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RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS RELATING TO GAMBLING BY EMPLOYEES OF GAMING VENUES

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ABSTRACT. *This paper examines how the work environment in gaming venues can influence employee gambling behaviour and how gaming venues can further discourage problem gambling by their staff. Interviews with 86 staff and 73 managers of clubs, hotels and casinos, and with 32 gambling counsellors and six problem gamblers who work in gaming venues revealed numerous workplace factors that can encourage, discourage or have no influence on employee gambling. These are synthesised into a theoretical framework and risk, moderating and protective factors and interventions relating to propensity to gamble, gambling products and services, and gambling outcomes and consequences for gaming venue staff are identified.*

Introduction

Despite substantial numbers of staff in gaming venues, minimal research has examined the impacts of gambling on gaming venue staff. Yet, it is widely recognised that gambling impacts vary markedly amongst different sub-populations. Given the high exposure of gaming venue employees to gambling and gamblers, it is expected that gambling impacts on them in distinctive ways, including their own gambling behaviour.

This paper reports on a study into how working in a gaming venue influences the gambling behaviour of staff.[1] It is the first to comprehensively examine how and why working in a venue might influence the gambling behaviour of employees and identify potential venue interventions to reduce gambling-related risks. It is informed by a public health perspective, recognising that contextual factors can influence gambling behaviour and interventions can often be developed to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors.

The paper first reviews related studies, explains the methodology and presents key results. It then adapts a conceptual model to highlight relationships between risk factors, protective factors and interventions relating to propensity to gamble, gambling products and services, and consequences of gambling by gaming venue staff.

Prior Research into Gambling by Gaming Venue Employees

While little is known about the gambling behaviour of venue employees, models of gambling involvement (e.g. Productivity Commission, 1999; Abbott *et al.*, 2004; Thomas and Jackson, 2004) identify environmental factors as influencers. Thus, the work environment in gaming venues may also influence the gambling behaviour of employees. Little research has been conducted into whether gaming venue employees are more or less likely to gamble, be low or high risk gamblers, or experience negative consequences. Four studies have been conducted:

- Collachi and Taber (1987) asked 34 employees from three Reno casinos about frequency of gambling, gambling habits, opinions of others who gamble, and gambling itself. Although many findings were consistent with problem gambling (e.g. borrowing money between paydays), no instrument quantifiably measured problem gambling.
- Shaffer *et al.* (1999) examined the prevalence of pathological gambling, drinking, smoking and other health risk behaviours amongst some US casino employees. Using the South

Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS), they found higher prevalence of past-year Level 3 (pathological) gambling (2.1%), but lower prevalence of Level 2 (problem) gambling (1.4%), than the general adult population.

- Duquette (2000) surveyed 271 employees of one Las Vegas hotel/casino, using the SOGS. The pathological gambling rate was 20.3%, compared to 1.14% for the general adult population. However, this research has not been formally peer reviewed.
- Shaffer and Hall (2002) examined gambling, drinking and other health factors amongst full-time employees at six sites of one US casino at three points approximately 12 months apart. Using the SOGS, prevalence rates of past-year Level 3 gambling were 4.3% at Time 1, 2.1% at Time 2, and 1.8% at Time 3. Level 2 gambling rates were 21.2% at Time 1, 15.1% at Time 2, and 13.0% at Time 3. The employees evidenced considerable plasticity in their capacity to change their gambling behaviour in the context of regular exposure to gambling. Amongst those with complete prospective data, 22.6% lowered their SOGS score, while 11.6% became more disordered. Most Level 3 employees became Level 2 gamblers, tending to 'languish in a subclinical state even after they experienced a period of relief from more serious gambling problems' (2002, p. 419). This suggests some employees may adapt to gambling exposure after initial novelty effects.

These studies were confined to the US and none examined how particular aspects of the work environment might influence staff gambling, although they assumed heightened exposure to gambling was a key influence. A deeper understanding of this can help develop interventions and provide a work environment conducive to responsible gambling.

Methodology

Given the paucity of research and the need for an exploratory approach, a qualitative design focused on uncovering people's opinions and experiences and gathered large amounts of in-depth information about a small number of subjects (Ticehurst and Veal, 1999; Zikmund, 2000).

Participants and Sampling

This multi-stage study was conducted over 18 months during 2005-06 and based in the Australian state of Queensland. Information was obtained from numerous stakeholder groups.

- To seek support and advice, we held consultative meetings with the Queensland Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee, Clubs Queensland, Queensland Hotels Association, Queensland Gambling Help executives, Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union, and Queensland Legal Aid.
- With help from Queensland Gambling Help executives, 40 gambling counsellors were invited for a telephone interview; 32 agreed, with the remainder explaining they were too busy, going on leave, or had never counselled a venue employee. Counsellors were asked to share both the experiences of clients who had developed gambling problems while working in venues (22 of the counsellors had treated such clients) and their professional opinions on the topic.
- Clubs, hotels and casinos were included, being the major providers of gambling in that state, collectively operating gaming machines, table games, keno, TAB and bingo. Judgment sampling was used to select venues to request participation, requiring adequate numbers of the three types of venues, small through to large venues, and venues in different locations, comprising a metropolitan centre, a heavily populated tourist area, a coastal regional area, Far North Queensland, and remote areas. Based on these criteria and

drawing on clubs and hotels which were members of the industry associations, we approached 69 clubs and 50 hotels to request interviews with managers; 44 club managers and 27 hotels managers agreed. Reasons for refusal included being too busy, few staff, staff were not allowed to gamble at work, and no knowledge of staff activities outside work. Three of the four casinos also participated, representing large and smaller properties in different regions. Two managers, representing three casinos, were interviewed.

