

Problem Gambling and Anxiety among Filipino Adults Engaged in Online Gambling: A Correlational Study

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Abstract. This study examines the relationship between problem gambling and anxiety among Filipino adults engaged in online gambling. The research used a correlational approach, gathering data from 138 participants to discuss their gambling habits, reasons for gambling, and anxiety levels. The findings revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.79$, $p = 0.001$) between problem gambling and anxiety, indicating that individuals who struggled more with gambling were also experiencing higher levels of anxiety. Most respondents reported gambling for financial gain or as a way to escape stress, with those who gambled more frequently showing more significant anxiety symptoms. While participants generally reported moderate anxiety levels, the results highlight an apparent concern for mental health in the context of online gambling. This study highlights the increasing mental health risks that are linked to gambling in the Philippines, especially among those individuals who are struggling with both problem gambling and anxiety. The findings suggest a need for accessible mental health support and targeted interventions for those affected by these struggles. It also underscores the importance of promoting responsible gambling practices to help individuals who engage in gambling activities minimize the harm caused by online gambling. These insights can help policymakers and mental health professionals create more responsive programs and services.

Keywords: Problem gambling; Online gambling; Mental health; Gambling behaviour.

1.0 Introduction

Online gambling has experienced significant growth worldwide, offering users more convenient access to various betting platforms. According to Gambling Industry News (2025), it is estimated that around 26% of the world's population has tried gambling at some point in their lives. The rapid growth of various online gambling platforms has worsened the problem by making gambling more accessible to a much larger number of people of all ages all around the world. These platforms are easily accessible from smartphones and computers, which allows individuals to gamble at any time, wherever they are. This increased accessibility has made it easier for those who may not have previously engaged in gambling to be involved with these activities, leading to a rise in gambling-related issues among a larger audience.

In the Philippines, online gambling has continuously increased over the years. According to the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR), between 1% and 4% of Filipinos are experiencing more gambling-related problems, as the growing number of casinos and online gambling platforms make it easier and more accessible to engage in various gambling activities (Georgieff, 2024). Additionally, according to a study conducted by TGM Research in 2022, 41.5% of Filipinos engage in lottery and other games of chance, such as

Powerball and Bingo. Additionally, with the rise of online gambling platforms available through commonly used apps like GCash, more and more people are getting involved, as Kho and Chandran (2024) reported. These reports show that a large number of people are taking part in gambling, making it a growing issue that affects many individuals of all ages.

Problem gambling happens when a person's gambling activities start to cause problems in their life, such as money troubles, stress, or issues with family and work. It can be challenging to control, and many people struggle to stop even when they know it harms them. Problem gambling is recognized as a significant public health concern due to its potential to cause severe psychological distress to an individual. People struggling with problem gambling often find it hard to control their urge to gamble, which often leads to money problems, stress, and conflicts within their family and friends. It can also significantly impact their mental well-being. Moreover, when gambling becomes a problem, it can lead to low self-esteem, stress, anxiety, and depression (Gambling and Mental Health, 2021). As online gambling is available 24/7, people may end up gambling more frequently, making their anxiety, stress, or other mental health struggles even worse.

The American Psychiatric Association (2022) explained gambling disorder in the DSM-5-TR as a persistent and recurrent maladaptive pattern of gambling behavior that leads to significant impairment or distress. Associated behaviors may include betting increasing amounts of money, inability to limit or stop gambling, and preoccupation with gambling (American Psychological Association, 2023). Research shows that people struggling with gambling problems often face severe financial hardships, strained relationships with their loved ones, and significant mental health challenges, including high levels of stress and emotional distress (Koomson et al., 2022; Irie & Kengo, 2022; Yeung et al., 2023). Additionally, Banghoy et al. (2022) explored the adverse effects of online gambling in Barangay Bahay Toro, Quezon City. Their findings suggest that online gambling addiction can worsen existing challenges, leading to more frequent conflicts in relationships, difficulties at work, and greater financial instability.

Anxiety is one of the most frequently reported mental health concerns among individuals struggling with problem gambling. Studies have shown that problem gambling can have serious consequences, including heightened emotional distress, social isolation, and financial struggles (Livazović & Bojčić, 2019). Furthermore, a review by Atlantic Behavioral Health (2024) highlighted the mental health effects of gambling disorders, emphasizing that compulsive gambling is often linked to mood disorders such as depression and anxiety. The ongoing stress from gambling can worsen these conditions, leading to severe emotional distress and even physical health issues (Atlantic Behavioral Health, 2024).

