# GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGIES OF GAMBLING BUSINESS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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## Abstract

Numerous nations are worried about adolescent gambling addiction and challenges associated with gambling. Therefore, they have developed strategies to address these concerns (Dixon et al., 2016). This study aims to evaluate gambling management structures in Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau, and Thailand, and to compare educational-based gambling prevention strategies established in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Macau to find the best successful strategy for Thai students. For data collection, qualitative techniques such as document analysis and in-depth interviews were employed. The results indicate that the success of gambling management in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Macau is attributable to the collaboration of many sectors and the allocation of sufficient budgets. Gambling concerns are controlled completely by the government in Thailand, yet there are no government entities specifically responsible for gambling issues, creating management complications. In addition, a lack of finances may lead to poor management planning. The aforementioned three nations have achieved success in preventing gambling by employing strong national programmes and strategies. The objective of these programmes is to assist at-risk students in overcoming or preparing for addiction issues. Thailand must prioritise education on gambling, financial literacy, and collaboration of all relevant agencies to achieve success in gambling management and prevention.

**Keywords:** Adolescent Gambling, Educational-Based Gambling Prevention Programmes, Gambling Management, Governance, Southeast Asia

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Gambling problems and gambling addiction tend to rise worldwide. According to Petrovska (2021), approximately 26% of the world's population engages in gambling. In 2021, the global market for casinos and online gambling would be valued at 230.9 billion USD, indicating a rise in the number of gamblers worldwide. The global market for online gambling was anticipated to reach 112.09 billion USD by 2025. This industry continues to exceed expectations year after year. While land-based gambling facilities were severely impacted by the global pandemic, online and mobile operators achieved record-breaking revenue. The potential for expansion in the online and mobile gaming businesses is huge. The convenience of playing casino games on the go or from the comfort of their own homes is adored by players all over the world. While the experience cannot be compared to the live action, for millions of players around the world, it is often sufficient. The latest casino industry statistics reveal that there are more than 2,000 iGaming sites worldwide. According to Dixon et al. (2016), the rise of the gaming business is increasing gambling-related issues. In many countries where gambling is legalized, the age of the players is thus restricted. These age groups are over twice as prone as adults to encounter gambling-related difficulties. However, adolescents were less likely to seek help from the government and regional private gaming centres than adults. Numerous governments have produced educational materials to avoid student gambling issues. To address the issue of juvenile gambling, school-based gambling prevention initiatives are needed. Based on their educational level, the objective of the learning kit is the "prevention" of gambling issues among school-aged children. Education packages are created for children in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand from the end of primary school to the end of high school; the contents and forms are suited for usage in these countries.

In Asia, Macau, Singapore, Hong Kong are the top three biggest gambling markets with legalized gambling businesses (Liu, Chang, Loi, & Chan, 2015). Macau's gross gambling revenue in 2020 was approximately 60.44 billion MOP, or approximately 7.57 billion USD (Fletcher, 2021). Despite the current coronavirus epidemic, the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) posted record betting revenues of 279.7 billion HKD (35.9 billion USD) for the 2020–2021 fiscal year, representing a roughly 28% year-over-year gain (Yau, 2021). In 2020, Singapore's casino and gaming industry earned a total of 6.57 billion USD in gross gaming revenue (Petrovska, 2021). In contrast, Thailand prohibits all forms of gambling excluding wagering on horse races and the state lottery (Mitchell, Christensen, & Krataykhwan, 2013). Nonetheless, several illegal gambling venues have been reported around the nation ("Legalisation of 5 casinos", 2022). Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau, and Thailand have similar cultural histories and beliefs founded on Confucian and Buddhist principles. Consequently, the strictness of government-controlled gambling management models is comparable, with the exception of Macau, where management is permissive since casinos contribute to more than 90% of the country's revenue. The relationship between cultural values and gambling remains difficult and complicated. Many believe that the consensus concept and devotion to authority, which symbolise this consensus, have been crucial in building a development-friendly atmosphere in nations and areas such as Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore, and Thailand. The relevance of these values in understanding East Asian gambling governance is understandable: if the success of Asian gambling governance were to be explained by cultural characteristics, the application of its most important lessons to other cultural settings may be questioned. By encouraging nepotism, traditional Confucian beliefs like family loyalty might be destructive to the purpose of good governance and gambling governance (Root, 1996; Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 2017). In reality, the restrictions on gambling age vary from location to location, and there is no standard practice. In Singapore, the minimum age to enter a casino is 21 years old (Phua, Pyun, & Leng, 2022), while the minimum age to participate in a horse race, sports betting, and purchasing lottery tickets is 18 (Yap & Ng, 2020). In Macau, people under the age of 21 are not permitted to enter casinos, but the age for legally participating in horse race betting, football betting, and basketball betting is 18 (Cortés & Vilela, 2022). In Thailand, according to the Gambling Act, B.E.2478, anyone under the age of 20 is prohibited from participating in the country's only authorised games, the lottery and horse racing (Gambling Act, B.E.2478, 1935). In Hong Kong, the legal minimum age for gambling is 18 (Yu & Ma, 2019).

