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University of Papua New Guinea

School of Business & Public Policy



“Socioeconomic Impact Study on Gambling in PNG: The Perceptions, Realities and Disparities of Playing Pokies in Four Provinces”

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Outline

• Executive Summary		1-10
• Acronyms		V
• Acknowledgement		Viii
• CHAPTER ONE	INTRODUCTION	11-16
• CHAPTER TWO	AIMS, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	17-19
• CHAPTER THREE	LITERATURE REVIEW	21-25
• CHAPTER FOUR	QUALITATIVE STUDY	26-41
• <i>QUALITATIVE STUDY OF <u>FOCUS GROUPS</u></i>		26-41
• <i>QUALITATIVE STUDY OF <u>GAMBLERS</u> & <u>AFFECTED OTHERS</u></i>		42-75
• CHAPTER FIVE	SOCIAL IMPACTS OF POKER GAMBLING	76-91
• CHAPTER SIX	ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF POKER GAMBLING	93-96
• CHAPTER SEVEN	PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF POKER GAMBLING	98-99
• CHAPTER EIGHT	RESPONSIBLE POKER GAMBLING POLICIES	103-108
• CHAPTER NINE	FUTURE DIRECTIONS ON POKER GAMBLING	110-113
• CHAPTER TEN	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	115-120
• CHAPTER ELEVEN	RECOMMENDATION	122-125
• REFERENCE		127-130
• APPENDIX		132

1. Introduction

- **Aim of the Research Report: Was to develop a methodology for evaluate the social, psychological & economic impacts of poker gambling in PNG.**
- **This presentation summarizes the main areas of the report.**
- **Gambling in this research mainly refers to poker gambling or poker machines.**
- **Funding was made possible by NGCB.**

1.1. Gambling Background

- **Gambling industry in PNG is of a process of expanding opportunities and participation, coupled with an associated expansion of gambling expenditure and problems.**
- **This report, from the tip of an iceberg, reveals an increase in proportions of PNGeans participating at least once in three or more types of gambling since 2000.**
- **However, the lack of research information for comparative analysis purpose remains many of the questions unanswered.**
- **The comparisons within PNG and with other countries cannot be done here due to the nonexistence of research data.**

1.1. Gambling Background Continue...

- **All gambling activities are governed by the Papua New Guinea *Gaming Control Act 2007 (GCA)*.**
- **The legislation enables the establishment of the National Gaming Control Board (NGCB), whose principal function is to consider applications for, and where appropriate granting, permits and licenses and to control the operations of gaming machines.**
- **Gambling includes: casinos, pokies, lotteries, horse-racing and sports betting, electronic gambling machines and similar licensed games and access to internet gambling located overseas.**

1.1. Background Cont...

- **The legislative environment for gambling is focus on promoting the benefits of gambling.**
- **The PNG Gambling Control Act 2007 takes an economic approach.**
- **Gambling Control Act 2007 should be amended aiming at: controlling the growth of gambling; and preventing and minimising the harm caused by gambling.**
- **NGCB should publish a Strategic Plan on Preventing and Minimising Gambling Harm, which outlines primary prevention and population approaches.**

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & SAMPLE

*** A Qualitative Study – 3 Sample Groups/ Population:**

(A) Focus Group;

(B) Individual Gamblers; and,

(C) Affected Others

*** Assessment Techniques Used: Questionnaires &
Interviews**

3. The Research

The research questions were designed to:

- **measure the prevalence and intensity of people's participation in poker gambling during the last 12 – 24 months;**
- **measure the range and extent of the social and economic impacts of gambling on respondents who participated in poker gambling during the last 12 – 24 months;**
- **measure the number of fairly heavy gambler respondents had in their lives during the last 12 – 24 months;**
- **measure the impacts the gambling behaviour of those fairly heavy gamblers had on the respondent's life during the last 12 – 24 months.**

3. Continue...

- **All respondents were asked if they had any poker gamblers in their lives in the last 12 – 24 months and, if so, how many poker gamblers were in their lives and what their relationship was to them, for example sibling.**
- **For respondents with other gamblers in their lives, they were asked to rate (from very negative to very positive) the impact that other peoples' poker gambling had had on the domains of life.**

4. RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

Provinces	Enga	East New Britain	Morobe	NCD	Total (All Provinces)
Focus Groups (FG)	N = 2 FG (9 participants: 4 females & 5 males)	N = 2 FG (6 participants: 2 females & 4 males)	N = 2 FG (7 participants: 3 females & 4 males)	N = 3 FG (12 participants: 6 females & 6 males)	N = 9 FG (34 participants: 15 females & 19 males)
Women gamblers (25+ years)	N = 4 individual interviews	N = 3 individual interviews	N = 4 individual interviews	N = 9 individual interviews	N = 20 individual Interviews
Men gamblers (25+ years)	N = 7 individual interviews	N = 5 Individual interviews	N = 4 individual interviews	N = 15 individual interviews	N = 31 individual Interviews
Younger gamblers (<25 years)	N = 5 individual interviews (1 female & 4 males)	N = 4 individual interviews (1 female & 3 males)	N = 4 individual interviews (2 females & 2 males)	N = 12 individual interviews (4 females & 8 males)	N = 25 individual Interviews: (8Fe & 17M)
Affected others	N = 6 individual interviews (2 females & 4 males)	N = 4 individual interviews (4 males)	N = 4 individual interviews (1 female & 3 males)	N = 9 individual interviews (3 females & 6 males)	N = 23 individual Interviews: (6Fe & 17M)
Total FG participants	N = 9	N = 6	N = 7	N = 12	N = 34
Total gamblers & affected others	N = 22	N = 16	N = 16	N = 45	N = 99
Total interviewed Province wise	31 participants	22 participants	23 participants	57 participants	Total Participants N = 133

Table Summary

- Table reveals the total number of participants who were interviewed in each of the stated provinces.
- A total of 133 participants participated in the research; and of the 133, 34 participants were from the nine focus groups, 76 participants were the old and young gamblers, and 23 participants were the affected others.
- Of the 133 participants, 49 were females and 84 were males.
- Respondents were recruited from three different ways (focus groups, gamblers and affected others).