With online gambling becoming more and more common in the Philippines, many Filipinos are facing its psychological impacts, including anxiety. Exploring the link between problem gambling and anxiety among Filipino adults can provide valuable insights to help shape policies and support systems that protect mental well-being and reduce the risks associated with online gambling.

Thus, this study aims to understand the correlation between problem gambling and anxiety among Filipino adults who participate in online gambling. Specifically, it seeks to understand how problem gambling influences anxiety levels and whether certain gambling behaviors worsen anxiety symptoms. The findings will help in understanding the psychological effects of online gambling and also offer valuable insights to mental health professionals and gambling regulators in order to help them develop more effective support systems and interventions.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

Descriptive research is an exploratory method that helps a researcher describe a population, circumstance, or phenomenon (Singh, 2024). Thus, the study utilized the descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between problem gambling and anxiety. On the other hand, Bhandari (2021) defines correlational research as a design that investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. According to Bhat (2023), descriptive correlational research is a type of research design that tries to explain the relationship between two or more variables without making any claims about the cause and effect.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was carried out across different online communities on Facebook, where Filipino adults involved in online gambling were selected as participants. Recruitment specifically occurred through groups like Online Gambling Philippines, Online Gamblers PH, Online Casino Philippines, Online Casino Gaming Philippines, Online Casino PH, and Philippines Legitimate Online Casino Games. These groups serve as platforms for individuals engaged in online gambling, offering a relevant and accessible population for exploring the relationship between problem gambling and anxiety among Filipino adults.

2.3 Research Participants

The total population of Filipino adults engaged in online gambling is unknown due to overlapping memberships across various online platforms. To obtain an adequate sample, 138 participants were selected using Cochran's formula, with a 7% margin of error and a 90% confidence level. Participants were chosen through non-probability sampling, with the inclusion criterion being Filipino adults, living in the Philippines, and aged 21-45 who have engaged in online gambling at least once a week. Exclusion criteria included individuals who engage in offline or physical gambling, as the study focuses purely on online gambling, and those with severe cognitive impairments or other conditions that could hinder understanding of the survey.

2.4 Research Instrument

This study utilized two well-established instruments: the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7), to assess the severity of problem gambling and anxiety levels among Filipino adults engaged in online gambling.

The Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) was developed by Ferris and Wynne (2001) and is a recognized tool for evaluating the severity of problem gambling. The Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) is a widely used nine-item scale for measuring the severity of gambling problems in the general population (Currie et al., 2012). The PGSI demonstrates a unidimensional factor structure and has shown good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .84$ (Ferris & Wynne, 2001).

The Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7), created by Spitzer et al. (2006), is a 7-item scale used to assess the severity of generalized anxiety disorder. The GAD-7 showed excellent internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha of .92 and good test-retest reliability with an intraclass correlation of .83 (Spitzer et al., 2006). This questionnaire is suitable for use in the study as it does not aim to diagnose a person with the said disorder using this questionnaire alone. The researcher used this questionnaire only to have an accurate or estimated measurement of the level of anxiety experienced by the respondents.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection process for this study started by obtaining ethical clearance from the university's Ethics Committee, where the researcher is enrolled, the University of the Cordilleras. This important step ensures that all research activities follow ethical guidelines and that the rights and well-being of those who took part are protected. Before beginning the research, the researcher also got permission to use the measurement tools from the respective organizations. The researcher obtained an email approval to use the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) from the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA). On the other hand, the GAD-7, a tool used to measure anxiety, does not require special permission because it was developed with an educational grant from Pfizer Inc. Once all the ethical approvals were collected, the next step was to recruit participants. This careful process ensures that the study is conducted responsibly and respectfully, keeping the safety and rights of everyone involved as a top priority.

Participants were recruited from various Facebook groups dedicated to online gambling, such as Online Gambling Philippines, Online Gamblers PH, Online Casino Philippines, Online Casino Gaming Philippines, Online Casino PH, and Philippines Legitimate Online Casino Games. These groups shared a post containing a brief description of the study, its objectives, eligibility criteria, and an invitation to participate. The post also included a link to an online survey hosted on Google Forms. Before answering the survey, participants must read and acknowledge an informed consent form. The consent form outlined the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and the voluntary nature of participation. Only those who provided digital consent were allowed to proceed with the survey.

