

The threat of online gambling to low-income communities: Insights from a bibliometric analysis

Ancaman judi online di kalangan masyarakat berpenghasilan rendah: Wawasan dari analisis bibliometrik

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Abstract

Gambling has long been linked to various social issues, including poverty. In Indonesia, concerns have increased as some social assistance recipients have been found participating in online gambling. This study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the global research landscape as to the relationship between gambling and poverty over the past decade, laying the groundwork for the development of evidence-based social policies. It employed a bibliometric approach, following the PRISMA guidelines. Data were collected from the Scopus database and analysed using VOSviewer software. The findings indicate that research on gambling is predominantly conducted by high-income countries, with limited focus on developing nations such as Indonesia. The results also support the general strain theory, which proposes that gambling among the impoverished is a response to economic hardship and social marginalisation. The study concludes that tackling gambling-related poverty requires evidence-based, cross-sector public policies that include economic empowerment, social protection, and mental health services. Furthermore, these findings highlight potential areas for further research to examine the causal relationship between poverty and gambling behaviour in developing countries.

Keywords: bibliometric analysis; gambling studies; poverty context; public policy; social assistance

Abstrak

Perjudian telah lama dikaitkan dengan berbagai masalah sosial, termasuk kemiskinan. Di Indonesia, kekhawatiran meningkat karena beberapa penerima bantuan sosial ditemukan terlibat dalam perjudian daring. Studi ini bertujuan untuk memberikan gambaran komprehensif tentang lanskap penelitian global terhadap hubungan antara perjudian dan kemiskinan selama dekade terakhir, yang menawarkan landasan untuk mengembangkan kebijakan sosial berbasis bukti. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan bibliometrik mengikuti pedoman PRISMA. Data diambil dari basis data Scopus, lalu dianalisis menggunakan perangkat lunak VOSviewer. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa penelitian tentang perjudian masih didominasi oleh studi dari negara-negara berpenghasilan tinggi, sementara perhatian masih terbatas di negara-negara berkembang, termasuk Indonesia. Temuan ini juga mendukung Teori Ketegangan Umum, yang menjelaskan perjudian di kalangan masyarakat miskin sebagai respons terhadap tekanan ekonomi dan eksklusivitas sosial. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa penanggulangan kemiskinan terkait perjudian memerlukan kebijakan publik berbasis bukti dan lintas sektor yang mengintegrasikan pemberdayaan ekonomi, perlindungan sosial, dan layanan kesehatan mental. Lebih lanjut, temuan ini juga membuka jalan bagi penelitian di masa mendatang untuk mengkaji hubungan kausal antara kemiskinan dan perilaku perjudian dalam konteks negara berkembang.

Kata kunci: analisis bibliometrik; studi perjudian; konteks kemiskinan; kebijakan publik; bantuan sosial

Introduction

Gambling is a longstanding social and economic activity that continues to evolve, both in its form and its influence on society. Over the past decade, gambling has become an increasingly complex, multifaceted issue with the rise of online gambling platforms with easy access significantly contributing to this focus.

The social consequences of this shift are also substantial. As a result, social problems such as high divorce rates (Elton-Marshall et al. 2018, Syvertsen et al. 2023), mental health issues (Rodda et al. 2018, Derevensky et al. 2019), and various crimes related to debt (Rodda 2021, Malkin & Stacey 2024) have emerged. Ultimately, a complex relationship between gambling and poverty has developed, and this remains a key area of concern.

Groups with low economic vulnerability are often easy targets for both legal and illegal gambling activities (Canale et al. 2017, Resce et al. 2019, Latvala et al. 2021, Badji et al. 2023). Difficult living conditions and limited access to better economic prospects drive these groups to engage in such reprehensible activities in pursuit of quick financial gain. In many cases, individuals from lower-income backgrounds feel pressured to seek quick alternatives to increase their income (Hamilton-Wright et al. 2016, Matheson et al. 2021, Koomson et al. 2022, Matheson et al. 2022). Therefore, it is vital to recognise that gambling is not merely an individual problem but a shared concern for all stakeholders, especially policymakers.

Previous studies have shown a connection between poverty and gambling (Hamilton-Wright et al. 2016, Sims 2017, Resce et al. 2019). Poverty is seen as a factor that drives people towards gambling. Those experiencing financial hardship often seek shortcuts, and gambling is frequently viewed as a quick way to improve their financial situation. However, another factor often overlooked is that gambling can worsen poverty. When low-income individuals become trapped in gambling, they risk losing money that should be spent on basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. As a result, gambling, initially considered a way to escape life's difficulties, can actually worsen economic struggles and deepen a vicious cycle that is hard to break. Therefore, understanding this phenomenon is crucial for developing effective strategies to address the growing issue of poverty in society.

