The Conceptual Framework of Harmful Gambling

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Project Overview

• Purpose: develop a clear, comprehensive, internationally relevant conceptual framework of harmful gambling that addresses a broad set of factors related to population risk and resilience beyond the symptoms-based view that affects individuals

• Previous models inform the work

• As the project sponsor, OPGRC is collaborating with an expert panel to facilitate the development of a conceptual framework of harmful gambling that captures the broad set of factors related to harmful gambling

• The framework is outlined in a publication, jointly authored by the expert panel members, and presented at the OPGRC website
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Framework Development Process

• The framework is being developed through a number of facilitated working sessions

• The first meeting of the group was in September 2011 to develop a preliminary framework and project plan

• Informed by stakeholder feedback

• Since then, the OPGRC has collaborated on the framework and publication with the expert panel via teleconferences, an online collaborative portal and email
Key Outcomes

The framework is expected to facilitate **three key outcomes** with the first iteration of the publication focusing on capturing the state of knowledge and subsequent iterations focusing on the other outcomes:

1. To reflect, at a given point in time, **the state of knowledge** (across disciplines and existing models) as it relates to factors impacting harmful gambling and the relationships among those factors.

2. To **assist service providers, policy makers, regulators, and the public** to better understand the complex dynamics involved in harmful gambling.

3. To act as a **strategic map** that can guide the development of future research programs and identify areas where future research is most needed.
Organizing Principal

- **Gambling harm**
  - Repetitive wagering something of value
  - Recurring negative consequences

- **Broader perspective of associated problems and consequences**
  - Financial, physical, addictions, mental health
  - Individual, family, society

- **Degree of harm ranges**
  - Independent of gambling status, severity, frequency, intensity (episodic, binges, transition)
Framework Factors

- Gambling specific – mostly external, societal
  - Environment
  - Exposure
  - Types
  - Resources
- General – proximal, individual differences
  - Cultural
  - Social
  - Psychological
  - Biological
Example

Gambling Exposure

Accessibility

Biological

Genetic Inheritance  X

Sex

Psychological

Personality & Temperament

Lifespan Developmental

Coping Styles

GAMBLING & ADDICTIONS RESEARCH CENTRE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH
THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK IS NOW ONLINE
CLICK HERE TO VIEW
Conceptual Framework of Harmful Gambling

Welcome to the Conceptual Framework of Harmful Gambling, an international collaboration sponsored by the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre (OPGRC), Guelph, Ontario, Canada.

While seen by many as a form of leisure and recreation, gambling can have serious repercussions for individuals, families, and society as a whole. The harmful effects of gambling have been studied for decades to attempt to understand individual differences in gambling engagement and the life-course of gambling-related problems.

In this framework, we present a comprehensive, internationally relevant conceptual framework of “harmful gambling” that moves beyond a symptoms-based view of harm and addresses a broad set of factors related to population risk, community and societal effects. Interactive factors represented in the framework represent major themes in gambling that range from specific (gambling environment, exposure, types, and resources) to general (cultural, social, psychological, and biological).

This framework has been created by international and interdisciplinary experts from a variety of stakeholder perspectives – including researchers, treatment providers, operators, policy makers, and individuals and their families – to facilitate an understanding of harmful gambling.

The key objectives of the Framework are to:

- reflect on the state of knowledge of the factors influencing harmful gambling;
- assist researchers, treatment providers, policy makers, and regulators to better understand the complex dynamics of harmful gambling and facilitate informed decision making; and
- identify areas where research is most needed in order to guide strategic research programs.

Use the Main Menu to learn more about the Conceptual Framework of Harmful Gambling. On this website, you will find options to provide feedback about the Framework and links to related plain language summaries of research using the Interactive Framework.

How to Use this Website?

You can navigate the conceptual framework in three ways:

1. Use the menu to learn more about the Framework.
2. Use the interactive framework to learn more about each factor and link to research synopses and research projects.
3. Download and read through the PDF.

Subscribe to Updates!

Use the form below to subscribe and receive an email when the Framework is updated. Don’t worry – we won’t spam you!
We have already acknowledged that views on gambling vary between people and cultures. They range from gambling being a fully acceptable activity or even the norm on certain social occasions, to being viewed negatively; little involvement in commercial forms of gambling; and a lack of money to spend on gambling. Many groups exhibit bimodal patterns of gambling whereby the group as a whole gambles relatively little, but those members who do gamble do so heavily and experience high rates of gambling problems (Abbott & Volberg, 2000; Kim, 2012; Volberg & Wray, 2007). These are likely sectors of populations in the early stages of introduction to commercial gambling.

In the case of immigrant groups, elevated rates of harmful gambling may have several causes. One category of causes is related to the culture and traditions of the country of origin. The immigrant groups may belong to a culture where views on luck, fortune and destiny increase the risk of harmful gambling or where the level of probabilistic thinking is generally lower. In their culture, gambling may be common and accepted, with heavy gambling less likely to be seen as a problem by the gambler or people around the gambler. In some immigrant cultures, greater value is placed on the possession and display of wealth, which attracts individuals to the world of gambling where great amounts of money rapidly change hands.

By contrast, some cultures consider gambling to be so shameful that individuals might hesitate to talk about or seek help for gambling problems. Finally, in certain cultures there may not be much gambling but if immigrants then move to a host society with plenty of gambling, they may develop unrealistic expectations of making money, which in turn could lead to excessive gambling.