The online questionnaire consisted of demographic information, such as gender, age, gambling frequency, and reason for gambling, the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) to assess gambling severity, and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) to measure anxiety levels. The estimated time to complete the survey was 7–15 minutes. Once data collection was completed, responses were reviewed for accuracy and completeness. Incomplete, duplicate, or inconsistent responses were removed to maintain the integrity of the dataset. After data cleaning, statistical analysis was conducted using the Jamovi App. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic data, while correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between problem gambling and anxiety among Filipino adults engaged in online gambling.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This study strictly followed ethical research guidelines to ensure the rights and well-being of all the participants. Before data collection began, ethical approval was secured from the university's Ethics Committee. Before participating, participants were fully informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and potential risks. They were required to provide digital consent before proceeding with the survey. Participation was entirely voluntary, and individuals had the right to withdraw from the study without providing a reason or facing any consequences. To protect participants' privacy, all responses remained confidential and were only used for research. Data was stored in a secure, password-protected database, and access was limited to the researcher. Following ethical research guidelines, the collected data was deleted after a designated retention period.

Since the study involves sensitive topics such as gambling behaviors and anxiety, efforts were made to minimize potential psychological distress among participants. At the end of the survey, participants were provided with contact details of mental health support services available in the Philippines, such as the National Center for Mental Health Crisis Hotline, in case they experienced any distress. By adhering to these ethical principles, this study ensures the responsible conduct of research while contributing valuable insights into the relationship between problem gambling and anxiety among Filipino adults engaged in online gambling.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Distribution of Respondents

The results (see Table 1) showed a slight gender imbalance among the 138 Filipino adult participants engaged in online gambling. Among the respondents, 77 individuals (56%) identified as male, while 61 (44%) identified as female. This distribution indicates a greater representation of males in the sample than females. The larger number of male participants in the study may reflect a familiar pattern where men are more likely to take part in gambling activities compared to women. In a study by Evangelista et al. (2021), it was found that male young adults were more likely to participate in gambling, often influenced by peer pressure, curiosity, and the thrill associated with betting.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Gender, Age Group, Gambling Frequency, and Primary Gambling Motivation

Dimension	Category	n	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	77	56%
	Female	61	44%
Age Group	21-33 (Younger)	101	73%
	34-45 (Older)	37	27%
Gambling Participation Frequency	Daily	57	41%
	A few times a week	70	51%
	Once a week	11	8%
Primary Gambling Motivation	Financial Gain	88	64%
	Escape from Stress	35	25%
	Social Engagement	10	7%
	Others (Boredom, Hobby, Predictions)	5	4%

Regarding age, there was a concentration of respondents in the younger age group. Among the 138 Filipino adults engaged in online gambling, the majority – 101 individuals (73%) – belonged to the 21 to 33 age range. In contrast, only 37 participants (27%) were classified in the older age group of 34 to 45. This distribution suggests that younger adults are more involved in online gambling, likely due to their greater access to technology,

higher digital literacy, and also their frequent use of online entertainment platforms. These factors may contribute to their increased exposure and engagement in various internet-based gambling activities.

Regarding gambling frequency, a significant portion of the respondents—70 individuals (51%)—reported gambling a few times a week, while 57 participants (41%) engaged in online gambling daily. Only 11 respondents (8%) indicated gambling once a week. These findings suggest that most participants gamble regularly, with many doing so either several times a week or daily. This frequent gambling behavior may be influenced by the easy access and convenience of various online gambling platforms, and could also indicate the development of habitual or problematic gambling patterns.

As for the primary reasons for gambling, the majority of the 138 Filipino adult participants reported financial gain as their primary motivation for gambling, accounting for 88 respondents (64%). This was followed by 35 participants (25%) who engaged in gambling as a way to escape from stress, 10 respondents (7%) who gambled for social engagement, and five individuals (4%) who cited boredom or other reasons for gambling. The large number of respondents who gamble for financial reasons reflects a common trend among Filipinos who see online gambling as a quick and accessible way to earn money. Economic challenges, limited job opportunities, or the appeal of instant rewards may influence this mindset. Corporation (2023) reported that approximately 32% of Filipino online gamblers, particularly women, participate in gambling activities in hopes of financial gain.