The situation in Indonesia emphasises the increasing urgency of escalating this issue. In recent years, there has been a notable rise in low-income individuals participating in online gambling activities (Dzaki et al. 2024, Fahrudin et al. 2024, Kamalludin 2024, Khithobi et al. 2024). Even more concerning is the report that social assistance recipients (bansos) are allegedly using funds meant for their families' basic needs to gamble (Solehudin et al. 2025). This unusual situation not only raises serious moral and social concerns but also threatens the success of various social welfare policies introduced by the government.

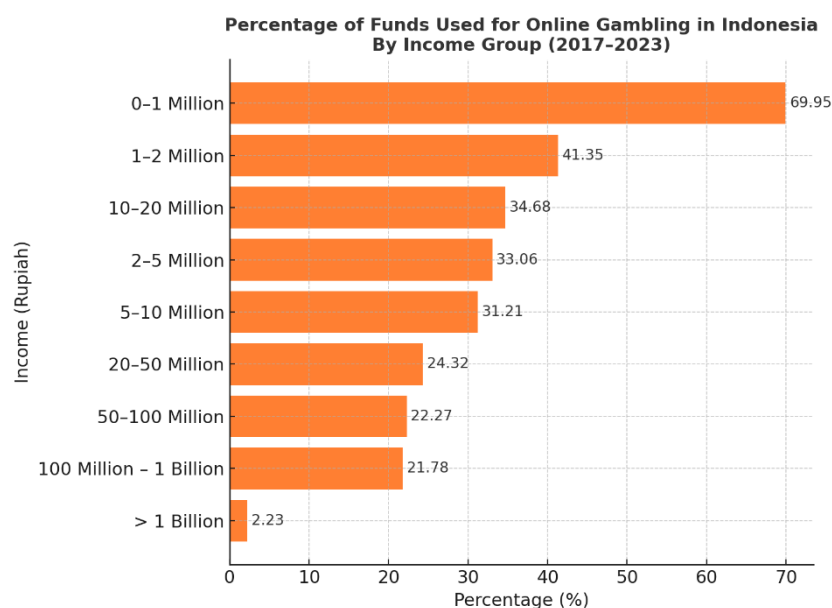


Figure 1.
Online gambling participation in Indonesia by income levels
Source: Modified by the authors from GoodStats (2025)

The data presented in Figure 1 show that low-income groups in Indonesia predominantly engage in online gambling. Those earning less than IDR 1 million per month dedicate nearly 70% of their income to online gambling, while individuals earning IDR 1-2 million allocate 41.35%. This underscores that online gambling constitutes a significant expense for vulnerable communities, many of whom rely on social assistance. The widespread nature of online gambling reveals underlying structural problems in regulation and law enforcement, highlighting the urgent need for evidence-based, cross-sector public policies.

When government social assistance programmes, designed to improve lives, are misused, their noble objectives are undermined. Therefore, it is essential to develop a comprehensive, evidence-based understanding of the relationship between gambling and poverty worldwide. In-depth research will aid in creating more effective policies and offer better insights into why people from disadvantaged backgrounds turn to gambling. By employing a data-driven approach and conducting detailed analysis, we can develop more sustainable and practical solutions to address this problem.

While gambling has garnered increasing interest in academic circles worldwide, there remains limited research exploring its connection to poverty, especially in Indonesia. Most studies focus on moral, psychological, or legal issues (Fahrudin et al. 2024, Kamalludin 2024, Solehudin et al. 2025), often overlooking their socioeconomic impacts on vulnerable groups. To fill this gap, this study employs a bibliometric approach to systematically analyse global research trends, key themes, leading institutions, and collaboration networks related to gambling and poverty. By examining publication data from the Scopus database between 2015 and 2024, this study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the international development of this field, with a particular emphasis on emerging gambling challenges in Indonesia. The findings are expected to offer valuable academic insights and practical guidance for policymakers in countries facing similar socioeconomic challenges.

This study is theoretically grounded in general strain theory (Agnew 1992), which views deviant or maladaptive behaviours as responses to stress and frustration stemming from adverse social and economic conditions. In poverty-stricken contexts, persistent financial hardship, social exclusion and limited legitimate opportunities generate emotional tension, which can lead individuals to gamble as a temporary coping mechanism. This perspective helps explain the issue not just as a moral failing but as a consequence of broader structural inequalities and psychological distress. Using this framework provides a strong conceptual basis for understanding the global research trends identified through bibliometric analysis.

Research Method

This study employs bibliometric analysis to examine the development and trends in research on the relationship between gambling and poverty over the past decade. Literature selection followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. VOSviewer software was used to visualise collaborative networks and research patterns. The results seek to enhance understanding of contributions in this area and promote increased collaboration among researchers.