The purpose of this study is to examine gambling management structures in Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau, and Thailand, as well as to compare educational-based gambling prevention programmes adopted in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Macau in an endeavor to determine the most effective approach for Thai students. The findings of the study may be used to create a guideline for relevant sectors in Thailand to handle such concerns and to establish an approach to prevent gambling addiction among the younger generation.

To outline the paper's structure, the study is divided into five sections. Section 1 is an introduction that discusses the worldwide gambling problems in children and youth. Sections 2 and 3 are reviews of the literature and methodology, respectively. Sections 4 and 5 contain the findings and conclusions, which compare the structure of gambling management and the project to prevent gambling problems among children and youth in four countries.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gambling is one of the most important and widespread industries in the world (Grande-Gosende, López-Núñez, García-Fernández, Derevensky, & Fernández-Hermida, 2020). Therefore, it is not surprising that gambling and gambling-related concerns are on the rise (Merkouris et al., 2021), particularly in nations with a liberal gaming industry (Newall et al., 2019). Williams, Volberg, and Stevens (2012) analysed many studies on the prevalence of gambling problem from 1975 to 2012 and found

that rates of gambling problem were lower in Europe and higher in Asia (including Hong Kong, Macau, and Singapore). Adolescent gambling issues are on the rise. Many youngsters indicate they gambled at least once between the ages of 8 and 12 years old (Newall et al., 2019).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that universal school-based prevention is the best approach for adolescent social and behavioural problems, as it improves adolescents' skills while reducing their internalising (such as anxiety, somatic symptoms, etc.) and externalising (such as disruptive conduct, aggressive behaviour, etc.) issues (Matos et al., 2017; Calado, Alexandre, Rosenfeld, Pereira, & Grifths, 2020). According to St-Pierre and Derevensky (2016), school-based gambling-specific prevention programmes may be divided into two categories: 1) psychoeducational prevention programmes and 2) comprehensive prevention programmes that incorporate psychoeducation and skills training. Regardless of the category, preventative programmes have a common set of factors that determine the effectiveness of treatments. Although school-based programmes are an integral part of a comprehensive approach to preventing problem gambling, the number of such programmes globally is currently low, and there is a growing demand for assessment studies on their efficacy (Calado et al., 2020).

This study addressed two primary research questions:

*RQ1: How to manage gambling issues among the younger generations of Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau, and Thailand?*

*RQ2: How to avoid this problem?*

Singapore, Hong Kong, and Macau were selected for the study because they are well-known Asian countries with legal gambling and powerful gambling control systems. In addition, these three countries share favourable strategic geographic locations, a similar cultural context, and a colonial historical legacy that has, for the most part, contributed to stable political and social systems coupled with linguistic and cultural diversity (Todd, Leask, & Fyall, 2015). Consequently, gaming regulations and gambling management may be equivalent. In contrast, social and licensed gaming in Thailand is illegal for most gambling kinds, excluding wagers on horse racing and the government lottery. In order to identify a realistic approach for the prevention of gambling among children and adolescents in Thailand, the results of investigations conducted in three other nations were compared with Thailand's results.

