

## Social Dynamics of the Families of Former Online Gamblers (Narrative Study of Former Online Gamblers in Wonomulyo District, Sidodadi Village, Polewali Mandar Regency)

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### Abstract

*This study aims to determine 1) Changes in social functions within a family after one of its members stops being an online gambler, and 2) The meaning of the status of "former online gambler" is constructed by family members and the social environment. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. The technique in determining informants uses purposive sampling. The number of informants is 5 people. The data collection techniques used are observation, interviews, and documentation. The data validation technique uses member check. The data analysis techniques are data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study show that: 1) Changes in social functions within a family after one of its members stops being an online gambler, namely: the involvement of family members in online gambling causes disruptions in the function of affection, economy, and social roles in the household. After the perpetrator stops gambling, the family goes through a process of recovery and adaptation. 2) The meaning of the status of "former online gambler" is constructed by family members and the social environment, namely: success in restoring family functions. However, in the formation of a new social identity in the environment has not been fully recovered, because it is influenced by emotional support, positive symbolic interactions, and the perpetrator's consistency in showing real changes in the surrounding environment.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of science and technology (IPTEK) has brought changes to people's lives, including in communication patterns and social interactions. Advances in information technology encourage people to adapt to new ways of interacting, both physically and remotely through digital media. (Tobing, 2019) argues that: The internet provides convenience in various aspects of life such as education, economics, and communication. However, this progress also has a dark side that cannot be ignored. (Zurohman, et al., 2016) argue that: the use of technology has the potential to cause social deviation, one of which is online gambling behavior.

Online gambling is a form of social deviance resulting from technological advancements. This activity not only impacts the perpetrators but also puts significant stress on families. (Soerjono, 2004) argues that: Gambling is a speculative betting activity that violates legal and moral norms. Kalischuk (2010) states that: gambling addiction can disrupt the balance between individual and family life, create psychological stress, and trigger internal household conflict. When someone in a family becomes involved in online gambling, the entire family is affected emotionally, economically, and socially.

However, the dynamics that arise after a gambler stops gambling are even more complex. Families of former online gamblers face unique challenges in restoring household harmony, building trust, and addressing the residual effects of the past. In many cases, the trauma, tension, and stigma do not disappear immediately after gambling stops. Kourgiantakis et al. (2013) add that in families of gambling addicts, other members often experience emotional disturbances such as stress, anxiety, and feelings of insecurity—these effects can persist even after the gambling habit is abandoned.

Previous research by Nurdin, Hafid, & Ibrahim (2021) showed that involvement in online gambling significantly impacts household stability, both financially and emotionally. Meanwhile, Rahmawati & Prasetyo (2020) highlighted verbal abuse and child neglect in families where members are involved in online gambling. Similar findings were found by Nurhayati (2022), who stated that online gambling significantly contributes to communication breakdowns and increased emotional burdens within households. These conditions illustrate that recovery from addiction is not a simple process.

In a local context, this phenomenon is clearly visible in Wonomulyo District, Sidodadi Village, Polewali Mandar Regency. Based on data from the Polewali Mandar Police, the number of online gambling perpetrators increased significantly: from 2 people (2020), to 3 people (2021), and jumped to 11 people in 2022 (Tenry Muslinda S, A. Muin Fahmal & Nur Fadhilah Mappaselleng, 2024). In several hangout spots such as coffee shops, young workers can be seen using devices to gamble — often as an escape from work pressures and economic burdens.

A 28-year-old former gambler admitted that he initially gambled simply to relieve stress, but then became so intractable that it impacted his family's finances and emotional relationships with his wife and children. He felt guilty and tried to restore those relationships. This demonstrates that quitting gambling is not the end of the problem, but rather the beginning of the struggle to rebuild a healthy family life. Kalischuk et al. (2006) explain that the impact of gambling on families is not limited to economic issues but also affects emotional aspects such as loss of trust and domestic disharmony.

After gambling, many families must restructure their structures and relationships. Previously unequal roles—for example, the wife taking over financial responsibilities while the husband gambles—don't always return to normal. Children may still carry emotional scars from absences or past conflicts. Internal tensions remain, and in many cases, families also face the social stigma of being "a family of former gamblers," which is still viewed with disdain by the community.