- Gaming venue employees were recruited via the venue managers interviewed. While club and hotel employees participated voluntarily, they were selected by managers or more commonly were on duty when we visited and able to be freed from duties. A different approach was taken with casino employees. The casinos advertised the research on-site and about one-quarter of participants pre-arranged their interviews by contacting us directly; the remainder were recruited during two days we spent in each casino's employee dining room. Thus, the casino interviewees participated voluntarily and the sample was self-selecting. In total, we interviewed 35 club, 17 hotel and 38 casino employees. Their gambling behaviour, including frequency, types, expenditure and levels of problem gambling, have been reported elsewhere (Hing and Breen, forthcoming).
- *Problem gamblers.* Six problem gamblers working in venues were interviewed. One was recruited via notices in gambling help agencies and was interviewed by telephone, one was interviewed in the presence of her counsellor, and four were included in the venue interviews and later identified as problem gamblers by their score on the *Canadian Problem Gambling Index* (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2001). We attempted to recruit additional interviewees through the Gambling Help network and Gambling Helpline, with no success.

Interview Procedures and Analysis

The interviews were semi-structured. Based on themes apparent from the literature and discussions with an ex-casino employee of 18 years experience, a gambling counsellor who estimated that 25% of her clients had been venue staff, and a focus group of past and present venue staff, the interviewees were questioned about whether they thought the following aspects of the work environment encouraged, discouraged or had no influence on staff in their own gambling. The interviewees were free to raise additional themes.

- Close interaction with gamblers
- Frequent exposure to gambling
- Influence of fellow employees
- Influence of management
- Nature of employee work
- Hours of work
- Frequent exposure to gambling marketing and promotions
- Responsible gambling training of staff
- Responsible gambling strategies in the venue.

Interviews lasted for 20-60 minutes, were taped with permission, and were mainly conducted in the venues. Most employees completed a short questionnaire containing questions about their gambling and the CPGI (not reported in this paper). Interviews were transcribed and responses grouped under each question in the interview schedule. Open coding and inductive analysis identified pertinent themes, then sub-themes.

Aspects of the Work Environment Perceived as Influencing Gambling by Gaming Venue Employees

One research objective was to examine how the interviewees perceive that aspects of the work environment influence employee gambling behaviour. Tables I, II and III identify reasons given for why working in a gaming venue can encourage, discourage and have no influence on staff gambling, respectively. Given the qualitative research approach and its intention to uncover relevant themes, no attempts are made to quantify these results. It remains for future empirical studies to do this.

INSERT TABLES I-III

Venue Strategies for Encouraging Responsible Gambling by Gaming Venue Employees

The second objective was to identify how venues might provide a work environment that better encourages responsible gambling and discourages problem gambling amongst staff. Problem gambling can be defined as 'characterised by difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling which leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others or for the community' (National Gambling Research Working Party, 2005). By default, responsible gambling can be defined as gambling which is free of these characteristics. Table IV shows venue strategies proposed by respondents.

INSERT TABLE IV

A Conceptual Model of Influences on Gambling Behaviours and Outcomes for Gaming Venue Staff

The results are synthesised into a theoretical framework of influences on gambling behaviours and outcomes for gaming venue staff (Figure I). Drawing on a model by Thomas and Jackson (2004), propensity to gambling and gambling products are depicted as influencing gambling uptake by staff, which then influences consequences of their gambling. Also consistent with the Thomas and Jackson model (2004), risk and protective factors and interventions relating to propensity to gamble, gambling products, and gambling consequences for staff are identified. As such, Thomas and Jackson's model (2004) has been used to guide analysis and locate findings in a broader public health framework of gambling.

INSERT FIGURE I

Risk, Moderating and Protective Factors and Interventions Relating to the Propensity to Gamble of Gaming Venue Employees

This section focuses on propensity to gamble, that is the tendency or inclination to gamble. This varies amongst individuals, being potentially influenced by personal, sociological and cultural factors (Thomas and Jackson, 2004). Tables I-III identify reasons given for why working in a gaming venue may encourage, discourage or not influence employee gambling, and these can be interpreted as reflecting risk, protective and moderating factors, respectively.

Risk Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble

Ten risk factors relating to the propensity of employees to gamble are identified, along with factors that may moderate these risks.

Erroneous Beliefs About Winning

Close interaction with gamblers can lead to distorted views, where staff hear about wins more than losses, witness the accompanying excitement, and receive gratuities from winners. This fuels the hope of winning and a view of gambling as exciting and a way to make money, a view reinforced by venue marketing. The Productivity Commission (1999) concluded that certain gambling marketing activities have potential to undermine responsible gambling and informed decision-making by reinforcing inherently false beliefs. Further, faulty cognitions are widely considered correlates of problem gambling (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2001). This risk may be moderated if staff have little interaction with gamblers and exposure to gambling, if they cannot discuss wins and losses with patrons, where staff inductions emphasise the realities of gambling, and where venues engage in limited marketing.

Increased Interest, Familiarity and Knowledge of Gambling

Interest in gambling may be heightened if staff must be familiar with gambling to perform their job. They may need to understand different TAB and keno bets, how gaming machines operate, how promotions are run, features of new machines, and how table games work. Some constantly hear about gambling as patrons share 'hot tips', lucky numbers and playing strategies, and may be advertently or inadvertently encouraged to gamble by patrons and work colleagues. Staff may feel well equipped to gamble as increased knowledge enhances ease of product use and so increases accessibility to gambling, a factor associated with problem gambling (Productivity Commission, 1999). However, several interviewees considered staff are either gamblers or non-gamblers, so inherent lack of interest in gambling may moderate this risk.