Table 1.
Inclusion and exclusion criteria in this study

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scientific articles published between 2015 and 2024 Mainly focus on gambling and poverty or related socioeconomic aspects Written in English Include original research or systematic review articles Indexed in Scopus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-scientific articles (editorials, letters to the editor, conference abstracts) Articles in languages other than English Research that addresses only one topic (e.g., only gambling without socioeconomic context) Duplicate or inaccessible articles in full

Source: Processed by author

All scientific publications analysed were obtained from Scopus, one of the most comprehensive and reputable bibliographic databases covering multiple scientific fields (Baas et al. 2020). The search took place in July 2025, using the following Boolean query: TITLE-ABS-KEY (“gambling” OR “online gambling”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (“poverty” OR “low-income” OR “socioeconomic deprivation” OR “financial hardship”). Initial selection was based on the title, abstract and keywords, followed by a comprehensive review of the content. Inclusion and exclusion criteria are detailed in Table 1.

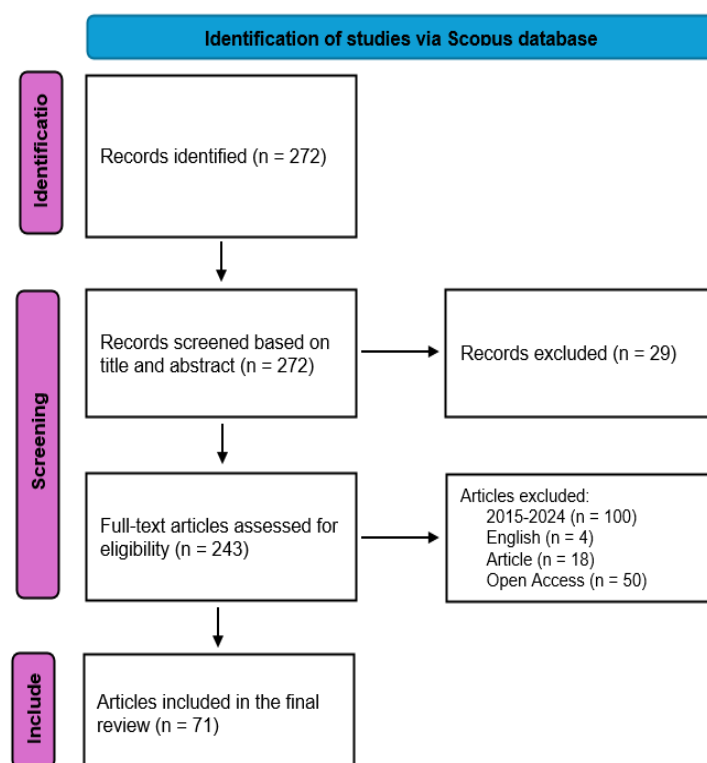


Figure 2.
The PRISMA flow guidelines in this research
Source: Created by the authors

The selection process used in this study adhered to the PRISMA flow diagram guidelines, aimed at ensuring transparency and systematic article selection (Page et al. 2021). The initial step is identification, where all relevant articles are gathered from search results using Boolean methods in the Scopus database. This step is essential to guarantee that all potential sources are considered before moving to the next phase. After identification, the process proceeds to screening. During this stage, duplicate articles are removed to prevent data redundancy, and the titles and abstracts of the remaining articles are carefully examined. The aim is to identify articles that initially seem pertinent to the research topic.

Next, the eligibility stage is conducted, during which the full contents of the selected articles are reviewed thoroughly. This review adheres to predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure that only articles aligned with the research focus are considered. Finally, in the included stage, articles that meet all the set criteria are included in the final analysis. To document the entire selection process clearly and transparently, a PRISMA flowchart will be presented, offering a visual overview of each step in the article selection process. Therefore, the PRISMA flowchart, as shown in Figure 2, not only guides the process but also improves the credibility and accountability of the research conducted.

This research depends on a single primary database, Scopus. Although it is among the leading academic databases, it has certain limitations that can impact research outcomes. A key concern is publication bias, primarily because using a single database excludes literature from other important databases, such as Web of Science and Google Scholar, as well as additional relevant sources. This restriction can lead to incomplete data collection, potentially affecting the validity and generalisability of the research results.

Additionally, the selection of keywords in this study may restrict its scope. Using overly narrow keywords can result in important articles being overlooked. Therefore, careful keyword selection is essential for capturing and analysing all relevant literature. However, this study aimed to reduce selection bias by following a systematic and transparent process aligned with PRISMA guidelines. Adhering to these standards makes the research more structured and accountable, ensuring more accurate and comprehensive insights into the subject.

Results and Discussion

This results and discussion section presents the main findings from the bibliometric analysis, highlighting key research trends, patterns and dynamics related to gambling and poverty. The results and findings of this study are discussed by combining quantitative data with qualitative insights to provide a comprehensive overview of the field's development and its policy implications for this phenomenon.