## 2.1. Singapore

The gambling industry in Singapore is fueled by both economic and social factors. Folk gambling, for instance, is categorised as a sort of social gambling that emphasises socialising; the gambling business, on the other hand, is the other type of gambling that earns income for the state and emphasises economic reasons (Ho, 2022). In this regard, the Singaporean government exercises stringent control over casino enterprises, such as horse racing and sports betting, by focusing on the administration of gambling businesses, as well as their regulation and control, with the cooperation of many agencies. For instance,

the Tote Board has the legal authority to conduct horse racing via its proprietary club. Through the Singapore Pools, the Singapore Turf Club has the legal power to undertake gambling activities such as horse racing, lotteries, and sports or game predictions (Tote Board, n.d.). Casino businesses are governed by the Casino Regulatory Authority (CRA) under the Ministry of Home Affairs (Ministry of Home Affairs, n.d.). The Ministry of Social and Family Development oversees the Public Education and Outreach, Gambling Safeguards Division, which acts as the National Council on Problem Gambling's (NCPG's) secretariat (Ministry of Social and Family Development, n.d.). The National Addictions Management Service (NAMS), supported by the Ministry of Public Health, provides treatment and assistance for addictions to drugs, alcohol, gambling, gaming, and others (National Addictions Management Service [NAMS], n.d.-a). All of these organisations and institutions focus on integrating government and civil society activities at the local level, producing tangible advantages.

Another factor affecting the success of gambling control and prevention is proper budget allocation to operate gambling control in an appropriate and adequate manner (Quah, 2021). In Singapore, the revenues from gambling, such as licence fees, application fees, and fines, are budgeted to address such matters. The 2015–2016 gambling revenues totaled 40.5 million SGD, and yet they increased to 44.7 million SGD in 2016 and 2017. According to Singapore Totalisator Board (2020), 17% of the CRA's annual net income must be allocated to gambling control operations. The Tote Board's criteria for proper fund allocation were established for fund management. The budgets allocated to gambling control projects are divided between government agencies and specific individuals or public organizations based on the proposals of schemes. The granted project must significantly benefit the community or be innovative to facilitate community members working together to achieve the set goals or as a strategic alliance on new issues of national significance (Tote Board, n.d.).

In addition, Singapore has established a system for caring for patients or families affected by addictive behaviours (drugs, alcohol, and tobacco) and non-drugs (gaming and gambling) based on the holistic care principles of individual healing, family, community, and society (NAMS, n.d.-b). Mental health departments routinely visit homes and schools to assist those directly and indirectly affected by psychiatric patients, as well as to assist families and communities in learning to coexist with psychiatric patients (Chang et al., 2021). After deciding to legalise gambling as a business in 2005, the Singaporean government established the NCPG, the primary body responsible for gambling. It is a group to raise awareness of gambling problems in Singapore through, for example, announcements about the dangers of gambling; providing knowledge, comprehension, and protection for children and adolescents from gambling; as well as comprehensive consulting services and recommended information for the treatment of those with gambling addiction (Winslow, Cheok, & Subramaniam, 2015).

As a result of the adoption of social safeguards, public education, and treatment services, the 2020 Gambling Participation Survey revealed that 44% of

Singapore citizens and permanent residents aged 18 and over had participated in at least one form of gambling activity in the past year, a decrease from 52% in the 2017 survey. This decline was found across the majority of demographic categories and types of gambling, including 4-D, Toto, and social gaming. The decline is statistically significant, according to the council, which has surveyed 3,000 individuals every three years since 2005 to determine the scope and pattern of gambling in the area (National Council on Problem Gambling [NCPG], 2021). This confirms that the government has an effective management structure and that its overall policy and preventative measures for children and adolescents are sufficient.