Erroneous Beliefs About Own Skill

Increased familiarity and knowledge about gambling may lead some staff to believe insider knowledge enhances their chances of winning. Some reported watching machines in their venue, or receiving advice on which ones to play from staff in other venues, in the false belief that certain machines are 'due' to pay. Griffiths (1995) suggests irrational thinking about control and outcomes is common amongst gaming machine players, and such cognitive distortions probably influence the development and maintenance of gambling problems (Perese *et al.*, 2005), because gamblers then believe they can predict or influence the outcome of chance events (Toneatto, 1999).

Gambling and Heavy Gambling are Normalised

Frequent gambling exposure and a workplace culture of gambling seem to normalise gambling and heavy gambling. Extended gambling sessions and large bets may be considered typical. Seeing heavy gambling may lead some employees to view their own gambling as minimal, even if not. They can lose sight of the value and ownership of money when gambling, being accustomed to large amounts of cash. As Perese *et al.* (2005) note, attitudes to gambling directly influence behaviour, so employees' acceptance and normalisation of gambling likely influence their own gambling.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Staff

The relatively young age of staff means fewer family and financial obligations to otherwise limit their gambling. Some interviewees suggested the industry attracts outgoing, less risk-averse people, and gamblers and problem gamblers. Gambling may seem an attractive means to supplement low and irregular wages sometimes earned. Youthful age and low socio-economic status generally align with high risk profiles for gambling problems (Productivity

Commission, 1999; Perese *et al.*, 2005). Studies have also found associations between youthful age and elevated sensation seeking (Gupta and Derevensky, 1998; Powell *et al.*, 1999), in turn associated with loss of control in gambling (Perese *et al.*, 2005).

Novelty Factor

Some interviewees suggested younger and newer staff are more vulnerable to gambling problems. Several thought these staff are more likely to gain distorted views about winning, be caught up in the excitement, and be less aware of associated risks, especially if they have not yet been trained in responsible gambling or witnessed extensive gambling losses. This risk may be moderated with time, as suggested by Shaffer and Hall (2002). Abbott (2006) has proposed that during new exposure to gambling, previously unexposed individuals, population sectors and societies are at high risk, but over time adaptation typically occurs and problem levels reduce, even in the face of increasing exposure.

High Alcohol Consumption

Alcohol consumption appears high and was a constant observation when asked how staff typically deal with stress or unwind after work. Lowered inhibitions accompanying alcohol consumption can prompt the start of a gambling session and riskier styles of play (Perese *et al.*, 2005). It usually also brings the person into a gambling environment. The chronic effects of alcohol, such as reduced income and higher expenditure on alcohol, may increase the severity of gambling problems (Welte *et al.*, 2004).

Workplace Stress Can Create Urges to Gamble

Venue staff face numerous workplace stressors, including emotional labour with difficult or intoxicated customers, ethical dilemmas about problem gamblers, heavy, unpredictable workloads, shift work, boredom, job dissatisfaction, and the need to be constantly 'upbeat' and communicative. Staff may need to relax after work, to escape from workplace worries, and to have 'time out' from others. For some, gambling – particularly 'zoning out' on machines – becomes appealing. Venue employees elsewhere have reported substantial stress, irritability, moodiness and exhaustion after work, and sleep and appetite problems (Keith *et al.*, 2001). Many studies have found that gambling to relieve negative emotional states, such as depression, anxiety, boredom and loneliness, may be a significant risk factor (Perese *et al.*, 2005). However, some interviewees suggested this risk may be modified where staff are trained to better cope with workplace stress, their jobs are not particularly stressful, there is a supportive work environment, and staff engage in other activities to reduce stress.

Limits on Social Life

A legacy of shift work is that staff can experience social isolation if friends and family are working during their time off. With limited recreational opportunities during the day and mid-week, gambling can become an attractive solo activity. Split shifts exacerbate this where the work break is insufficient to go home. Gaming venues are the only places open after working a late shift. Some mainly socialise with other hospitality workers who may also be active gamblers. Some gamble in their workplace during time off, if allowed, in what is a familiar, comforting environment, while some frequent other venues where they know the staff, and/or gamble in their workplace while waiting for colleagues to finish their shift. Gambling to relieve negative emotional states, such as loneliness and boredom, is associated with gambling problems and many counsellors we interviewed noted high proportions of shift workers amongst clients. Shift work can interfere with family, social and community life, leisure activities and other obligations (Keith *et al.*, 2001), and a lack of social interaction likely

influences the development and maintenance of gambling problems (Perese *et al.*, 2005). However, some interviewees noted that some staff engage in other activities during time off, have other shift workers in hospitality to socialise with, or just want to go home after work. Others reported they do no shift work or have permanent shifts around which they can plan, while some managers minimise shift work in the interests of staff wellbeing.

Peer Pressure to Gamble

Given the close social bonds that can develop amongst staff, employees sometimes gamble due to peer pressure. This occurs in the workplace via tipping competitions, punters' clubs and syndicates, and with work colleagues before and after work, on days off, during staff social club activities, during trips away, and on hospitality nights. Staff can introduce other staff to gambling, and participation can enhance peer acceptance. A desire to gain favour or build bonds with management, where managers are keen gamblers themselves, may encourage some to gamble. While there is minimal research into how social interaction influences gambling (Abbott and Volberg, 1999), associations between problem gambling and parental gambling problems suggest significant others can be a key influence through increasing exposure to gambling and social learning (Perese *et al.*, 2005). One study (Abbott 2001) noted problem gamblers commonly report their partner and work colleagues have gambling problems. While conventional wisdom is that problem gamblers gamble alone, they apparently do not differ from non-problem gamblers in their frequency of participating in gambling with friends and work colleagues (Perese *et al.*, 2005). However, several factors may moderate this influence - some do not socialise with other staff due to family responsibilities, because they finish work at different times, and because interest in socialising declines over time, particularly amongst older staff. Peer pressure may be limited where staff constantly work with different people, or where the venue employs very few staff. Some interviewees reported no peer pressure to gamble, particularly from management.