Annual publication trends

An analysis of publication trends from 2015 to 2024 reveals a consistent increase in scientific articles examining the relationship between gambling and poverty. Initially, the number of publications was low, with only three articles in 2015 and 2016. The count gradually grew over the following years, reaching four articles in both 2017 and 2018, and six in 2019. A more notable increase began in 2020, with seven publications, then continued to rise to 10 in 2021, 11 in 2022, and peaked with 12 articles in 2023. In 2024, 11 publications were recorded, indicating that academic interest in this topic remains high, although slightly lower than in the previous year.

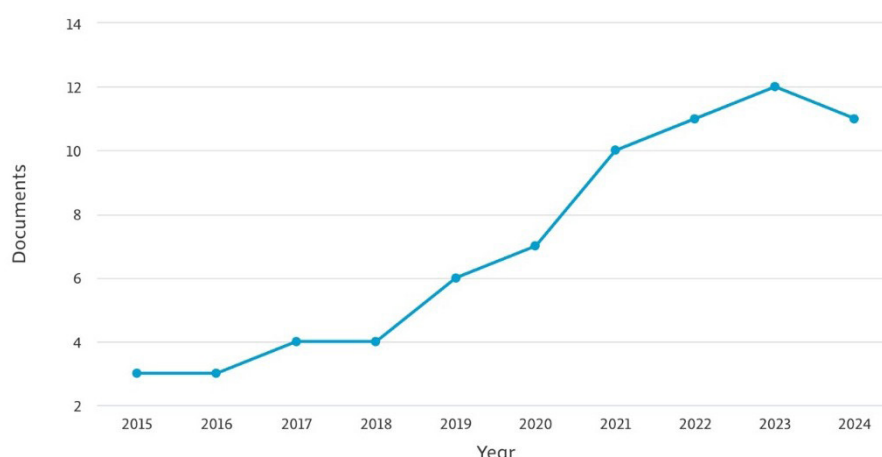


Figure 3.
Publication trends between 2015 and 2024
Source: Data from Scopus in 2025

Figure 3 illustrates a linear trend showing a steady and significant increase in interest in this topic over the past decade. Overall, this trend suggests that the link between gambling and poverty is increasingly recognised as a serious social issue that demands a cross-disciplinary and cross-national scientific approach.

Keyword distribution

A co-occurrence analysis of author keywords revealed four primary thematic clusters identified through bibliometric visual mapping using VOSviewer. Each cluster, as illustrated in Figure 4 below, is represented by a different colour and indicates a specific thematic focus in the literature exploring the connection between gambling and poverty.

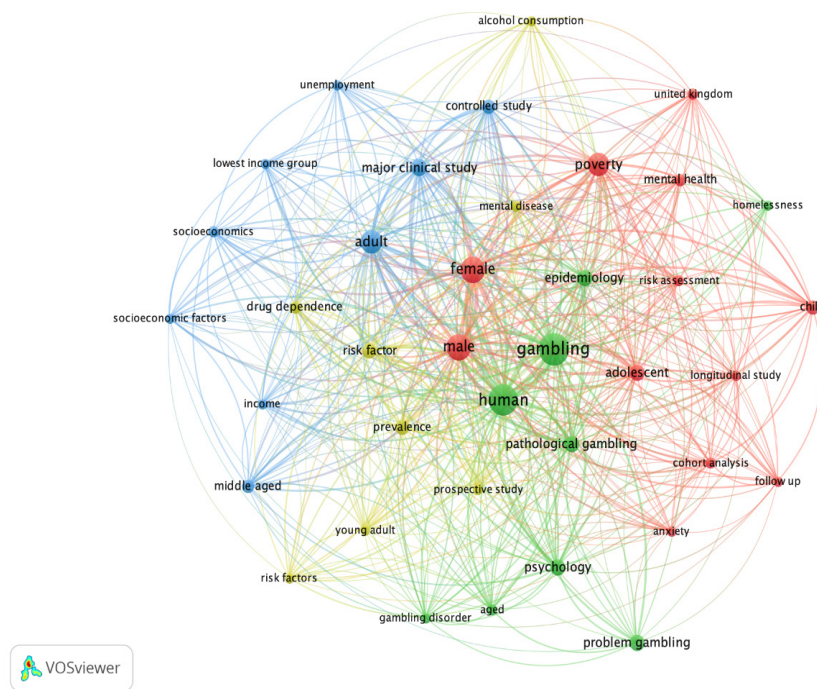


Figure 4.
Keyword distribution
Source: Data from VOSviewer

The green cluster includes keywords such as “human”, “gambling”, and “epidemiology”, which illustrate a macro-level approach to gambling as a broad, cross-population social phenomenon. The term “human” refers to the general human population, while “gambling” is the core topic, and “epidemiology” indicates a quantitative approach to mapping the prevalence and impact of gambling. This cluster reflects efforts to understand gambling as a public health issue.

