

Exploring view among Norwegian Sámi regarding gambling and gambling treatment

Ståle Pallesen^{1,2}, Andre Syvertsen^{2,3}, Anne Rita Spein^{4,5}, Marie Pedersen¹ Indset¹ and Marte Devold¹

¹Department of Psychosocial Science, University of Bergen, Norway

²Norwegian Competence Center of Gambling and Gaming Research, University of Bergen, Norway

³Department for Drug Addiction, Haukeland University Hospital, Norway

⁴Centre for Sámi Health Research, Arctic University of Norway (UiT), Norway

⁵Sámi Norwegian National Advisory Unit on Mental Health and Substance Use (SANKS), Finnmark Hospital Trust, Karasjok, Norway



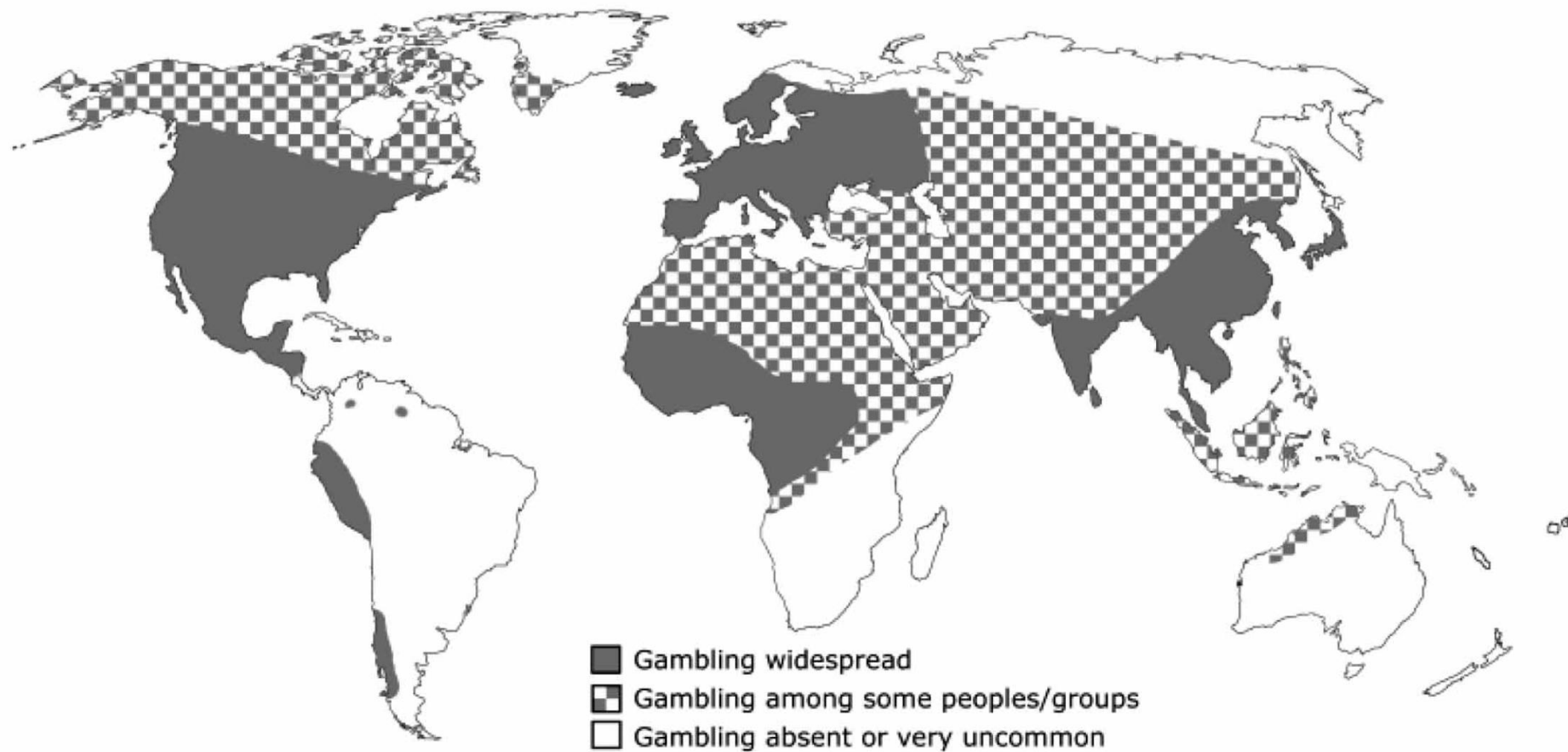


Figure 1. Approximate prevalence of indigenous gambling

Factors influencing occurrence of gambling in previous societies



- **Presence of money** (ease redistribution of wealth)
- **Social inequality** (motivates gambling as means to advance economically)
- **Plurality of socio-cultural environments**
- **Non-nomadic societies** (for nomads dangerous to go below certain level of wealth)
- **Polythetic religions** (monotheistic religion monopoly on gambling)

Gambling among indigenous people



- Involved in gambling industry in USA, New Zealand and Australia
 - Exposure to and normalization of gambling
- Often socioeconomically deprived
- More exposed to gambling opportunities and advertisements