Protective Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble

Five protective factors relating to the propensity of employees to gamble are discussed, with moderating factors identified.

Exposure to Problem and Heavy Gamblers

Close interaction with and frequent exposure to heavy and problem gamblers deter some staff from gambling, or from gambling heavily. Many interviewees had an aversion to heavy gamblers and did not want to be like them. Some were turned off by the distress, rudeness, anger and mood volatility accompanying gambling losses. Some had witnessed the effects of gambling problems amongst patrons, such as relationship breakdowns, child neglect, personal neglect and poverty. There appears no research that examines whether propensity to gamble is lowered by exposure to problem gamblers. However, responsible gambling training and community education programs that discuss the effects of problem gambling and provide case histories of problem gamblers assume such knowledge can be a protective factor.

Gambling Becomes Unexciting or Stressful

For some staff, any glamour, excitement and appeal of gambling had long been dispelled by virtue of their work experiences. They referred to gambling as boring, were sick of being around gambling, found the accompanying lights and sounds annoying, were turned off by gambling promotions, and were deterred by the darkness and smokiness of the gambling environment. During their time off, the last environment they wanted to be in was a gaming room. While there appears no research that directly supports this as a protective factor, some

people immersed in an environment of addictive behaviours may adapt to that environment and develop some immunity towards it (Zinberg, 1984 in Shaffer *et al.*, 1999). Whether that immunity becomes an aversion to the activity, however, is not known.

Awareness of Gambling Losses

Staff sometimes hear about losses from patrons, see how much people spend, and see the venue's takings during machine clearances, when change booth tills are cleared, in count rooms and during banking. Staff can therefore have better knowledge of the poor odds of gambling than the general public, knowledge often reinforced during responsible gambling training. However, there is no previous research that supports this as a protective factor, reflective of a general paucity of research into the effectiveness of responsible gambling measures (Jackson *et al.*, 2000). Nevertheless, responsible gambling training and community education that highlight the odds in gambling assume this knowledge provides some protection against the development of gambling problems.

Knowledge of Responsible Gambling

Training and venue-based responsible gambling measures can raise staff awareness of problem gambling, its signs and typical consequences, the poor odds in gambling, and help-seeking strategies. They can destigmatise problem gambling and trigger help-seeking. Administering self-exclusion can deter staff, as can a proactive workplace culture of responsible gambling. Few studies have evaluated the effectiveness of responsible gambling initiatives. However, in one study (Hing, 2003), around 18% of club patrons reported they had reduced the frequency of their gambling, typical session length, and usual gambling expenditure because of these measures. However, whether these measures influence staff is not known. Further, our interviewees cited numerous factors that might moderate any protective effect of responsible gambling training. These were that not all staff are trained or that the training was not engaging, did not encourage staff to reflect on their own gambling, was not lengthy enough, and did not convey the 'human' aspect of gambling problems. Similarly, the effectiveness of responsible measures in venues was compromised where signage becomes overly familiar, too discreet, and perceived as targeting patrons not staff. Some commented that responsible gambling training and venue measures would not assist staff in denial about gambling problems.

Peer Pressure to Not Gamble

In some workplaces, a prevailing attitude of gambling as 'a mug's game' or that the staff member 'should know better' deterred staff from gambling. As noted above, prior research suggests that significant others and social learning can influence gambling behaviour, presumably in a positive as well as negative way.

Interventions Relating to the Propensity to Gamble

Thomas and Jackson (2004) contend that interventions can target propensity to gamble and to develop gambling problems by targeting at-risk groups with appropriate communications in mass media and community settings. Three interventions were identified.

More Staff Training

Improvements suggested to heighten the effectiveness of training as an intervention were to train all staff, conduct regular refresher courses, to better emphasise the odds in gambling, the negative effects of problem gambling, and risks for staff in their own gambling, for all staff to witness machine clearances, and for a dedicated staff member to ensure training was regular

and of high quality. More training, especially for newer and younger employees, might dispel erroneous beliefs and decrease the normalisation of gambling and heavy gambling.

Stronger Culture of Responsible Gambling

Several suggestions were made to promote a stronger culture of responsible gambling in the workplace - proactive managers who lead by example, more widespread implementation of the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Conduct* and involvement in initiatives such as Responsible Gambling Awareness Week. This cultural change could promote healthier staff attitudes to gambling and prompt behavioural change.

Promote Staff Wellbeing

Propensity to gamble and to develop gambling problems may be reduced by promoting staff wellbeing, training in stress management and conflict resolution, and providing and promoting alternative leisure activities.

Risk, Moderating and Protective Factors and Interventions Relating to Gambling Products and Services

A second type of influence on gambling behaviour is shown in Figure 1 – gambling products and services – including availability, marketing, and how well they meet individual needs or expectations (Thomas and Jackson, 2004).

Risk Factors Relating to Gambling Products and Services

Two risk factors for venue staff associated with gambling products are discussed, with factors that may moderate these risks.