5. Individual Poker Gamblers; Focus Groups; & Affected Others

Results & Discussions

Impacts of Poker Gambling

5.1. IG, FCs & AOs Impacts

- **Poker gamblers' and their family's financial situation was identified as being impacted on by gambling behaviour.**
- **Financial impacts were noted to be greater for those from lower and average socio-economic groups because relatively more of their money was spent on poker gambling instead of other necessities.**
- **Health and wellbeing impacts were wide-reaching for poker gamblers and their family and included weight loss, stress, low self-esteem, hypertension, aggression, irrational thoughts.**
- **Loss of trust and strains and breakdowns in relationships were also noted.**

5.1. IG, FCs & AOs Impacts Cont...

- **Dropping of living standards; e.g., food, clothing, school fees, etc..**
- **Less money to spend on the basics**
- **Employment Impact - Poor work performance**
- **Longer lunch breaks – in the poker room**
- **Late for work – due to poker**
- **Stealing from employers & others**
- **Physical health problems; e.g., increased smoking, alcohol**
- **Lies they told..**
- **Relationships Breakdown**
- **Withdrew from other networks /activities**
- **Benefits from poker gambling; e.g., entertainment, social interaction, etc.**

5.1. Impacts Continue...

- Low to average wage earners were seen as having higher rates of poker gambling problems compared with high income earners.
- The social isolation of some poker gamblers was noted as a cause of problem gambling.
- Community or individual contributions, such as death or sick, were identified as being impacted on by increasing levels of poker gambling.
- At a wider level, poker gambling was seen to be a drain on welfare, social and health services and the justice system.
- Spending on gambling was considered to have a big negative impact than spending on other businesses.
- Few employment benefits were seen to arise from gambling environments. (handouts – see Cases)....

6. Research Limitations

- Understanding of the social impacts of gambling is limited by a serious lack of high quality research.
- As a result both the negative as well as the positive effects of poker gambling tend to be overstated.
- It claims that pokies create significant revenue, new jobs and regenerate local economies; or that they create massive social problems through increases in problem gambling and crime tend to be overstated.
- The evidence base shows that pokies are neither as beneficial as supporters claim, nor as damaging as opponents fear.

6.1. Problem Gambling

- **Problem or heavy gambling** is defined as behaviour that is out of control and that disrupts personal, family, financial and employment relations.
- It is linked to **financial problems** such as debt, divorce, lost productivity, crime (such as theft and fraud), depression and suicidal thoughts.

7. Risk Factors & Disadvantage Groups

- **Disadvantaged social groups who experience poverty, unemployment, dependence on relatives/ wantoks, and low levels of education and household income are most likely to suffer the adverse consequences of increased poker gambling.**
- **Problem /heavy gamblers are more likely than non-problem players to have heavy and/or problematic consumption of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs.**
- **Although individuals from these groups may not spend more money on poker gambling in absolute terms, they do spend a higher proportion of their incomes than wealthier players.**

8. Venue Availability

- Availability and convenience are strongly associated with problem gambling.
- Poker machines located outside towns and centralized in particular vicinity tend to require deliberate effort.
- Convenience is therefore a crucial regulatory issue

Continue...

- **Poker venues increases rates of problem gambling in the local population.**
- **Location of poker venues within 50 miles of an individual's home can double the prevalence of problem gambling.**
- **This research also suggests that the provision of specialist problem gambling services and public health initiatives can militate against such increases.**

9. Long Term Impacts

- Studies from Australia, NZ & the US have found that the prevalence of problem gambling has remained stable or declined over time despite the introduction of pokies and other forms of gambling.
- However, in PNG and other developing countries, prevalence of problem gambling is increasing due to the increase in poker machines & venues.

Continue...

- **Since poker machines are the fastest growing sector of gambling markets, often displacing other forms as they spread to new venues, it is not too late for PNG to learn practical examples from Australia or US to provide some of the preventative measures and treatment services for problem gamblers.**

10. Prevention & Treatment

- The provision of public health information and specialised treatment services.
- Public health approaches that focus on the prevention of problem gambling behaviours in the general population can save costs in the long term.
- Raising awareness is particularly important in PNG.
- Many individuals are simply not aware of the risks gambling can pose, nor are they aware of the availability of services to treat it?
- The immediate issue for NGCB is to establish an office to provide public health information, specialised treatment services, and counseling for problem gamblers.

11. Responsible Gambling Policies

- Public Health and Harm Reduction**
- Responsible Poker Gambling Policies**
- Prevention Strategies**

12. Future Directions on Poker Gambling

- Possible Reform Direction**
- Emerging Issues for Policy Consideration**

13. Recommendation

- **Recommendations for Responsible and Sensible Poker Gambling**
- **The Poker Gambling Environment**
 - **Poker Machines**
 - **Smoking Areas**
 - **Poker Rooms/ Venue**

Recommendation Continue...

- **Venue Availability**
- **Problem Gambling**
- **Raising Awareness to Public & Poker Operators**
- **Gaming Control Act 2007 be amended to accommodate social implications**

Recommendation Continue...

- **Strategic Plan on Preventing & Minimising Poker Gambling Harms**
- **Workplace Gambling Policy**
- **Future Research**

The End

Bula

Vinaka