Another category of causes for elevated rates of harmful gambling relates to the experience of migration and of life in the host country. Certain individuals may feel discomfort because of perceptions of being uprooted, loss of social status, altered family roles in the new country and perceptions of being excluded and discriminated against. Such psychological strains may cause them to rely on gambling to relax, dissociate or spend time in a gambling subculture, which increases the risk for harmful gambling. Migrant groups also often include refugees who have suffered physical and emotional trauma and are often characterized by high rates of gambling problems. However, little is known about the precise link between trauma and harmful gambling. Further, in the host society, immigrants or refugees may have a socioeconomically disadvantaged position which in itself constitutes a risk factor for harmful gambling as discussed in section 3.2 Social Factors. Newcomers to the host country may also experience high unemployment rates and gambling...
In summary, gambling problems of immigrants arise in the interaction between having roots in another culture, the experience of migration, and the process of integration in the host society. Thus, immigrants themselves do not constitute a problem in relation to gambling. In the case of indigenous minority ethnic groups, the main reason for elevated rates of harmful gambling has been argued by some to be a result of the often marginalised and disadvantaged socioeconomic position of such groups (Green, & Gainsbury, 2013; Volberg & Abbott, 1997). Factors such as unemployment and low education are strongly associated with harmful gambling as discussed in Social Factors.

### Related Synoposes [17]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese and English probabilistic thinking and risk taking in gambling.</td>
<td>Lau, L., &amp; Raneyard, R.</td>
<td>Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disordered gambling among racial and ethnic groups in the US: Results from the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions.</td>
<td>Alegría, A. A., Petry, N. M., Hasin, D. S., Liu, S., Grant, B. F., &amp; Blanco, C.</td>
<td>CNS Spectrums</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling cognition and subjective well-being as mediators between perceived stress and</td>
<td>Tang, C. S., &amp; Oei, T. P.</td>
<td>Psychology of Addictive</td>
<td>2011</td>
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Interactive Framework

This framework represents major themes in gambling that range from specific (gambling environment, exposure, types, and resources) to general (cultural, social, psychological, and biological). This framework has been created by international and interdisciplinary experts from a variety of stakeholder perspectives – including researchers, treatment providers, operators, policy makers, and individuals and their families – to facilitate an understanding of harmful gambling. It not only reflects the state of knowledge as it relates to factors influencing harmful gambling, but also acts to guide the development of future research programs and educate policy makers on issues related to harmful gambling.

Conceptual Framework of Factors Influencing Problem Gambling

Click on any Framework factors below to learn more and link to related synopses and research. Synopses are one-page summaries of published research studies. Learn more about the Synopsis Project.

### GAMBLING SPECIFIC FACTORS

- **Gambling Environment**
  - Macroeconomics
  - Microeconomics
  - Socio-political Environment
  - Corporate Environment
  - Culture of Social Responsibility
  - Availability of Leisure Options
  - Public Policy

- **Gambling Exposure**
  - Accessibility
  - Context
  - Gambling Setting
  - Adaptation

- **Gambling Types**
  - Event Frequency & Arousal
  - Skill & Perceived Skill
  - Sociality

- **Gambling Resources**
  - Prevention & Harm Reduction
  - Risk Assessment
  - Mutual Help
  - Treatment
  - Self-Help
  - Perceptions of Problem Solving

### GENERAL FACTORS

- **Cultural**
- **Social**
- **Psychological**
- **Biological**

- **Ethnicity & Traditions**
- **Social Demographics**
- **Personality & Temperament**
- **Genetic Inheritance**

- **Socio-Cultural Attitudes**
- **Education System**
- **Lifespan Development**
- **Neurobiology**
Provide Feedback

Ongoing Development of the Framework

OPGRG is committed to continue improving the Framework so it remains relevant and accessible to stakeholders and makes a contribution to furthering the understanding and awareness of harmful gambling. To achieve this objective, OPGRG has committed to continue to work with the expert panel and stakeholders in the gambling field to expand and refine the conceptual framework based on new knowledge and feedback. Emerging research evidence will be incorporated into subsequent iterations of the document. Through this sustained active engagement from the scientific community and other stakeholders, the Framework is expected to evolve towards meeting our stated objectives. While similar exercises have been attempted in the past no evolving comprehensive framework currently exists in the field.

The Conceptual Framework of Harmful Gambling will be updated annually. Your feedback is important to us in improving the quality and readability of the Framework. Please take a moment to complete the survey below.

1. How well does the publication meet its three stated objectives?

   1. To reflect for all readers the current state of knowledge (across disciplines and existing models) as it relates to factors impacting harmful gambling and the relationships among those factors.
   2. To assist service providers, policy makers, regulators, and the public to better understand the complex dynamics involved in harmful gambling to enable better informed decision making.
   3. To act as a strategic map that can guide the development of future research programs and identify areas where future research is most needed.

2. Is the Framework structure and terminology explained clearly in the document?

3. Did you find the overall document easy to read and understand?

4. Do you see the value in the framework being organized around the principle of harm?

5. How accessible is the document to a broad audience ranging from researchers, treatment providers, policy makers and the public?

6. What value did you derive from reading this publication?
Framework Strengths

• Relevance to public health & addictions
  o PG framed as public health concern
  o Decades behind addictions
• Embraces harm reduction
  o Beyond abstinence to empowerment
• Consideration of non-harmful gambling
  o Recreational; may or may not impact well-being
• Promotes strategic research
  o Identify gaps
Next steps

• Document sharing
  o Distribution of written document April 2013
  o OPGRC website launch April 2013
  o Interactive web link to synopses May 2013

• Document updating
  o “Living document”
  o Yearly expert panel discussions

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