Increased Access to Gambling

No casinos, but about one-half of participating clubs and hotels allowed staff, other than gaming licensees, to gamble at work outside working hours. Staff who can gamble in their workplace have very high accessibility to gambling due to: proximity and convenience; increased ease of product use given their knowledge and familiarity; social accessibility in a familiar, inclusive environment; opportunities to gamble in the workplace to unwind after work; and ready access to bank accounts and wages through venue ATMs. Even staff who are not allowed to gamble in their workplace have heightened access to gambling due to: increased ease of product use; social accessibility where other venues are often familiar, non-threatening environments; because other venues may be the only places open after a late shift; and temptation for TAB and keno operators to gamble (illegally) on credit. While little research has been conducted into access to gambling, the Productivity Commission concluded there was 'sufficient evidence from many different sources to suggest a significant connection between greater accessibility to gambling – particularly to gaming machines – and the greater prevalence of problem gambling' (1999, p. 8.31). This conclusion recognises accessibility to gambling is a multi-dimensional construct, beyond proximity. While policies of no gambling in the workplace may moderate risks by reducing access, they do not fully ameliorate them.

Exposure and Marketing Can Trigger Urges to Gamble

Seeing patrons win, hearing 'hot tips', rising jackpot levels, the excitement of gambling promotions, frequent exposure to gambling marketing, being surrounded by the lights, music and atmosphere, and just being in the gambling environment for long periods can trigger gambling by staff. It is widely recognised that the gambling environment may influence gambling behaviour (Griffiths, 1995; Griffiths and Parke, 2003), although the linkages between situational factors and problem gambling remain unclear (Perese *et al.*, 2005). Most

problem gamblers interviewed considered that working in a gambling environment triggered their urge to gamble, suggesting this may have contributed to the maintenance, if not onset, of problems. Rotating staff between departments, not operating promotions or linked jackpots and not allowing staff to enter promotions may moderate this.

Protective Factors Relating to Gambling Products and Services

Two protective factors relating to gambling products were identified for staff.

Limits on Access to Gambling

Policies of no gambling in the workplace protect staff, although even staff who are not allowed to gamble in their workplace have heightened access to gambling. Exceptions are where casino staff are interested only in table games and have to travel considerable distances to access these, and where staff finish work when all local venues are closed, removing opportunities to gamble after work.

Awareness of Poor Odds

While exposure to gambling products and marketing can trigger urges to gamble, other staff become sceptical of gambling marketing, more aware of the low chances of winning promotions and jackpots, and less receptive to marketing and promotional appeals.

Interventions Relating to Gambling Products and Services

Three interventions relating to gambling products were identified.

No Gambling in the Workplace

No allowing staff to gamble in the workplace may reduce, although not eliminate, heightened access to gambling, because it lessens easy and convenient access, reduces temptation, and prevents staff from spending wages at work. Several respondents suggested this policy should include all staff, recognising non-gaming staff may also be at risk.

Limit Access to Cash

Ready availability of cash in the workplace was identified as a potential risk factor. Suggested interventions comprised no advances on staff wages, not paying staff in cash, and strict surveillance and control procedures to minimise the temptation to steal cash and credit bet.

Limit Exposure to Gambling

Some managers noted they rotate frontline staff to limit exposure to gambling products and marketing. One employee suggested staff should be shielded from the sights and sounds by containing gambling in separate rooms.

Risk, Moderating and Protective Factors and Interventions Relating to the Outcomes and Consequences of Gambling

Outcomes and consequences of gambling uptake can include negative impacts on individuals, families and the community through development and maintenance of problematic gambling (Thomas and Jackson, 2004).

Risk Factors Relating to Outcomes and Consequences of Gambling

Six risk factors relating to the outcomes and consequences of gambling by staff are discussed, along with moderating factors.

Unhelpful Attitudes to Gambling Problems

An unintended consequence of greater awareness of problem gambling is that some staff have a false sense of security against developing gambling problems, and problems may not be taken seriously as staff 'should know better'. Close friendships can deter colleagues from intervening. One problem gambler reported that close friendship with her boss and other staff deterred them from assisting her through support, advice and self-exclusion.

Reluctance to Expose Gambling Problems

Given that risks to staff are not discussed in most venues and the general staff disdain for people who cannot control their gambling, many interviewees reported staff would be too embarrassed to admit a gambling problem and might go to additional lengths to conceal it. This is exacerbated by fear of job loss. While most managers reported they would assist staff with gambling problems, many employees and counsellors felt staff would be very unlikely to expose a problem. Further, Legal Aid (Brisbane) noted it would advise employees not to reveal a gambling problem to an employer, as they would be a first suspect for cash discrepancies and employment could be easily terminated. Given problems and consequences of excessive gambling become most apparent when financial resources are insufficient to fund gambling activities (Thomas and Jackson, 2004), any threats (real or perceived) to the financial resources of staff with problems would be additional deterrents. This may deter staff from seeking help, and exacerbate or prolong the negative consequences of problem gambling.

Limited Detection of Gambling Problems

It is difficult for others to detect a gambling problem, where staff are not allowed to gamble in their workplace, and where shift work makes it easy to gamble when family and friends are at work. Concealing a gambling problem can enhance self-denial.

Lack of Social Support

Familial and community support is a key protective factor for adversity in general and negative consequences of gambling in particular (Thomas and Jackson, 2004). Given the social isolation experienced due to shift work, their relatively young age and fewer family responsibilities, support mechanisms encouraging staff to admit, address and resolve gambling problems may be absent. This is exacerbated where staff move away from their community for seasonal work.

Limited Financial Resources

Low and irregular wages often earned by staff may exacerbate the negative consequences of gambling, with insufficient financial resources to fall back on as gambling losses mount.