## 2.2. Hong Kong

Gambling is crucial and fundamental to Chinese culture. In Chinese popular culture, gambling is a long-standing custom, especially among friends and family. For example, Mahjong, a traditional Chinese tile-based game, has been played as an evening or festival activity among friends and family (Department of Applied Social Sciences, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 2017). Nowadays, Hong Kong has a regulated market for gambling. The Hong Kong Jockey Club is the sole Hong Kong government-licensed gambling operator, offering horse race betting, football betting, and a lottery (Tessle, El Beyrouty, & Crapnell, 2017). Aside from social gambling, the Hong Kong government restricts gambling to a small number of authorised regulated locations. Therefore, while satisfying the public demand for gambling, regulation ensures that gambling opportunities are not excessive and community harm is minimized. The Gambling Ordinance (Cap. 148) states that all forms of gambling are illegal, except for those that are allowed by the government. These include horse racing, football betting, and the Mark Six lottery, as well as betting places that are licenced by the government or are exempt from the Ordinance (The Hong Kong Jockey Club, n.d.). Hong Kong's gambling laws prohibit all casino games, in contrast to Macau, where slot machines, blackjack, and poker can be played legally (Cortés, 2021).

In addition to government regulation, to avoid compulsive gambling among adolescents, the Hong Kong government established the "Ping Wo Fund" in 2003 to support the prevention and treatment of gambling-related problems and gambling's negative effects. The Ping Wo Fund has three primary goals: 1) to research gambling problems and gambling-related issues; 2) to disseminate information and educate the public on ways to prevent or mitigate the effects of gambling; and 3) to provide counseling, therapies, remedies, or supportive services for gamblers with gambling addictions or those affected by gamblers, such as family members (Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 2017). According to The Hong Kong Jockey Club (2017), during the first two years of the fund's establishment, the Hong Kong Jockey Club allocated a portion of its revenues totaling 24 million HKD and an annual amount in the tens of millions of Hong Kong dollars. The fund accepts contributions from the general public as well. The fund has supported the establishment of four counseling centers for

gamblers and their families. The HKJC has pledged to donate 360 million HKD to the Ping Wo Fund by 2019. This emphasizes the coordination between government agencies, private sector cooperation, non-profit organizations, and foundations in order to prevent and treat gambling-related harm. This resulted in systematized budget management efficiency with available resources for maximum benefit.

Over the past 15 years, there has been a noticeable decline in the gambling tendency of the Hong Kong community, which may be attributable in part to better public education. According to surveys commissioned by the government, around 62% of the local population aged 15–64 participated in various forms of gambling in 2016, a decrease from the peak of 80% in 2005. During the same time span, the proportion of high school students who engage in gambling decreased by half, from 54% to 22% (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2019).

## 2.3. Macau

The gaming industry in Macau dates back to the 16th century when the city first opened its ports to foreigners. Certain ethnic groups, such as construction workers who emigrated from mainland China, seaport laborers, etc., enjoyed gambling games. No rules were issued to govern the game at that time. Macau's role as an important trading port was gradually replaced by Hong Kong after Hong Kong's sovereignty became under British control in 1842 (O'Regan, 2019). To generate revenue from other economic activities for the government, the Portuguese rulers of Macau legalized gambling for the first time in 1847. In the 1850s, over 200 Fan-Tan stands were in operation. The gaming industry has always been thriving, and gaming taxes have become the government's primary source of revenue. Prior to the 1930s, the government granted concession operators a monopoly. The Hou Heng Company and the Tai Heng Company were granted concessions in 1930 and 1937, respectively (Alves & Osorio, 2015).