The red cluster includes the keywords “male”, “female”, and “poverty”, highlighting a focus on gender and socioeconomic status. Many studies in this cluster explore differences in gambling behaviour between men and women, along with how poverty serves as a risk factor that exacerbates gambling problems. This highlights the significance of considering demographics when developing prevention and intervention strategies.

The blue cluster features keywords like “adult”, “income”, and “socioeconomics”, illustrating the connection between an adult’s financial situation and gambling behaviour. Research in this group often focuses on how income levels and economic inequality influence gambling participation, as well as their effects on household financial stability. This underscores the perspective of gambling as both a behavioural concern and a structural economic issue.

The yellow cluster comprises the keywords “prevalence”, “drug dependence”, and “alcohol consumption”. It mainly focuses on comorbidity, or the link between gambling and other types of addiction, like drugs and alcohol. Research within this cluster generally adopts a clinical or psychological approach and sees gambling as part of the spectrum of addictive behaviour disorders.

This keyword mapping shows that research on gambling and poverty is multidisciplinary, including public health, economics, demographics and addiction. These groups also suggest a shift from seeing gambling only as an individual behaviour to a broader, societal understanding, taking into account social factors and comorbidities. Therefore, these results emphasise the need for a cross-sectoral approach, involving health, social welfare and economics, in developing evidence-based gambling prevention policies.

Most productive institutions

An analysis of author affiliations reveals that the topic of the link between gambling and poverty has garnered attention from various academic and social service institutions in developed countries, particularly in North America and Europe. Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of the top 10 institutions most active in publishing research on this topic.

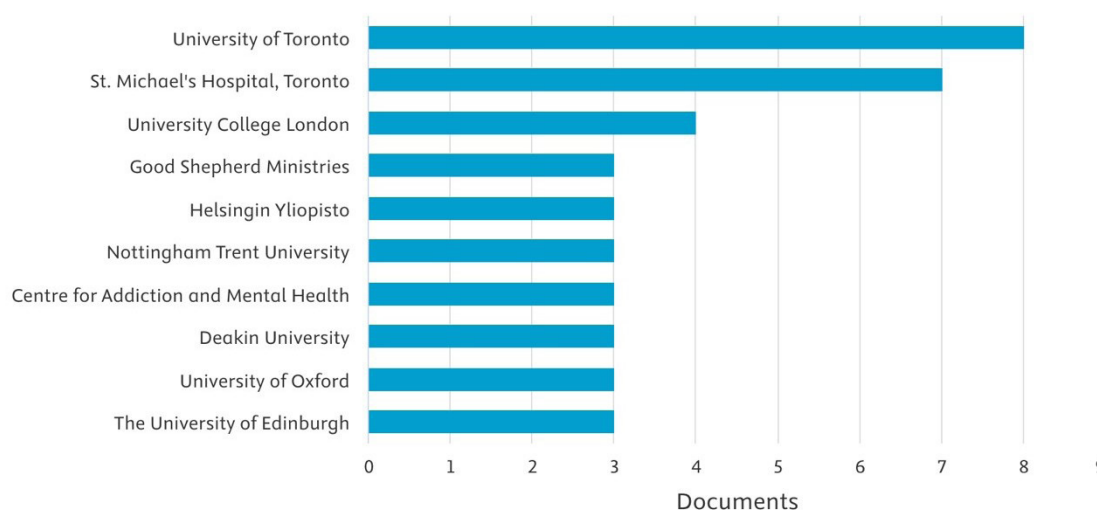


Figure 5.
Most productive institutions
Source: Data from Scopus in 2025

The University of Toronto secured the top position with eight contributions. This accomplishment highlights the university's strong research emphasis on public health, poverty and addictive behaviours, including gambling. St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, an academic hospital affiliated with the University of Toronto, ranked second with seven contributions, highlighting the healthcare sector's strong engagement in producing evidence-based research in this field.

University College London (UCL) authored four papers, strengthening the UK's standing as a hub for addiction research and gambling-related social issues. Several other institutions each published three papers, including Good Shepherd Ministries (Canada), Helsingin Yliopisto (University of Helsinki), Nottingham Trent University, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (Canada), Deakin University (Australia), University of Oxford (UK), and the University of Edinburgh (UK).

These data demonstrate that the main contributions originate from institutions in Canada and the UK, which adopt a cross-sector approach involving academic, clinical and social organisations. This emphasises the broad recognition that gambling, especially in poverty contexts, is more than an individual issue; it is part of a complex socio-structural problem. Furthermore, the contributing institutions include not only universities but also hospitals, addiction centres and socio-religious groups, highlighting that research on this topic is highly relevant and closely linked with field intervention practices.

Main journals

The distribution of publications by journal indicates that the link between gambling and poverty has been widely covered across various interdisciplinary journals, ranging from public health to social and behavioural psychiatry. Eight journals each published at least two articles during the period 2015–2024. These journals play a vital role in disseminating scientific knowledge on this topic, with a particular emphasis on public health, mental health and social epidemiology approaches.