Based on this reality, it is important to examine more deeply the social dynamics within the families of former online gamblers: how family roles and functions are rebuilt, and how the meaning of "former gambler" is constructed within family interactions. Therefore, this study uses a qualitative approach with narrative study methods to explore the subjective experiences of the families of former online gamblers in Wonomulyo District, Sidodadi Village, Polewali Mandar Regency. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide theoretical and practical contributions to the understanding, prevention, and management of this complex social problem.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative research method with descriptive analysis. (Sukmadinata, 2005:18) descriptive research is aimed at describing a situation or phenomenon as it is. (Moleong, 2014) Qualitative research is research that aims to understand the phenomena of what is experienced by research subjects, for example behavior, perception, motivation, actions, etc. holistically and by means of description in the form of words and language, in a specific natural context. The purpose of this research

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is to provide an overview of how the relationships between the phenomena are studied as they are without special treatment.

The data collection technique used interview techniques, according to (Moleong, 2010) Interviews are conversations with a specific purpose conducted by two parties, namely the interviewer who asks questions and the interviewee who provides answers to those questions. The interview technique is carried out by first creating interview guidelines that are in accordance with the problems being studied. The interviews conducted by researchers in this study were guided by the interview guidelines that had been prepared before going into the field. Where the interview guidelines that researchers have prepared can provide answers to the existing problem formulation. Where the interview guidelines that researchers have prepared can provide answers to the existing problem formulation. And interviews in this study were conducted with the families of former online juni perpetrators in Sidodadi Village. There were 5 research informants, from this informant data it is hoped that they can provide an initial picture which will then be described to better understand the information in the study.

| No | No                    | Age | Type Sex | Connection With Perpetrator | Education Final    | Work          |
|----|-----------------------|-----|----------|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 1  | Nurfadillah           | 25  | Woman    | Wife                        | D4                 | IRT           |
| 2  | Bahtiar               | 60  | Man      | Father                      | SMA                | Farmer        |
| 3  | Revelation of Ramadan | 32  | Man      | Autumn                      | S1                 | civil servant |
| 4  | Wahyuni               | 27  | Woman    | Wife                        | SMA                | IRT           |
| 5  | Kasmia                | 58  | Woman    | Mother                      | JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL | IRT           |

Based on the informant characteristics, the study involved five informants who were part of the families of former online gambling perpetrators in Wonomulyo District, Sidodadi Village, Polewali Mandar Regency. These informants were purposively selected based on emotional closeness and direct experience with former online gambling perpetrators. Below are the demographic characteristics of the informants who served as the primary sources for this study.

### 3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Online gambling is a highly dangerous form of deviance in society because it can trigger problems, both within the family and social environment. Starting from minimal knowledge and implicit socialization conducted by gambling affiliates, with the promise of millions of rupiah in quick earnings, online gamblers are consciously drawn into making deposits into online gambling applications accessed via mobile phones.

It then develops into a habit, practiced daily for extra income and as a form of entertainment in their spare time. Through a demonic app played on a screen with their fingertips, the perpetrator unconsciously influences their mindset to make regular transactions without considering the scale of winning or losing, profit or loss. The app will continue to run as long as the nominal amount is sufficient to gamble. The excessive euphoria makes the perpetrator feel hypnotized by the app while playing online gambling. The perpetrator is unaware that the monthly salary he earns from the sweat and prayers of

his family is slowly being swallowed up by the demonic app, thus neglecting his family's needs. Income that should be used to support his wife and children is diverted to the online gambling app. Some are even willing to go into debt to cover expenses and even to continue playing, hoping for large profits from the demonic app they play.

### **1. Changes in social functions within a family after one of its members stops being an online gambler.**

From experimentation to addiction, online gambling is like a ticking time bomb that will eventually become a major regret for the perpetrator. This behavior undoubtedly has significant repercussions for the family and social environment. The perpetrator's negligence makes the family increasingly anxious as the impact is gradually being felt, including emotional tension, financial disruption, and deteriorating communication.

Duvall, E. M. & Miller, B. C. (1980) "The family is a system of interconnected roles. If one role is not running well, for example, the father as protector and breadwinner, the family will experience chaos and non-ideal structural reorganization." Each structure in the family has a different function; to maintain structural stability, each structure must function according to its function. Based on this incident, changes in social function in the family occurred in the field after one of its members stopped being an online gambling perpetrator. If we look at the impacts that arise, it will certainly have a big impact on the functions and roles of each structure within the family. **Satari, M.**(2016) argues that: "Online gambling addiction can lead to disruption of family functions, especially in meeting economic needs, emotional security, and children's education. In extreme cases, other family members will experience dual roles or the loss of a stable authority figure." There will be instability in carrying out the functions of each family structure so that one family member structure plays a dual role to maintain the stability of the family condition.