Later, in February 1961, Macau's Governor, Jaime Silvério Marques, designated Macau as a "permanent gaming region" and positioned it as a low-tax area where gaming and tourism are significant economic activities (Sonia, 2019). Prior to the expiration of the monopoly concession granted to the Tai Heng Company on December 31, 1961, the Governor of Macau and related authorities passed Law No. 1496 (Legislative No. 1496) in July 1961 to liberalize auctions for the "Games of Fortune" operator. In 1962, the Government awarded the Casino Monopoly concession to Sociedade de Turismo e Diverses de Macau (STDM), a subsidiary under the leadership of Stanley Ho, the company monopolized Macau casinos for the next four decades; STDM introduced a number of popular Western-style games and modernized travel between Macau and Hong Kong. Consequently, each year millions of gamblers travel from Hong Kong to Macau (Chan, Li, & Leung, 2016).

Macau casinos are regulated by the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (*Direcção de Inspecção e Coordenação de Jogos, DICJ*) of the Macau Special Region (Gaming Inspection and

Coordination Bureau Macau SAR, n.d.). DICJ's mission is to provide counsel and assistance to the Chief Executive of Macau regarding the interpretation and implementation of economic policy. As for casino gambling (casino games of chance and other publicly offered games), Macau has imposed conditions on casino concessionaires (Chan et al., 2016). The state must be compensated for concessions. The current tax rate is 35% of gross gaming revenue (GGR), with 1.6% (up to a maximum of 2%) going to the Macau Fund and 1.4% to 2.4% (up to a maximum of 3%) going to the Infrastructure/Tourism/Social Welfare Fund (Liu et al., 2015). Moreover, there is a fixed premium per VIP table and per other table type connected to a slot machine. In practice, the effective tax rate on GGR in Macau casinos is between 35% and 40% (Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau Macau SAR, n.d.).

## 2.4. Thailand

The government of Thailand permits state-sponsored gambling, including the state lottery, also known as "the government lottery" (Tho-un & Saenphumi, 2021). At the same time, there are illegal underground lotteries, football predictions, casinos, and gambling (Kraiwanit, 2016). State law prohibits all forms of public gambling. The central question is whether or not the government is biased toward the management of gambling in society. Even though the government is working hard to protect and maintain the state lottery, underground lotteries and other forms of illegal gambling are still going on in many Thai communities and are a part of the government's power structure. This affects policy decisions that are made on a regular basis.

The Civil and Commercial Code of 1923 (2466 B.E.), the Gambling Act of 1935 (2478 B.E.), and the Government Lottery Office Act of 1974 (2517 B.E.) govern gambling in Thailand at the present time. Book 3, Title 18, Gambling and Concession, Sections 853 through 855 of the Civil and Commercial Code contain clearly defined provisions pertaining to gambling. The Gambling Act of 1935 classifies gambling into two categories: those that are strictly prohibited and those that are permitted. As for the Government Lottery Office Act of 1974, although it considered a government lottery as a form of gambling, it is considered to be exempt from both civil and criminal legal consequences because there is a specific exemption by law. However, playing must be authorized by the appropriate authorities, such as the Royal Thai Police or the Ministry of Interior; failure to obtain permission will result in arrest by the appropriate government officials (Chaiprasit, 2021). Numerous cases of gambling are on the rise throughout the nation. In 2019, over 30.42 million Thai citizens, or 57%, participated in some kind of gambling. Since 2017, this represents an increase of 1.4 million gamblers. 20 percent of the total number of gamblers were aged 15 to 18, while 46 percent were aged 19 to 25 ("Study finds gambling on the rise", 2019). Currently, there is no organization specifically responsible for addressing this issue, which has led to a lack of collaboration between academic departments and civil society in achieving the desired goals of gambling management and prevention.

