: *“My neighborhood is very strict against gambling. My friends in the study group often remind me that it is haram and dangerous”* (Interview with Eli). These findings are in line with the research of Bush et al., (2021) and Pisarska & Ostaszewski (2020) which show that social norms and community support can be protective factors against engagement in risky behaviors, including gambling.

Thus, patterns of social interaction among Islamic university students in the context of online gambling are strongly influenced by peer group factors, access to digital information, and economic and psychological pressures. Although there are groups that tend to support gambling, religious norms still act as a barrier for many students. This shows that there are complex dynamics in the process of socialization and the formation of student behavior towards online gambling.

Peer group as a driving agent for online gambling

This study found that peer groups have a significant influence in encouraging students to engage in online gambling. This influence appears in various forms of social interactions that create a permissive environment for gambling, ranging from normalization of

behavior, subtle and explicit social pressure, to encouragement from close friends who have been involved first. In the context of students at an Islamic college in Jakarta, peer groups proved to be an important mediator in shaping attitudes and behaviors related to online gambling.

One informant, Dono, explained that at first he did not understand how to play online gambling. However, after being taught by his friend, he began to understand and then tried it. *"I didn't understand at first, then my friend taught me, so I understood more and tried it,"* he said. This statement confirms that involvement in online gambling is not a completely autonomous individual decision, but rather the result of a social process involving interpersonal interaction, learning and influence. In this case, gambling is not only practiced as an individual activity that is hidden but instead presents itself as a collective activity characterized by a spirit of togetherness and curiosity.

The normalization of gambling occurs when this activity begins to be considered as regular entertainment in certain social groups. Students who were initially only spectators or simply listening to their friends' conversations about online gambling eventually began to be interested in trying. Karin, one of the informants, stated that her curiosity arose after seeing her friends playing online slots. She said, *"when I see my friends were playing slots, I wanted to join in, and I wanted to depo (read: deposit) too."* In fact, the term 'depo' has become a normal word heard among students on the Islamic campus, as revealed by informants Dina, Sari, Nia and Ali. With constant exposure to gambling in everyday social interactions makes individuals more familiar with the practice and eventually encouraged to participate. Also, the normalization of online gambling is reinforced by communication patterns in peer groups that often emphasize the benefits over the risks involved. With

constant discussions about the benefits of online gambling, students who were initially hesitant or uninterested eventually began to see this activity as something worth trying.

This normalization is reinforced by communication patterns within peer groups that more often highlight the benefits of gambling than the risks. In many informal conversations, students share stories of wins, playing strategies, or betting site recommendations. Narratives of losses or negative impacts are rarely discussed openly, so what surfaces is a picture biased towards benefits. As a result, students who were initially hesitant or uninterested are encouraged to try. This process illustrates one of the mechanisms in Albert Bandura's social learning theory, namely *observational learning*, where individuals learn through observing the behavior of others and the results they get.

Bandura's theory explains that individual behavior is shaped by the processes of observation, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1969). In this context, students who watch their friends gamble and win will internalize the experience as something positive and profitable. This modeling process becomes stronger when individuals see that the behavior gets reinforcement from the social environment, such as praise, admiration, or recognition from their friends. Informant Nabil, for example, said, *"The first time that I won a big prize, I felt really proud, my friends were also amazed. So, I wanted to play more."* The positive social response to winning creates a kind of positive reinforcement that strengthens the tendency to continue gambling.

Previous research by Sanscartier et al., (2020) supports these findings. They showed that individuals who are in a social environment that is permissive towards gambling have a higher tendency to engage. In the context of Islamic university students, this environment may not be explicitly

open but exists in the form of informal social networks – whether in hangouts, digital friendship groups, or more closed communities – that provide space for gambling to grow.

In addition to modeling mechanisms, social pressure also plays a crucial role. In many cases, students feel compelled to gamble not because of internal urges, but because of group pressure so that they do not feel different or alienated. Informant Towel stated, *“My friend in my circle is the one who made me play online gambling; he is the one who brought me into this online gambling.”* Meanwhile, Adit added, *“Sometimes it feels like if we’re all together, we feel like there’s no problem if we play gambling.”* This is a clear form of peer pressure, where the desire to be accepted and not left out of the group pushes individuals to go with the flow, even if it goes against their personal values.

The economic aspect is also a significant motivating factor. Some students see online gambling as a way out of the financial difficulties they are experiencing. In this context, gambling is no longer interpreted as entertainment, but as a survival strategy or a search for economic opportunities. Dono, for example, recounted his experience when he first won: *“The first time I played, I won immediately, so I kept playing, thinking it was really easy to get money from here.”* Early wins like this often led to an illusion of control, the belief that they are able to control the outcome of gambling based on a particular strategy or sheer luck.

In the study of behavioral economics, this phenomenon has been widely discussed. Lewiandy et al. (2024) note that individuals under financial stress are more susceptible to the temptation of gambling as they see it as a quick income alternative. Early wins provide false hope and build unrealistic expectations about the likelihood of future success, when in reality it more often leads to losses (Juma & Pandelaere, 2024).