Based on the results of the study on the Social Dynamics of the Families of Former Online Gamblers (Narrative Study of Former Online Gamblers in Wonomulyo District, Sidodadi Village, Polewali Mandar Regency), there are changes in social functions within the family after one of the family members stops being an online gambler, namely:

#### *a) Family Conditions When the Perpetrator Was Still Actively Gambling*

The author's field interviews revealed that when perpetrators were actively gambling online using websites or apps accessed via mobile phones, family members experienced stress. Affective functioning was severely impaired due to the emergence of conflicts, as well as distrust among family members.

Several informants stated that their children were afraid to communicate with their fathers who often got angry without reason. Besides that, financial stability was also disturbed because several informants stopped working and even went into debt to carry out gambling transactions. or as an escape to cover losses from negligence. As happened to Mrs. Nurfadillah and Mrs. Wahyuni, one of the perpetrator's family members, the wife, had to take over the responsibility of both economic functions and childcare. This case demonstrates a role crisis within the household due to online gambling behavior.

#### *b) Changes After the Perpetrator Stops Gambling*

Continuous online gambling behavior creates numerous issues that affect family harmony. The problems that arise in households due to online gambling are important lessons for gamblers to be more careful in handling information disguised as investments or additional income without a clear basis. It's crucial for every gambler to filter information clearly so they can act wisely on the information they receive, as it can have a significant impact on themselves and their families.

Based on field interviews, after the perpetrators stopped gambling, the family structure began to gradually improve. For example, economic function began to recover due to the family support system and the perpetrators' strong desire to improve. Some helped with household chores or returned to work. Furthermore, affective function also recovered as relationships between family members improved and became more open than before. For example, informant Mrs. Kasmia reported that her children began diligently helping her with sales and participating in beneficial activities. Significant changes were felt by each family member, although not immediately, but there were stages the perpetrators went through to truly recover from the impact of online gambling.

c) *Structural Adaptation and New Habits*

Within a functional structural framework, families demonstrate an ability to adapt to the structure. Family members who previously held dual roles due to a flawed structure are now beginning to return those roles to their husbands or children who were previously involved in online gambling. Nurfadillah stated that her husband has begun helping her recover financially, and he is also spending time rebuilding emotional relationships with his family. Similarly, Wahyu Ramadhan stated that his younger siblings are now closer, sharing stories and future plans.

To strengthen their family structure, each of them created new plans, such as positive activities, eating together, starting a business, and being more open. This case certainly demonstrates that the social structure within a family can recover and thrive through collective and continuous adaptation.

When linked to Talcott Parsons' Structural Functionalism theory. Soekanto, S. (2006) "Parsons states that a social system can only function if social roles in society are carried out in accordance with prevailing norms and values. When deviations occur, the balance of the system is disturbed." Soekanto emphasized the importance of order as the core of Talcott Parsons' theory. If one structure does not function according to its role, then the function of the family as a whole will be disrupted. As happened in the case of online gambling involving family members, where one family member was involved in online gambling which had fatal consequences in carrying out family functions.

Structural functionalism theory views every social institution (family) as having interrelated functions to support social balance. Parsons & Bales, 1955; Soekanto, (2006) Parsons identified four main functions in the family, namely: In this study, when one of the family members is involved in a deviant case in the form of online gambling, these four functions will be disrupted. From the results of the interview showed that: a) The affective function is disrupted, because the relationship is increasingly strained, conflicts arise between family members, and children feel afraid to the point of losing closeness with their parents, b) The economic function is weakened, because the perpetrator uses his income to make transactions into gambling sites, causing his wife to have to play a dual role as a breadwinner, c) The maintenance function, and d) socialization is threatened, because the perpetrator no longer plays a role in his family.

However, when the perpetrator stops gambling, the family not only experiences functional recovery but also demonstrates structural adaptability, as Parsons explained. This adaptation is seen in several ways: a) Restabilization of economic function, when the perpetrator returns to work or is involved in household businesses. b) Recovery of affective function, through more open communication, joint family activities, and a more harmonious home atmosphere. c) Reconstruction

of social roles, where the role of head of the family begins to be played again by the husband, after previously being taken over by the wife.

Thus, seen from the results of the research and the theory of structural functionalism, the author can conclude that changes in social functions in the family structure of former online gambling perpetrators occur through several existing stages such as the crisis stage, transition, recovery, to stability where social functions and roles in the family return.

