



EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT OF GAMBLING AND PROBLEM GAMBLING ON PACIFIC FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES IN NEW ZEALAND

Summary

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Background

Pacific people have consistently been at higher risk than other ethnicities for developing problem gambling. Despite this higher risk, there is very little research on Pacific people's gambling and the impacts of problem gambling. There is even less gambling research focusing on different Pacific ethnicities, with small Samoan and Tongan studies being the only research to date. Most Pacific research is conducted with participants described as 'Pacific' irrespective of their ethnicity.

Aim

The main aim of the study was to improve our understanding of the impact of gambling on the health and wellbeing of Pacific families and communities, to understand why some Pacific people are more likely to develop problem gambling than others, and to discover what could protect Pacific people from developing problem gambling.

Method

The research was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved in-depth examination of Pacific data collected for three past studies. Two of these were national studies and the third was a study that has been following Pacific children (and their parents) from their birth in the year 2000 to 2009. The examination of data focused on Samoan, Tongan, Cook Islands and Niuean results. The second phase of the research involved face-to-face contact with Samoan, Tongan and Cook Islands participants via focus groups and in-depth interviews. The participants included general community gamblers and non-gamblers (including young people aged 18 to 24 years), problem gamblers, significant others of problem gamblers and church leaders as well as gambling treatment providers and gambling venue staff.

Summary of key findings

- Religion and the church are very important in whether Pacific people gamble, based on whether the church denomination endorses any gambling, no gambling, or only gambling for fund raising purposes. Church leaders had different views on their role in guiding or intervening around gambling issues.
- Migration issues can lead to Pacific people gambling, particularly in relation to cultural and religious obligations (e.g. fund raising for family or church).
- Gambling was perceived to be an easy way to make money.
- Changes in life circumstances, such as marital status as well as co-existing behaviours including drinking alcohol, tobacco smoking and other mental health behaviours impact on gambling behaviour and expenditure.
- Generally, more negative impacts of gambling were noted than positive impacts and overall, the negative impacts of someone else's gambling were greater than the impacts of own gambling. Financial problems are a considerable negative impact of problem gambling and are sometimes masked by other family members 'helping' a problem gambler's family by feeding them.



- There was limited awareness of gambling help services.
- Some ethnic and gender differences in relation to gambling behaviours and impacts were noted. In particular, the study highlighted differences amongst Cook Islands participants compared with Samoan and Tongan participants.