Psychologically, gambling also provides certain sensations that can be addictive (Gürbüz & Gürcan-Yıldırım, 2025). The euphoria of winning, the suspense of waiting for results, and the adrenaline released in the process of playing make gambling a form of escape from other life pressures, including academic stress or emotional conflict. When this activity is associated with feeling good, being socially accepted, and providing economic opportunities, it is no wonder that many students end up getting caught up in this practice on a recurring basis.

However, it is important to note that not all college students are easily influenced. Students who are in a strong religious environment or have social networks that reject gambling tend to be more resistant to this temptation. Religious values, open family communication, and a community that is active in ethical and moral discussions are protective factors. As informant Eli pointed out in the previous section, an environment that consistently reminds people of the dangers and prohibitions of gambling is an effective bulwark.

Thus, this study confirms that peer groups act as the main agent in shaping gambling behavior among Islamic college students. This influence works through the process of normalization, social pressure, economic expectations, and learning through observation.

Peer group as a preventive agent for online gambling

Peer groups not only act as a factor that encourages students to engage in online gambling but can also be a factor that protects them from engaging in the activity. In this section, it is found that the process of peer groups playing a role in preventing individuals from playing online gambling is by creating strong social norms, open communication about the dangers of online

gambling, and social support, as described as follows.

Peer groups form strong moral norms within their group that explicitly reject online gambling. The social norms revealed by Lulu can be referred to as preventive norms and individual responsibility, namely norms that emphasize awareness of the negative consequences of an action and the obligation of individuals to bear the consequences of their actions. This can be seen from her statement: *"You already know what the consequences are, you already realize that if you do that, what the consequences will be, then you have to bear everything."*

This norm arises from the group's agreement to reject activities that are considered harmful, both financially and socially. Those who are students at an Islamic university generally have a strong social-religious background that can prevent them from getting involved in gambling. This finding confirms other studies who found that students who are in a social environment that has moral norms against deviant behavior tend to have lower levels of involvement in risky activities (Malik et al., 2024). In these studies, it was found that students who are members of groups that have strong moral values tend to find it easier to refuse gambling invitations compared to those who are in an environment that is permissive to gambling.

Besides the strong moral norms, open communication in peer groups is also one of the factors that can prevent students from engaging in online gambling. The findings in this study show that students in peer groups with open communication tend to be more aware of the risks associated with online gambling. Informant Lili, for example, explained that she and her friends often talk about the risks of online gambling as part of their daily communication: *"Then when we know about it, we have communicated it, so we don't let ourselves get sucked in, like*

this friend of ours. Yes, the point is that it is often discussed: let's not mess our friendship, let's just be real." Through this open communication, individuals in the group feel safer rejecting gambling without fear of losing social acceptance. Other informants such as Tina, Nana, Aang and Putra agree that such communication plays a role in reinforcing anti-gambling values within the group. With open communication and mutual reminders, peer groups can be an effective social protection system in preventing student involvement in online gambling.

In groups that have openness in discussing social issues, students find it easier to gain an understanding of the dangers of gambling and get support when they face social pressure to gamble. It is likely in line with previous studies which shows that effective communication in social groups can be a powerful tool in shaping individual perceptions of a behavior, including in this case online gambling (Siricharoen, 2024). In a communicative environment, students are more likely to discuss the negative impacts of online gambling and remind each other to stay away from the practice.

Unknowing the way to gamble is also contributing factor to prevent the online gambling. This study found that some informants, such as Liam, Anda and Lili, stated that they never tried online gambling because they felt they did not understand the game system. Informant Lili revealed that she was not interested in gambling because she did not know how to register and play. *"I've never played online gambling because I don't understand it either. I don't understand how to play it."* This ignorance is one of the factors that make students have no desire to try online gambling, even when they are in a social environment that supports the activity.

Previous literature also found that a lack of knowledge about online gambling and a lack of interest in the activity are additional

factors that prevent students from engaging in gambling. Because they believe they don't grasp the gaming structure, how to play, or even the risks involved in gambling, many students aren't interested in trying their hand at online gambling. Research by Amoah-Nuamah et al., demonstrates that people who lack a thorough understanding of how gambling works are less likely to partake in the activity (Amoah-Nuamah et al., 2023). This can be considered as personal disinterest which is a significant deterrent to internet gambling. People showed no interest in online gambling, either because they disliked games that involved betting or because they had personal beliefs that forbade them. This individual choice to participate in or refrain from particular activities are greatly influenced by personal preferences (Riley et al., 2021). When it comes to online gambling, even in situations where gambling is acceptable, students who are not interested in the activity are typically more resistant to peer pressure.

Finally, another main way that peer groups function as a protective agent is through the social support provided by peers who have strong moral values against gambling. In the social environment of university students, individuals tend to conform to the norms prevailing in their group. If the peer group instills values that oppose online gambling, individuals in the group are more likely to avoid the activity. In this sense, peer groups have an important role in shaping individual character and behavior, especially in providing social support that can strengthen attitudes towards a social issue (Reid et al., 2014), including gambling.