Difficulties in Addressing Gambling Problems

Strategies to assist recovery from gambling problems may be limited. Staff find it difficult to avoid workplace triggers to gamble, may lack alternative employment opportunities, face embarrassment self-excluding from their workplace or other venues, particularly in small towns, and face difficulties gaining regular counselling when working varying and unpredictable shifts.

Protective Factors Relating to Outcomes and Consequences of Gambling

Two protective factors against the negative outcomes of gambling for staff were identified.

Responsible Gambling Initiatives Assist Help-Seeking

Training, signage and administering self-exclusion might trigger problem recognition, raise awareness of sources of help, destigmatise problem gambling and encourage staff to approach counselling. One counsellor recalled an employee presenting after the counsellor ran a training session at the employee's workplace, noting it 'made it a little bit easier for him to come in. He may not have come in at all, if he hadn't been at that training'.

Support from Colleagues to Address Gambling Problems

Some interviewees noted work colleagues were proactive in providing advice or support for staff to stop or decrease gambling, to seek help, or to suggest alternative leisure activities.

Interventions Relating to Outcomes and Consequences of Gambling

Thomas and Jackson (2004) contend that interventions relating to outcomes and consequences of gambling can include early intervention, problem recognition intervention, and treatment for gambling problems. Three interventions for staff were identified.

Supportive Management Attitudes

Open communication with management, where staff feel comfortable raising personal and work-related concerns, was considered a precursor to appropriate interventions. Supportive attitudes and assurances that gambling problems would be confidential and not threaten employment are important.

Provide Alternative Jobs

Management can intervene by removing an employee with gambling problems from the gambling environment, finding an alternative position, organising self-exclusion from workplace gaming areas, and helping with self-exclusion from other venues.

Assist with Help-Seeking

Managers can intervene by referring staff and liaising with local counselling services. In larger organisations, in-house counselling services may be appropriate if staff feel confidentiality will be maintained.

Table V summarises the risk and protective factors and interventions relating to propensity to gamble, gambling products, and gambling outcomes and consequences for gaming venue employees that have emerged from this study.

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Conclusion

This paper has reported on a study into aspects of the work environment in gaming venues that influence the gambling behaviour of staff, and venue strategies to encourage responsible gambling and discourage problem gambling. After summarising key results, the paper developed a conceptual model to synthesise findings into risk and protective factors and interventions relating to propensity to gamble, gambling products, and outcomes of gambling by venue staff.

While exploratory, the research is able to draw a number of conclusions. First, gaming venue staff appear an at-risk group for developing gambling problems. Second, this risk stems from a variety of factors relating to working in a gambling environment that heighten their propensity to gamble, accessibility to gambling and receptivity to gambling marketing and promotions, and that compound the negative outcomes and consequences of their gambling. Third, numerous workplace factors protect some staff by deterring them from gambling, by improving informed choice and by minimising harmful behaviours. Finally, venues can

implement strategies to better encourage responsible gambling and discourage the development and maintenance of gambling problems amongst staff. These include staff training and education aimed at reducing propensity to gamble, reducing staff accessibility and exposure to gambling products, and assisting staff with gambling problems to reduce the potential negative outcomes.

It is hoped this research has drawn attention to numerous risk factors faced by venue staff in their employment and the range of potential interventions to enhance their wellbeing in relation to gambling. If the results can be validated in future studies, they have potential implications for numerous stakeholders. There are opportunities for: trainers and educators to highlight risks to gaming venue staff; venues to implement interventions and provide more comprehensive employee assistance programs; and responsible gambling training to focus on staff gambling. Gambling industries can extend their current focus on responsible provision of gambling for venue patrons to also encompass staff.

Naturally, this study is subject to limitations typically associated with any exploratory, qualitative research using small, non-representative samples and requiring an interpretive approach. Nevertheless, provides the basis for future research which might test the conclusions in different jurisdictions, conduct a broad population survey, or test the applicability of the risk and protective factors to different types of gambling staff engage in.

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Table I: Reasons Why Working in a Gaming Venue Can Encourage Gambling by Gaming Venue Staff

Close Interaction with Gamblers
Staff hear about wins more than losses
Seeing people win creates hope of winning
Staff get caught up in the excitement of patrons' wins
Staff constantly hear about gambling and given 'hot tips'
Patrons can encourage staff to gamble
Staff who gamble build relationships with other gamblers
Staff want a piece of the action
Influence of Workplace Stressors
Staff need to unwind after work
Staff can experience stress about problem gamblers
Staff can experience stress about difficult customers
Staff can experience stress from heavy workloads
Job dissatisfaction/boredom
Staff need to escape from work stresses
Staff want to be left alone
Staff have to leave workplace soon after end of a shift
Frequent Exposure to Gambling
Increases staff familiarity with gambling
Increases staff interest in gambling
Normalises gambling for staff
Staff may have ready access to gambling
Staff are surrounded by the lights, music and atmosphere
Infrequent staff can gain distorted views about winning
New or younger staff can be vulnerable
Staff can lose sight of the value and ownership of money
Increases perceived insider knowledge about gambling
Staff become attracted to the gambling environment
Normalises heavy gambling for staff
Triggers the temptation to gamble
Influence of Shift Work
Staff can suffer social isolation
Lack of alternative social opportunities for staff
Lack of alternative recreational opportunities for staff
Only gambling venues are open late at night
Staff need to find solitary leisure activities
Staff tend to socialise with other hospitality workers
Staff gamble to fill in time between shifts
Staff social life can revolve around the workplace
Staff gamble while waiting for others to finish work
Shift work makes it easier to hide heavy gambling
Shift work leads to stress
Staff gamble together on days off
Staff directly encourage other staff to gamble
Staff gamble together in their workplace
Influence of Fellow Employees