According to "More Thais addicted to gambling" (2019), a survey by the Research Centre for Social and Business Development finds that 30.42 million Thai citizens, or 57 percent of the population, participate in gambling. This number represents an increase of 1.49 million over 2017 and the addition of 700,000 new gamblers. The vast majority of gamblers are employed. Nevertheless, 733,000 juvenile gamblers between the ages of 15 and 18 cause the biggest worry. This group represents 20.9% of the young population. In addition, 3.05 million, or 46.3% of young adults aged 19 to 25, are known to gamble. This indicates that Thailand's government lacks effective governance guidelines and has not allocated funds to develop a systematic learning package for society. While the governments of Singapore, Macau, and Hong Kong have a good governance approach and are sufficiently efficient in terms of overall policy and preventive measures for children and youth, the same cannot be said for mainland China.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employed qualitative methods, including document analysis and fieldwork. The study explored the impacts of gambling on children and youth along with its management and prevention in the four countries (Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau, and Thailand) where such problems have impacted extensively the nation. The documentary study includes examining and analysing documents and materials relevant to the concepts, theories, contexts, and challenges surrounding gambling in the younger generation. To ensure the effectiveness of the research, both official and unofficial data and information sources were evaluated. The fieldwork research involved performing an in-depth interview to discover information regarding management and prevention of gambling among children and adolescents in Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau, and Thailand. The key informants for the in-depth interview include 50 participants from the four countries who have knowledge, understanding, and experience related to gambling in the younger generation directly and indirectly. The key informants were categorised into seven groups: NGOs, Department of Mental Health, Ministry of Health, Stop Gambling Campaign Foundation, National Council for Children and Youth, Ministry of Education, academicians; Lakeside Family (Singapore), and a group of primary schools in four countries. These participants were selected based on a theoretical requirement, also known as "theoretical sampling" or "data-driven strategy", which adheres to a reality-based qualitative research paradigm.

The real effectiveness of educational-based gambling prevention programmes for adolescents may not be measured directly because this research is based on the perspectives and opinions of relevant parties, and there is no conclusive proof that such programmes actually cause a recent decline in teenage gamblers. For instance, the impact of the coronavirus crisis, such as COVID-19 restrictions and the pandemic-related economic crisis, may result in a decrease in the number of players in 2020–2022 ("Singapore gambling participation", 2021; Yui, 2022). Therefore,

successful programmes in other countries cannot simply be copied and used; other factors, such as characteristics of Thai teen gamblers, risk behaviour, and protective factors related to gambling need to be taken into consideration when choosing the most appropriate educational-based gambling prevention programmes for Thai students (Calado et al., 2020). Fisher (2000) created the DSM-IV-Multiple Response-Juvenile (DSM-IV-MR-J), a psychometrically validated measure for assessing teenage problem gambling among those who had gambled during the previous year. As a result, this tool may fill in the gaps of this study's limitations.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Structures in managing gambling problems in Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau and Thailand

Document analysis reveals that governance in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Macau emphasizes the participation of multiple sectors in resolving gambling issues among young people. The governments of these nations provide financial support to encourage civil society's participation in addressing the negative effects of gambling on children and youth, such as the establishment of a school-based hotline consulting clinic. In Thailand, however, there are no government agencies directly responsible for gambling problems due to a lack of funding and operational objectives, as evidenced by a 5% increase in children and youth gamblers in Thailand between 2019 and 2021 (National Economic and Social Development Council, 2022), whereas children and youth gambled less in the rest of the world.

According to the in-depth interview, a summary of the structure of gambling management in four countries (Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau, and Thailand) is as follows:

*Singapore*: The purpose of gambling management structure is to organize the state's gambling business and set up a legal organization in charge of allocating the budget, with an emphasis on getting everyone to work together to achieve common goals.

*Hong Kong*: Hong Kong's structure of gambling management is influenced by both social and economic factors. Folk gambling is categorized as a form of social gambling, with an emphasis on social activities. In contrast, business gambling is the type of gambling that generates revenue for the state, with an emphasis on economic factors. In this regard, the government imposes stringent regulations on activities such as horse racing, casino operations, and sports wagering.

*Macau*: Macau has a legal organization responsible for budget allocation that emphasizes the integration of working collaboratively with achieving goals.

*Thailand*: As for gambling management in Thailand, the state has a two-faced approach: it has a system for organizing and debating the legalization of certain forms of gambling while making other forms illegal. Despite the fact that the word "gaming" is synonymous with gambling,

the state has sloppily accepted some forms of gambling in order to protect it. In the meantime, the government has portrayed most forms of gambling as undesirable and illegal, so participation is prohibited.