This study found that students who are in peer groups that reject online gambling tend to get negative reinforcement that strengthens their attitude to stay away from the practice. Informant Lulu, for example,

revealed that when she received an invitation from her male friend to gamble, her other friends immediately reprimanded her and prevented her from online gambling.

Well, sometimes if my boyfriend forced me to play gambling and continually said to me to play gambling, like let's go play, let's go play and so on. Then my female friends directly intervened and said to my boyfriend 'what the hell are you doing like that, please do not force anyone to play the gambling'. Then my female friends suggested me to do not join in playing the gambling because they see that playing gambling is not good for me (Interview with Lulu).

This kind of social support provides reinforcement for individuals to stick to more positive values and avoid risky behavior.

The findings of this study clearly suggest that peer groups not only play a role in encouraging students' involvement in online gambling but can also be a protective factor that prevents them from engaging in the activity. Moral norms against gambling, open communication, and strong social support are key elements that make students more resistant to invitations to gamble. In addition, incomprehension and disinterest in online gambling are also barriers that reduce students' involvement in this practice.

Social learning process of online gambling based on bandura's theory

This research highlights the role of peer groups in shaping students' behavior towards online gambling by using Albert Bandura's social learning theory. In his theory, Bandura (1969) explains that individuals learn through observation, retention, reproduction, and motivation (as shown on the diagram below, these aspects are described based on the collected data). In the context of online gambling, students who often interact with friends who gamble tend to imitate this behavior because of social

Diagram 1. *The Gambling Learning Process Following Bandura's Theory*



Adapted from Bandura's (1969) work, "Social learning theory of identificatory processes."

incentives, while those who are in groups that reject gambling internalize norms against it. Students who were in a gambling permissive environment were more frequently exposed to discussions about gaming strategies, winnings, and links to online gambling sites. This is in line with the research of Sirola et al. (2021) and Chóliz et al. (2021) which showed that virtual communities and social groups have a great influence on a person's gambling habits. Groups that support gambling also provide greater motivation, mainly through financial winnings or social status gained within the group.

In addition, internalization of values in the group has a significant effect on students' attitudes towards online gambling. As explained by Kaakinen et al. (2020) and Kou (2020), social dynamics in groups determine whether a person will engage in deviant behavior or reject it. Students who are in groups that reject gambling more often hear arguments about the negative impact of

gambling from the moral, legal and financial aspects. For example, some informants in this study refused to give money to their friends to gamble because they felt the action was unjustified.

At the reproduction stage in Bandura's theory, individuals begin to imitate observed behaviors. Students who are in the pro-gambling group eventually start gambling, both as active players and as observers who join in placing bets. Studies by Khalid & Lida (2021) and Delfabbro et al. (2021) support this finding, suggesting that repeated exposure to gambling in a social circle can accelerate individual engagement. In contrast, students in the gambling-averse group also reproduced the values they internalized by rejecting gambling invitations and reprimanding their friends who played. Lim & Wang, (2023) found that groups that instill anti-gambling values can reduce one's tendency to try online gambling.

Motivation also plays an important role in students' decision to continue gambling or

avoid it. In pro-gambling groups, students who win bets gain social recognition and are considered more experienced, which in turn creates a cycle of incentives to continue playing. Adu-Akoh (2023) showed that social factors such as recognition from peers are one of the main motivations for students to gamble. In contrast, students in the anti-gambling group stayed away from the activity because they received social support from their friends (Pitt et al., 2024).

The results of this study strengthen the findings of Schunk & DiBenedetto (2020) which shows that social and cognitive factors play a role in an individual's social learning process. Students' social environment determines whether they will see gambling as a normal activity or as something to be avoided.

This study highlights the importance of community-based social interventions to shape a more positive environment, such as access restrictions to gambling sites (Caillon et al., 2019) and digital literacy campaigns to raise students' awareness of the risks of online gambling (Jones et al., 2024). Some literature also suggests that campuses strengthen student groups that instill anti-gambling values (Låftman et al., 2020) and encourage their involvement in more constructive activities, such as entrepreneurship, leadership and financial literacy (Debarliev et al., 2022).

Conclusion

This study confirms that peer groups play a major role in influencing university students' involvement in online gambling, both as a motivating and inhibiting factor. Social environments that are permissive of gambling tend to increase students' involvement, whereas groups that reject gambling create social norms that protect

them from this activity. Using Albert Bandura's social learning framework, this study shows that the processes of observation, retention, reproduction and motivation in social interactions are highly influential in shaping college students' decisions to gamble or avoid it.

The implications of these findings highlight the importance of social-based prevention strategies that strengthen the role of peer groups in building a gambling-free academic environment. This study recommends that campuses and governments are expected to implement stricter regulations on access to gambling sites and campaign against the risks of online gambling. In addition, strengthening more positive alternative activities, such as entrepreneurship and leadership, can be an effective solution.

However, this study has limitations as it did not explore the role of family and social media and was cross-sectional. Further studies with a longitudinal approach are needed to understand the dynamics of students' involvement in online gambling more deeply.

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Declaration of Ownership

This article is our original work.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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