Staff introduce other staff to gambling
Staff share gambling tips
Staff gamble together after work
Staff gamble on hospitality industry nights
Staff travel away together to gamble
Staff social club activities can encourage gambling
Staff gamble before work
Staff gamble to gain acceptance into the workgroup
General acceptance of gambling amongst staff
Gambling problems not taken seriously by staff
Frequent Exposure to Gambling Marketing and Promotions
Promotions can act as a trigger
Reinforces gambling as a way to win money
Raises awareness of jackpot levels
Increases knowledge about other promotions
Staff get caught up in the excitement of promotions
Worsens existing gambling problems
Influence of Venue Managers, Policies and Practices
Managers are sometimes gamblers and set an example
Managers gamble with staff
Managers allow staff to gamble in the workplace
Gambling can be a job requirement
Workplace has a gambling culture
Managers sometimes talk about big wins
Managers might talk about gambling in a positive way
Managers do not take gambling problems seriously
Other Aspects of the Workplace
Some staff drink large quantities of alcohol
Reluctance to expose problems due to fear of job loss
Some staff have the opportunity to bet on credit
Irregular wages of casual staff
Low wages of some staff
Young age group of staff
Self-exclusion difficult due to embarrassment/ job loss
Staff are overlooked in problem gambling
Staff cannot gamble at workplace so problem undetected
Access to cash and pay in their workplace
Lack of alternative employment opportunities
Staff may not have time to access help services
The industry attracts gamblers and problem gamblers
The industry attract outgoing people
Staff receive gratuities drawing attention to wins
Staff boredom

Table II: Reasons Why Working in a Gaming Venue Can Discourage Gambling by Gaming Venue Staff

Close Interaction with Gamblers
Staff see problem or heavy gamblers and don't want to be like them
Staff see negative responses to gambling losses
Staff see the effects of problem gambling
Staff see or hear about the losses
Staff see the amount of money patrons spend on gambling
Staff see the amount of time patrons spend gambling
Staff see gambling as boring
Can trigger problem recognition

Influence of Workplace Stressors
Staff avoid gambling for stress relief
Staff can be deterred by stress about problem gamblers
Staff can be deterred by stress about difficult customers

Influence of Shift Work
Staff might go out less
No gambling venues open after some shifts

Frequent Exposure to Gambling
Staff can become sick of being around gambling and environment
Staff see venue takings from gambling
Staff have better knowledge of the odds of losing

Frequent Exposure to Gambling Marketing and Promotions
Staff are aware of the low chance of winning promotions
Promotions turn staff off

Influence of Fellow Employees
Staff provide support or advice to stop gambling
Staff hear about staff losses on gambling
Friends from work want to avoid gambling venues
Staff can trigger help-seeking

Influence of Responsible Gambling Training
Raises awareness for staff of problem gambling and its signs
Raises awareness for staff of the effects of problem gambling
Raises awareness for staff of the poor odds in gambling
Raises awareness for staff of ways to seek help
Destigmatises problem gambling
Can trigger help-seeking

Influence of Venue Managers, Policies and Practices
Managers can provide support or advice to stop gambling
A policy of no staff gambling in the workplace
A proactive culture of responsible gambling
Training and education courses
Strict management policies

Influence of Other Responsible Gambling Measures
Measures raise awareness of gambling problems
Signage raises awareness of where to get help
Can trigger problem recognition
Staff involvement in self-exclusion of patrons deters staff from gambling

Table III: Reasons Why Working in a Gaming Venue Can Have No Influence on Gambling by Gaming Venue Staff

Close interaction with Gamblers
Staff not allowed to discuss wins and losses with patrons
Staff are either gamblers or non-gamblers anyway
Some staff have little interaction with gamblers
Influence of Shift Work
Staff have other hospitality friends to socialise with
Staff find other activities in their time off
Staff just want to go home after a shift
Some staff have permanent shifts or do not do shift work
Management strategies to minimise effects of shift work
Management strategies to assist staff home
Older staff have family commitments
Frequent Exposure to Gambling
Staff are either gamblers or non-gamblers anyway
Staff become immune to any influence
Staff inductions point out the realities of gambling
Staff are rotated between jobs or departments
Frequent Exposure to Gambling Marketing and Promotions
Promotions are not attractive to the age group
Staff are often not allowed to enter workplace promotions
Staff who are not gamblers would not be influenced
Venue does very little gambling marketing and promotions
Heavy staff gamblers not attracted to promotions
Staff are desensitised to marketing and promotions
Management policies separate staff from these activities
Small prizes are not attractive
Venue has no linked jackpots
Influence of Fellow Employees
Staff prefer not to socialise together
Staff socialise by going out to drink instead
Staff do not socialise due to family responsibilities
Older staff are not interested in socialising
Staff work with different people all the time
Heavy gamblers prefer to gamble on their own
No peer pressure to gamble or this pressure is resisted
Being the only employee gambling in the workplace
Staff may hide their gambling from fellow employees

Some staff finish work alone
Staff lose interest in socialising with other staff
Staff have shared sports interests instead
Influence of Responsible Gambling Training
Training is not readily available in all areas
Training may not be done due to expense
Training may not be done because it is voluntary
May not encourage staff to reflect on their own gambling
Training was not engaging
People may be in denial about their own gambling
Training can provide a false sense of security
Staff sceptical about venue's commitment to RG
Not all staff are trained
Not all venues welcome training by counsellors
Trainers not given enough time
Training may not be done due to other difficulties
Influence of Venue Managers, Policies and Practices
Staff do not mix with management
Management restrict staff gambling only in workplace
Mgt have no interest/knowledge of staff in their on time
Management do not try to influence staff
Influence of Other Responsible Gambling Measures
Staff don't look at signage/are sceptical about them
Signs become too familiar
Signs are aimed at patrons not staff
Signage is too discreet
Signage is misleading
People may be in denial about their own gambling
Signage can trigger gambling
Staff are sceptical about responsible gambling measures
Staff may not know about self-exclusion
**Influence of Workplace Stressors**
Some staff are trained to better cope with stress
The work is not stressful
Staff de-stress in other ways
Stress would not influence non-gamblers to gamble
Supportive work environment