Table 2.
List of most productive journals

Journal name	Quartile (Highest percentile)	Number of articles	Publisher
Journal of Gambling Issues	Q2 in Clinical Psychology	7	CDS Press
BMC Public Health	Q1 in Public Health, Environmental and Occupational Health	4	Springer Nature
Frontiers in Psychiatry	Q1 in Psychiatry and Mental Health	2	Frontiers Media SA
Frontiers in Public Health	Q1 in Public Health, Environmental and Occupational Health	2	Frontiers Media SA
Journal of Affective Disorders	Q1 in Clinical Psychology	2	Elsevier
PLOS ONE	Q1 in Multidisciplinary	2	Public Library of Science
Public Health	Q1 in Public Health, Environmental and Occupational Health	2	Elsevier
SSM - Population Health	Q1 in Health (social science)	2	Elsevier

Source: Processed by author from Scopus

Table 2 shows that the Journal of Gambling Issues (JGI) is the most productive in this dataset, with seven publications, highlighting its role as a key outlet for gambling research, especially from Canadian institutions. Journals like the Journal of Affective Disorders and Frontiers in Psychiatry showcase the close link between problem gambling and mental disorders, including depression and addiction. PLOS ONE and SSM – Population Health emphasise the importance of public health and social determinants approaches in understanding gambling behaviour among low-income populations. The prominence of Q1 and Q2 journals suggests that this topic has been taken seriously within academia and has been published in reputable international journals, both open-access and traditional.

Global collaboration network

The visualisation of the collaboration network presented offers a clear view of how interactions occur between authors and countries worldwide. Collaboration is especially prominent among countries where English is the primary language. The United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Australia collaborate, showcasing their extensive and fruitful networks for research and scientific work publications.

Figure 6 displays comprehensive data on these collaboration patterns, illustrating the relationships between authors from these countries. This not only reflects the active exchange of knowledge but also shows how research can benefit from cross-border collaboration. Therefore, this visualisation functions both as an analytical instrument and as a means to understand how international collaboration can enhance knowledge sharing and promote innovation in various areas.

Nonetheless, significant gaps still exist between Asia and other regions, emphasising that the potential for cross-regional research and collaboration has not yet been fully realised. This is particularly worrisome given the region's changing social and economic landscape. Furthermore, it is notable that, to date, there have been no publications from Indonesia specifically examining the connection between gambling and poverty. This social issue has become increasingly important and urgent in research over the past three years.

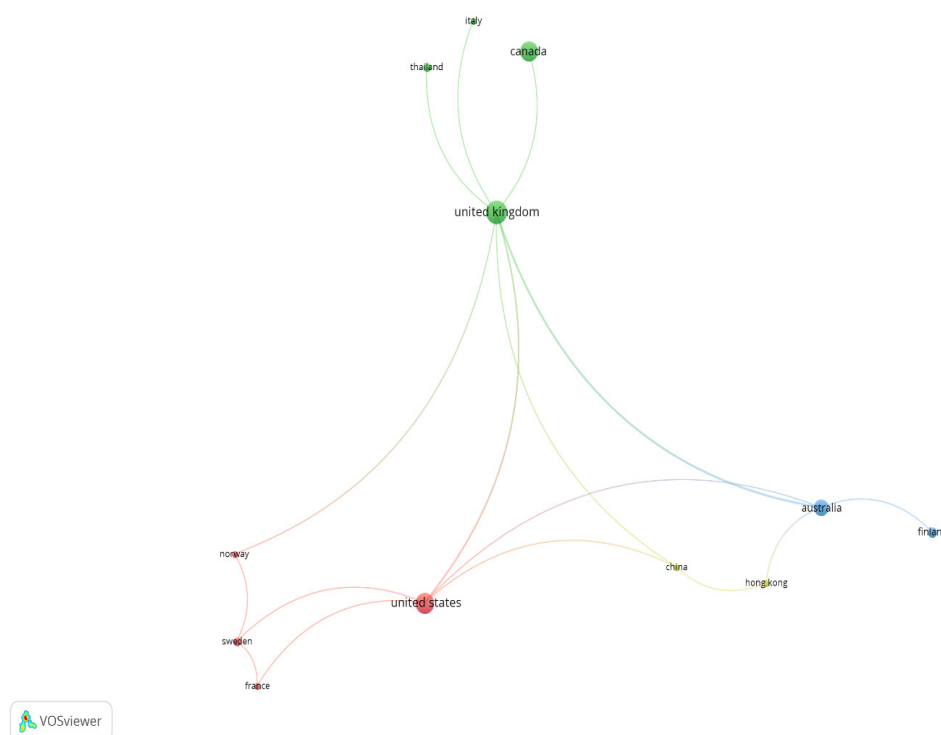


Figure 6.
Global collaboration network
Source: Data from VOSviewer (2025)

The existing research gap not only reveals a limited understanding of how gambling affects society but also results in an information shortage that could hinder initiatives aimed at addressing poverty and economic injustice. Consequently, this presents a valuable opportunity for researchers and scholars to examine the topic further and establish collaborative connections that can enhance insights and inform more effective intervention strategies.