## **2. The meaning of the status of “former online gambler” is constructed by family members and the social environment.**

After the perpetrator decides to completely stop all forms of gambling activity, the family faces not only an economic and emotional recovery process, but also a deeper social process, regarding how to take a stand and interpret the status of "former online gambler." In practice, informants demonstrated that amidst the desire to improve their lifestyles, several challenges remain, including social views and feelings that have deeply traumatized their own families. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how this new meaning is formed through daily interactions, both within the home and in the surrounding community.

In examining this issue, the author uses the symbolic interaction theory put forward by George Herbert Mead to explore in more depth the issue of the meaning of the status of "former online gambler" constructed by family members and the social environment.

### *a) Meaning Formation Process in the Family*

Establishing new meaning within the family is a primary task for the perpetrator, as the primary actor in this case. How can the perpetrator be accepted back into the family, both in terms of attitude and behavior? The deep trauma within the perpetrator's family presents a significant challenge to establishing new meaning within the perpetrator's family.

Research shows that family plays a key role in shaping new meanings for former online gamblers. Consistent behavioral changes, such as creating positive activities, helping their wives sell, or being active in family activities, are certainly important symbols of repentance or regret for their actions during their active online gambling activities. Based on the responses of Ms. Nurfadillah and Ms. Wahyuni, the perpetrators demonstrated their commitment to change in their daily lives, consistently starting with small steps.

### *b) Challenges in the Social Environment*

The challenges faced by former online gamblers are not only within the family but also outside the family, specifically within the former perpetrator's social circle. Based on data obtained in the field, society does not immediately accept the fact that the perpetrators' changes occur. Several informants, such as those conveyed by Mr. Bahtiar and Mrs. Kasmia, the perpetrators' parents, stated that the social stigma that persists is characterized by sarcasm, ridicule, and even subtle exclusion from their social circle. This condition indicates that the identity of a "former online gambler" is still not fully accepted by the wider community. This process of meaning-making is deeply ingrained because it is based on memories of the former perpetrator's past mistakes. In this case, the family and former online gamblers must demonstrate consistent change so that the new symbol can be collectively accepted within the community. social media.

When linked to the symbolic interaction theory developed by George Herbert Mead, it certainly provides a very important understanding in the process of analyzing social meanings formed through interactions that occur within the

community. According to Mead, George Herbert. (1934) stated that a person's identity is formed through a process of role-taking and social recognition within their interaction environment. Individuals learn to define themselves based on others' responses to them through symbolic interactions, and this meaning is formed through repeated social experiences. He emphasized that social symbols such as language, actions, or everyday habits are key to shaping self-understanding. In this view, the social identity of "former online gambler" is not a simply inherent meaning, but rather the result of an ongoing process. This identity is formed through symbols and meanings in interactions between individuals and others in their environment.

In this context, symbolic interaction theory explains that behavioral change is not simply demonstrated through actions but also needs to be interpreted by those closest to the individual, especially family. When family members provide recognition and trust, the perpetrator's identity also shifts. Positive actions that demonstrate a more open attitude become symbols of repentance. This also demonstrates that the meaning of "former online gambler" is formed through symbolic processes supported by social responses and acceptance.

However, this process certainly doesn't occur without obstacles. Within the perpetrator's social environment, society tends to maintain stigma. Some still hold memories of the perpetrator's past and view them as part of their identity. Symbolic interactionism theory suggests that interactions within the perpetrator's social environment have not yet fully produced new, collectively accepted meanings. Therefore, the perpetrator's identity is still in a transitional stage between old and new symbols of change. This symbol is undoubtedly influenced by the perpetrator's consistency in demonstrating significant positive change to gain trust within their social environment.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on the social dynamics of the families of former online gambling perpetrators in Wonomulyo District, Sidodadi Village, it can be concluded that:

1. Changes in Family Social Functions After family members stop online gambling, significant changes occur in the family's social functions. Previously, involvement in gambling disrupted the affective, economic, and protective functions within the household. However, after the perpetrator quits, these functions begin to gradually recover. Family members' roles return to normal, the household atmosphere becomes more harmonious, and new habits emerge that strengthen family solidarity, such as eating together, praying together, and involvement in household activities.
2. The Construction of Meaning in the Status of "Former Online Gambler" The identity of a former online gambler is not formed spontaneously, but rather through a social process involving symbols, interactions, and recognition from the immediate environment. Families play an active role in providing space and support for gamblers to improve themselves, which in turn shapes the new meaning of this status. However, challenges remain in the wider community, including stigma and negative perceptions that hinder collective acceptance.

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