When comparing the structure of gambling management and plans to prevent gambling problems among children and youth in three countries to Thailand, it is discovered that Thailand is lacking in many aspects. Specifically, the state's role in the gambling industry in the current context is still unclear. In addition, there is no legal organization serving as the primary agency to coordinate with the government sector and civil society in the form of a nationwide network, and there is no clear separation between the roles of the regulator and the operator. Furthermore, there is no clear and concrete budget allocation to prevent gambling-related issues. As summarized in Table 1, there are, therefore, no goals for collaborative work in Thailand at all.

**Table 1.** Structures in managing gambling problems in Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau and Thailand

| Agenda | Singapore | Hong Kong | Macau | Thailand |
|---|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| *1. Structures in gambling management problem* | | | | |
| 1.1. State management of gambling | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 1.2. Legal organizations | √ | √ | √ | × |
| 1.3. Budgeting | √ | √ | √ | × |
| 1.4. Strategic planning | √ | √ | √ | × |
| *2. Current schemes to prevent gambling-related problems in specific populations* | | | | |
| 2.1. Primary education | √ | √ | √ | × |
| 2.2. Secondary education | √ | √ | √ | × |
| 2.3. Vocational education | √ | √ | √ | × |
| 2.4. Higher education | √ | √ | √ | × |
| 2.5. Worker groups | √ | √ | √ | × |
| 2.6. Families | √ | √ | √ | × |

*Source: Compiled by authors.*

### 4.2. Comparisons of gambling problem prevention in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Macau

The interview demonstrates that Singapore, Hong Kong, and Macau have effectively prevented gambling-related issues. This is due in part to clear policies on their gambling industry in the current context and a legal body that coordinates with the government sector and civil society in the form of a nationwide network. In addition, the government (regulator) and operator have allocated sufficient funds for gambling prevention initiatives. Moreover, the joint action of the gambling management structure is efficient and cost-effective, with distinct primary and secondary objectives. The prevention of gambling problem among children and adolescents in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Macau is outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Comparisons of educational-based gambling prevention programmes in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Macau

| | *Singapore* | *Hong Kong* | *Macau* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Model of the education package | Extra-curricular activities | • Understanding Adolescents Project (UP): A part of the subject of morality and citizen duties in the courses of primary education for 4–6 grades students<br>• BEST TEEN: A project of 2013–2014 primary education for 5–6 grades students | Extra-curricular activities |
| Name of the education package | • RISK<br>• Handling Under-aged Gambling (HUG) | • UP<br>• BEST TEEN Project | Smart Teen Plan Project |
| Currently in use or not | In use | • UP — In use<br>• BEST TEEN — not in use | In use |
| Target group for the education package | Secondary education and higher education students | • UP for primary education students<br>• BEST TEEN for 5–6 grades students | • Primary, secondary education and higher education students<br>• Staff of the gambling industry and secondary education |
| Using the package | Extra-curricular activities/community gatherings | Being used in schools | Extra-curricular activities/community gatherings |
| Content characteristics | • RISK: Showing short films about gambling to raise awareness about the dangers of gambling<br>• HUG: Giving information about the dangers of gambling on one's physical and mental health, as well as organisations that offer assistance | • UP: Informing children and youth about emotional management and dealing with various situations that may arise in their lives, such as gambling and drugs<br>• BEST TEEN: Providing information to prevent gambling addiction, drugs, and alcoholism | • Providing gambling information<br>• Building anti-gambling networks<br>• Camping and anti-gambling quiz competitions<br>• Instruction on money management and protection from gambling losses<br>• Distributing to parents a guidebook on juvenile protection<br>• Development of elementary school textbooks on the theme of morality and civic responsibility with expanded coverage of the gambling |
| Appliers of the package | • Students<br>• Parents (use to instruct their children) | Instructors | • Instructors<br>• Students<br>• Parents |
| Objective for solving gambling problems | • Non-addicted students with risk factors<br>• Parents of problem gamblers<br>• Parents with difficulties and a gambling addiction | Students at risk from a range of issues | • Non-addicted students<br>• Students with parents who gamble<br>• Parents with difficulties and a gambling addiction<br>• Employees of gaming enterprises |
| Evaluation of the education package | NCPG and Nan Yang University | Each school is required by the Education Bureau to use the package | Social Welfare Bureau |