For many individuals, online gambling offers an easy and appealing way to try to earn extra income or cope with financial needs. Its availability through mobile devices and the lure of quick winnings make it more attractive, especially for those looking for fast financial relief. A significant number of the respondents also indicated that they gamble in order to relieve stress, highlighting the psychological role that gambling plays to individuals. This aligns with the findings of Evangelista et al. (2021), who noted that emotional regulation, particularly managing stress or life pressures, is a primary motivator for many young Filipino adults engaging in gambling. For some individuals, online gambling may offer a temporary escape from daily stressors.

The relatively small percentage of participants who gamble for social engagement (7%) aligns with the findings of Prasetyawati and Lamoste (2021), who suggested that some Filipino gamblers, particularly in online settings, engage in gambling as a way to connect with others or maintain social bonds. The rise of multiplayer and interactive gambling platforms may further contribute to this trend, offering opportunities for individuals to socialize while participating in gambling activities. Lastly, 4% of respondents indicated boredom, hobby, or predictive interests as their reason for gambling. This finding is consistent with the recreational aspect of gambling identified in Capstone-Intel's (2023) survey on Filipino online gambling behavior, which highlighted that some users engage in gambling primarily for entertainment or to pass the time.

3.2 Level of Problem Gambling and Anxiety among Filipino Adults Engaged in Online Gambling

As presented in Table 2, the results revealed that the mean score for problem gambling among the 138 Filipino adult respondents was 14.7 (SD = 6.43), indicating a severe or problematic level of gambling behavior. Meanwhile, the mean score for anxiety was 12.7 (SD = 6.33), corresponding to a moderate level of anxiety symptoms.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for Problem Gambling and Anxiety among Filipino Adults Engaged in Online Gambling*

Variable	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Problem Gambling	138	14.7	6.43	Severe / Problematic
Anxiety	138	12.7	6.33	Moderate

The elevated mean score for problem gambling indicates that, on average, participants show signs of gambling addiction, such as being overly focused on gambling, trying unsuccessfully to stop, and continuing to gamble despite facing negative consequences. This aligns with findings from recent studies in the Philippines, including one by Evangelista et al. (2021), which highlighted that young Filipino adults are more likely to engage in risky gambling behaviors, especially online, due to the ease of access and the temptation of quick financial gains. Additionally, the moderate anxiety levels observed among participants suggest that many may be experiencing emotional distress, such as constant worry, nervousness, or physical symptoms of anxiety. This supports previous research by Sundqvist and Wennberg (2022), which found a strong connection between problem

gambling and anxiety, further highlighting the mental health challenges that often accompany gambling behavior.

3.2 Relationship between Problem Gambling and Anxiety

As shown in Table 3, the correlation analysis reveals a strong positive relationship between problem gambling and anxiety among Filipino adults engaged in online gambling, with a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.79 and a p-value of 0.001. This result is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, leading to rejecting the null hypothesis. The findings suggest that as individuals exhibit more problematic gambling behaviors, their levels of anxiety also tend to rise. The strength of this relationship implies that individuals struggling with gambling issues are more likely to experience heightened symptoms of anxiety.

Table 3. Relationship between Problem Gambling and Anxiety among Filipino Adults Engaged in Online Gambling				
Variables Correlated	r	p-value	Decision on H ₀	Decision on Relationship
Problem Gambling and Anxiety	0.79	.001	Reject	Significant

This finding aligns with existing literature on the comorbidity of gambling disorders and emotional distress. In the Philippine context, Marimla (2024) conducted a qualitative study that explored the psychological impact of gambling addiction, noting that the accessibility and immersive nature of online gambling contribute to compulsive behaviors and significant emotional distress, including anxiety. Participants in Marimla’s study highlighted how the constant availability of gambling platforms and the lure of potential financial gains create a cycle of repeated gambling, often leading to increased emotional strain and anxiety.

4.0 Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal a strong relationship between problem gambling and anxiety among Filipino adults engaged in online gambling. The significant correlation between these two variables highlights the mental health risks tied to gambling behaviors, especially for individuals who gamble frequently or use it as a way to cope with stress. The results suggest that anxiety is often present alongside problematic gambling, underscoring the urgent need for mental health support and intervention. This growing concern is consistent with the broader issue of gambling's impact on mental health in the Philippines, as emphasized by Albano (2025) in Malaya Business Insight's article on responsible gaming. The increasing prevalence of online gambling has been linked to rising mental health challenges, particularly anxiety, making it crucial to implement responsible gaming practices and strengthen support systems to safeguard individuals from the adverse effects of gambling on their well-being.

5.0 Contributions of the Author

The author confirmed, reviewed, and approved the final version of this work.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflicts of interest about the publication of this paper.

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