Policy and theoretical implications

This bibliometric study highlights that concerns about gambling and poverty have grown globally over the last decade. Significant contributions come from academic and clinical institutions in developed nations, such as Canada, the UK and Australia. The literature views gambling not just as an individual behavioural issue but also as a structural and public health concern, closely tied to socioeconomic factors, gender, income levels and vulnerability to conditions such as alcoholism and drug dependence.

Keyword distribution and cluster mapping reveal a consensus in the global literature that poverty and economic inequality are key risk factors for gambling engagement. Studies within the cluster focusing on drug dependence (Wolfschlag & Håkansson 2023), income, prevalence (Day et al. 2020), and socioeconomics (Xouridas et al. 2016) highlight that individuals experiencing high economic stress are more likely to use gambling as an escape or a flawed strategy to avoid financial hardship. This indicates a cyclical relationship between poverty and gambling: poverty influences gambling behaviour, while gambling exacerbates poverty through economic loss dependence. Conversely, the involvement of health institutions such as the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and St. Michael's Hospital in the publications demonstrates that a clinical and mental health-based approach is essential in addressing this issue. In other words, policy approaches must be cross-sectoral and multidimensional, encompassing not only law or economics but also health and education.

In the Indonesian context, discourse on gambling (particularly online gambling) has become increasingly prominent in recent years (Fahrudin et al. 2024, Kamalludin 2024, Khithobi et al. 2024), mainly due to the growing involvement of social assistance recipients in online gambling activities (Solehudin et al. 2025). This underscores a failure in social protection, financial literacy and law enforcement at the grassroots level. Although social policies, such as cash assistance programmes, are designed to ease the economic burden on low-income communities, the lack of proper monitoring has led to beneficiaries misusing this support for non-essential purposes.

This study underscores how gambling is intricately connected to poverty issues. Gambling often perpetuates a cycle that exacerbates poverty, and its presence in vulnerable communities should be viewed as a vital aspect of broader efforts to alleviate poverty (Matheson et al. 2021, 2022). Addressing problem gambling is therefore essential for alleviating poverty and is one of the key factors contributing to the rise in poverty. Additionally, social assistance programmes should be enhanced with comprehensive education on financial literacy and responsible use of digital platforms. As online gambling becomes more accessible and sophisticated in this digital era, the public needs adequate knowledge to identify and steer clear of gambling-related dangers (Gainsbury et al. 2020). This educational effort will enable individuals to make wiser financial choices and diminish dependence on gambling activities that have more harmful than beneficial consequences.

Moreover, it is crucial to connect social policy with mental health policy. Many gamblers face serious psychosocial issues that are often overlooked and not adequately addressed (Metcalf et al. 2023, Hing et al. 2024). Therefore, implementing a comprehensive approach that combines psychological and social support is vital to help those with a gambling addiction overcome their mental health challenges. Given the current complexities, the Indonesian government should enhance collaboration across various sectors, involving agencies like the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, and the National Police. This inter-agency cooperation is vital for creating a national strategic framework that combines enforcement to combat online gambling with prevention and rehabilitation initiatives. Such a holistic approach will help communities stay safe from the adverse effects of gambling and ensure they get the support needed for a better future.

In the fast-paced and complex information age, experts increasingly emphasise the importance of a data-driven approach in shaping public policy (Witkowski 2017, Matheus et al. 2020, Zhu et al. 2022, Nilashi et al. 2023), including within the context of gambling. Evidence-based methods provide a strong foundation for decision-making, enabling the development of policies that are more effective and aligned with the needs of modern society (Keller et al. 2017, Hwang et al. 2021, Hossin et al. 2023). Therefore, policymakers must take immediate and decisive action.

In Indonesia, several strategic measures can be implemented to adopt an evidence-based gambling policy. First, it is essential to build a national database. This first step is crucial for developing a thorough database on gambling behaviours and the traits of participants. The data should encompass various elements, including demographics, behavioural trends and the socioeconomic impacts of gambling. With reliable and up-to-date information, policymakers can design more focused, evidence-driven strategies and conduct detailed analyses to identify emerging trends and patterns (Head 2016, Mayne et al. 2018). Second, involving academics and research institutions is crucial. The collaboration between government and academia is vital as involving scholars in reviewing social assistance policies related to gambling provides a broader perspective. Research conducted by experts can assess the effectiveness of current programmes and suggest improvements based on solid evidence (Scott et al. 2019, Gentry et al. 2020, Khomsi et al. 2024).