*Source: Compiled by authors.*

According to Table 2, the programmes in Singapore (RISK and HUG) and Macau (Smart Teen Plan Project) are extra-curricular activities, but the programmes in Hong Kong (UP and BEST TEEN) are integrated into the school curriculums. This may suggest that educational-based gambling prevention programmes are required for Hong Kong's primary school students, although in two other nations such programmes are offered as alternatives. In Singapore, school-based gambling prevention programmes are offered to students in secondary and higher education, but Hong Kong children have access to these programmes beginning in elementary school. This suggests that the Hong Kong government seeks to raise knowledge about gambling and educate its youth about the liberalised gaming environment. This may be related to the fact that the gambling age in Hong Kong is 18 (Yu & Ma, 2019), the lowest of the three countries. Despite the fact that the gambling age in Macau is 18 (Cortés & Vilela, 2022), gambling prevention programmes are available to students of all educational levels as well as workers in the gaming industry. Comparable coverage of gambling prevention measures is included in the programmes of the three nations. All programmes try to educate participants about

the dangers of gambling and provide them with helpful advice. Hong Kong's educational-based gambling prevention programmes target just certain populations, but the programmes in the other two nations emphasise a wide variety of applicants and targeted groups. Nevertheless, all programmes in the three countries have been validated by government sectors.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The expansion of the gambling industry is causing an increase in gambling-related issues. Therefore, in many nations where gambling is legal, the age of the players is limited; however, there are still underage gamblers, and this is a worldwide concern. Numerous nations have developed strategies to manage and prevent gambling problems among students. The success of gambling management in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Macau is due to the collaboration of multiple sectors and proper budget allocation in resolving gambling issues among young people. In Thailand, gambling issues are solely managed by the government, but there are no government agencies directly responsible for gambling issues, posing challenges to gambling

management. Moreover, there are insufficient budgets for the management; therefore, the management plan may not be effective. When you look at gambling problem prevention in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Macau, which have achieved success in gambling prevention, there are many effective educational-based gambling prevention programmes adopted by nationwide educational institutions in those countries to encourage gambling prevention. For example, by means of RISK and HUG projects in NCPG and Nan Yang University, Singapore, aim to support non-addicted students with risk factors along with gambling parents. The UP project for primary schools in Hong Kong aims to give information about emotional management and the management of difficulties in young people who may be at risk of addiction. The Smart Teen Plan for primary and secondary students in Macau aims to support non-addicted groups, groups with gambling parents, parents addicted to gambling with problems, and those working in gambling businesses by providing information about gambling and how to handle and avoid it.

This research is based on the opinions and perceptions of those involved in juvenile gambling prevention, and there is no solid evidence that educational-based gambling prevention programmes have caused a recent reduction in the number of teenage gamblers. The impact of the coronavirus crisis, such as COVID-19 restrictions and the pandemic-related economic crisis, may have reduced the number of players in recent years. Therefore, successful programmes in other countries cannot be simply replicated; other factors, such as the characteristics of Thai adolescent gamblers, risk behaviour, and protective factors related to gambling, must be considered when selecting the most suitable educational-based gambling prevention programmes for Thailand's students. For future research, methodologies that validate the efficacy of gambling prevention programmes, such as Fisher's DSM-IV-MR-J, may be utilised. Since this study reviews and analyses the successful educational-based gambling prevention programmes adopted in Asian countries where gambling and gaming are legalised, it may benefit future research as the structure of these programmes can be used as a reference to develop a model for adolescent gambling prevention programs.

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