Table IV: Venue Strategies Perceived to Encourage Responsible Gambling and Discourage Problem Gambling Amongst Staff

No Gambling in Workplace
Policy to apply to all staff
Lessens easy access
Reduces temptation
Protects staff and venue
Prevents spending wages at venue
Promote a Stronger Culture of Responsible Gambling
Change in workplace culture
Managers to set good example
More proactive management
Generate responsible gambling culture amongst staff
Widespread implementation of the QLD code of practice
Involvement in Responsible Gambling Awareness Week
More Responsible Gambling Staff Training
All staff should be trained
Refresher courses needed
Emphasise odds in gambling
Emphasise effects of problem gambling
Information about staff gambling
Staff member dedicated to responsible gambling **Limit**
Remove ATMs from close to gaming machines
No staff wages in cash

Access to Cash in Workplace
No advances on pay
Minimise temptation of cash
Assist Staff with Gambling Problems
Open communication
Provide non-gambling related jobs
Active management support
Information/referrals for counselling
Promote in-house counselling
Remove fear of job loss
Liaison with local services
Help with exclusion
Industry support for staff with gambling problems
Promote Staff Wellbeing
Training in stress and conflict management
Provide alternative social activities
Other Measures
Staff to witness gaming machine clearances
Shield staff from sights and sounds

Table V: Risk Factors, Protective Factors and Interventions for Gaming Venue Staff

	Risk Factors	Protective Factors	Interventions
Propensity to gamble	Erroneous beliefs about winning at gambling Increased interest, familiarity and knowledge about gambling Erroneous beliefs about their own skill at gambling Gambling and heavy gambling are normalised Socio-demographic characteristics (young age, low socio-economic status) Novelty factor amongst new, infrequent or young staff High alcohol consumption Workplace stress can create the urge to gamble Limits on social life Peer pressure to gamble	Exposure to heavy gamblers is a deterrent Gambling becomes unexciting or even stressful Increased awareness of gambling losses Heightened knowledge of responsible gambling Peer pressure and support to not gamble	More responsible gambling training Promote a stronger culture of responsible gambling Promote staff wellbeing
Gambling products and services	Increased access to gambling Exposure to gambling products and marketing can trigger gambling	Limits on access to gambling Exposure to gambling products and marketing can raise awareness of poor odds	No gambling in the workplace Limit access to cash in the workplace Limit exposure to gambling in the workplace
Gambling outcomes and consequences	Unhelpful attitudes to gambling problems Reluctance to expose a problem Lack of detection of gambling problems Lack of social and family support Limited financial resources Difficulties in addressing gambling problems	Responsible gambling initiatives can assist help-seeking Support from management and staff to address gambling problems	Supportive management attitudes Provide alternative jobs in the venue Provide assistance with help-seeking.
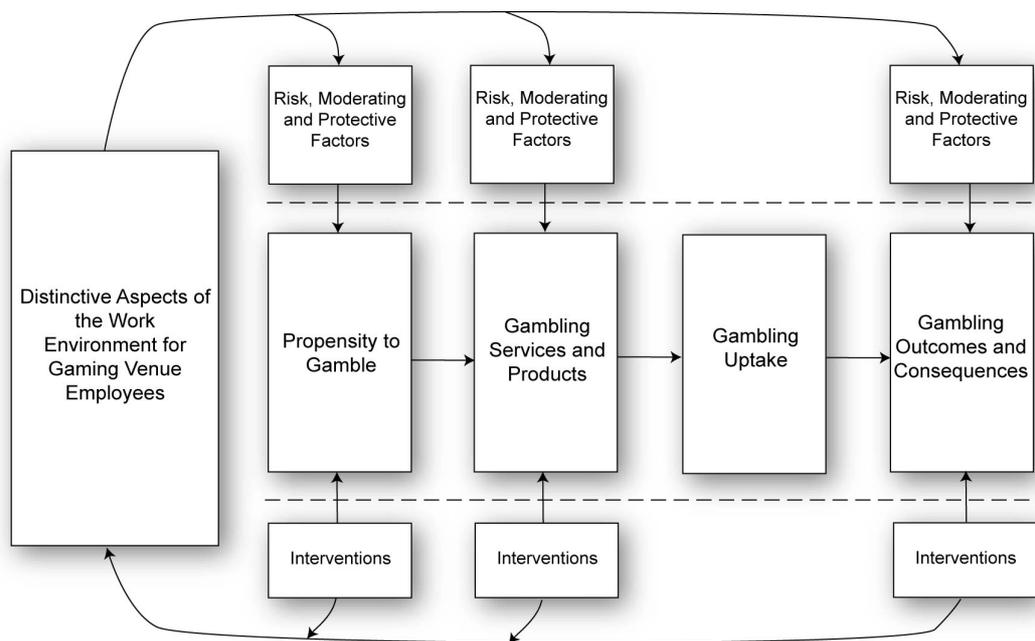
Source: adapted from Thomas and Jackson (2004, p. 44)

Figure I: A Conceptual Model of Influences on Gambling Behaviours and Outcomes for Gaming Venue Staff