Third, reforms are necessary for financial and digital technology regulations. As these technologies advance rapidly, the urgent implementation of strict policies is essential to prevent their misuse for illegal online gambling. Well-defined and firm regulations will protect the public from risks linked to unregulated online gambling and enable technological innovations to be used responsibly and beneficially (Kolandai-Matchett & Abbott 2022, Sichali et al. 2023, Wardle et al. 2024). Ultimately,

establishing comprehensive rehabilitation and counselling services is crucial. Providing accessible support to vulnerable groups looking to break free from gambling's influence can mitigate its harmful effects. These services should be customised to meet the specific needs of those affected by gambling and to aid their recovery process. Improving accessibility to such support can also help reduce stigma and raise awareness about the importance of mental health within the community (Guilcher et al. 2016, Schwarzkopf et al. 2021, Moreira et al. 2024).

By following the steps outlined above, Indonesia can create more effective, evidence-based gambling policies that benefit society as a whole. This strategy will enhance policy quality and provide better safeguards for individuals and communities vulnerable to the adverse effects of gambling. Drawing on international research, it is crucial to tailor gambling policies specifically to the Indonesian context. These policies should go beyond mere prohibition and evolve into a comprehensive, integrated social protection system.

This framework should be based on credible scientific evidence and lessons learnt from countries that have faced similar challenges over time. This approach will help develop more effective strategies to combat problem gambling, protect individuals and communities from its damaging impacts, and foster a safer, more prosperous society. Incorporating diverse viewpoints and best practices from other countries can provide valuable insights for developing policies that are both preventive and proactive in addressing gambling-related issues.

This bibliometric analysis corroborates the core concept of general strain theory (GST), introduced by Agnew (1992) who stated that socioeconomic pressures and emotional stress can lead individuals to adopt maladaptive behaviours as coping mechanisms to escape stress and frustration. Globally, publication trends reveal a growing focus on the connection between poverty, psychological stress and risky economic activities like gambling. In Indonesia, this pattern persists, with structural inequalities, scarce economic opportunities and insufficient social protections elevating strain among low-income groups.

Recent developments in Indonesia closely align with this GST theoretical framework. National media reports reveal that some recipients of social assistance spend their funds on online gambling (Detik 2025, Kompas 2025, Tempo 2025), demonstrating how economic and social pressures influence behaviour. These reports, supported by statistical data from national institutions, as shown in Figure 1 in the introduction, indicate that most users of online gambling platforms earn less than one million rupiah per month, highlighting that society's most vulnerable groups are at increased risk of succumbing to gambling-related temptations and dangers. From the GST perspective, this behaviour is not merely moral deviance but also a response to structural and emotional challenges arising from persistent social inequality.

The link between global research and the Indonesian situation demonstrates that GST theory applies to both understanding individual criminal behaviour and social dynamics in developing nations. This research highlights the importance of policies informed by evidence that consider economic, social and psychological factors across multiple sectors. Managing online gambling in Indonesia requires more than just law enforcement; it also needs structural strategies to reduce economic inequality and strengthen social support for vulnerable populations experiencing high levels of stress.

Conclusion

This study provides a detailed overview of global research on the relationship between gambling and poverty from 2015 to 2024, using a bibliometric approach with Scopus data analysed via VOSviewer. Results suggest that publication activity is expected to rise amid increasing awareness of gambling's social and economic effects, primarily on vulnerable populations. Some key findings from this analysis include: (1) a predominance of research from institutions in developed countries such as Canada and the UK; (2) a concentration of publications in reputable journals that focus on public health and mental health issues; (3) strong research themes related to social inequality, prevalence, gender, income and links to other addictive issues such as alcohol and drugs.

These findings improve the explanatory power of general strain theory in explaining gambling behaviour in impoverished communities. Economic struggle and social exclusion generate emotional stress, leading individuals to seek temporary relief through gambling. This perspective redefines gambling not merely as a moral failing but as a reflection of structural inequalities and psychosocial vulnerabilities. Consequently, this study offers both theoretical insights and practical recommendations for policymakers addressing gambling-related poverty, emphasising that it requires evidence-based, cross-sector approaches involving economic empowerment, social protection and mental health programs.

The results of this study open up opportunities for further research to examine the causal link between poverty and gambling behaviour more thoroughly, especially in developing countries like Indonesia, which have distinct social, economic and cultural traits compared to the countries where the dominant publications originate. Future investigations should adopt a mixed-methods approach to better understand the complexity of gambling motivations among vulnerable groups, including psychological factors, economic digitalisation and limited access to formal financial services. Furthermore, additional research could focus on evaluating the effectiveness of policies implemented in various countries in mitigating the impact of gambling on disadvantaged groups. Cross-regional comparative studies, mapping actors and policies, and examining the role of social media and digital platforms in increasing access to online gambling are also relatively underexplored areas. Therefore, future research is vital in creating a stronger scientific basis for designing social policies that are tailored and responsive to local context dynamics.

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