- More gambling problems among indigenous people in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Greenland

The Sámi population



- Only recognized indigenous people within EU
- Population of 70,000-80,000
- Nomadic –people settled about 5000 years ago

The Sámi population



- Hunting and fishing, later herding
- Originally barter economy
- Uralic languages, lived in small, kin groups
- Colonization process 19th and 20th century (tax, culture, language, religion)
- Lutheran sect, Laestadianism great influence in the 1840s
- Some revitalization of Sámi culture and language after second world war

Method



- **Research question:** How do individuals with knowledge or affiliation to the Sámi culture view the potential influence of Sámi culture on gambling and chance, problem gambling, and treatment of problem gambling?
- **Recruited 14 individuals** (7♀ and 7♂; 21-70 years, 13 self-identified as Sámi)
- **Recruitment**
 - Contacting people linked to Sámi organizations/political organizations
 - Advertising in a Sámi newspaper (www.sagat.no)
- **Semi-structured interview guide**
 - Views on coincidence, misfortune and luck in Sámi culture
 - Attitudes and views on gambling, and whether aspects of Sámi culture might promote or inhibit the development of gambling problems
 - Perspectives on treatment of gambling problems in a Sámi context
- **Approved by the Expert Ethical Committee for Sámi Health Research in Norway**
- Data analysed with **thematic analysis**
 - 1) Familiarization with the data (transcribing and re-reading the interviews), (2) Coding (systematically identifying initial ideas/themes providing meaningful descriptions of the data), (3) Gathering codes to find potential themes and sub-themes in the material, (4) Critically re-evaluating themes (going back to the material to verify that codes and themes correspond and make sense in the material), (5) Defining, redefining and naming themes and (6) Writing report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results



- Superstitious views
 - Care for nature and good fortune
 - Nothing is coincidental
- Factors promoting and inhibiting gambling problems
 - Normative role of Laestadianism
 - Representing more than oneself
 - Culture of silence
 - Non-materialistic society
 - Self-sufficiency ideal
 - Reduced trust in the Norwegian authorities and healthcare system
 - Importance of cultural knowledge in treatment

Care for nature and good fortune



- *“If we don’t take care of nature and the animals and the entirety that we call our life, then it will go badly for both nature, animals, culture and everything”.*

Nothing is coincidental



- Participants refer to the term “fate” as a link between one’s fate and one’s moral behaviour, claiming that *“what you do creates your fate in this life”*.
- Most informants believe that gambling is solely based on luck, a minority claims that the belief in a destined fate can act as a promoting and/or inhibiting factor in relation to gambling.
- Sáhkku is an old Sámi game traditionally used for entertainment, that contains superstitious elements. One informant claimed that Sáhkku has been used to gamble with money

Normative role of Laestadianism



- Negative attitudes towards gambling, but also towards games in general, including card games: *“In the milieu I grew up in, card games are forbidden because they are associated with gambling and poker.”*
- Another informant describes gambling as sinful; *“It’s a sin in a way, if you gamble money, you side with the devil.”*
- These findings are consistent with the pietistic nature of the Laestadian movement.

Representing more than oneself



- Collectivist mindset also entails that personal problems at the individual level often are transferred to the group level; *“your actions does not only reflect on yourself, but it also reflects back on your family”*
- The threshold for being open about problems and seeking help from outside of the family is high, partly because one does not want to cause shame on other family members.

Culture of silence



- *"It is very shameful to have a problem in Sámi societies. So if you do have a problem, let's say that there has been something severe like a rape, you've been subjected to an assault, there is a culture of not talking about it. The same applies if you have a gambling problem, where you have gambled away your house and home and everything you have, then you do not dare to speak of it."*

Non-materialistic society



- *It was a self-sufficiency system and an exchange system that we used until there was contact with the Norwegian system, it was only then that you started to use money“*
- *“We view money negatively in the first place, because it has a value that is not human. So as soon as you start mixing in money it’s negative because we see the value in things you have, for example in a reindeer herd.“*

Self-sufficiency ideal



- *"You have to pull yourself up by the scruff of the neck, and do the work, not whine, work hard and handle what you earn of the job with cleverness and respect and be able to manage on your own. There's a lot about that sort of philosophy that I think is kind of good."*
- It is explained that many would find it shameful to admit to a problem and confess to oneself and others that one needs help



Reduced trust in Norwegian authorities and healthcare system

- *"I also think there are many from the older generation who do not want to seek help because of all the harm the state has done to them. There are people now who are 60/70 years old who have experienced it first hand, being sent to a boarding school for example, and systematically being treated poorly from the state. It is so close to them that -"who are those people from the municipality, or who is going to come here to help me?""*

Importance of culture knowledge in treatment



- 13 of 14 participants expressed that they would prefer a Sámi therapist over a therapist who was of Norwegian ethnicity.
- *“Sámi culture is so diverse that you can't expect, if you go to a Sámi therapist, to meet someone who thinks exactly like you.”*

Conclusions



- Many protective factors regarding development of gambling problems
 - Closeness to nature
 - Laestadianism
 - Representing more than oneself
 - Non-materialistic society
 - Self-sufficiency ideal
- Factors inhibiting treatment seeking
 - Self-sufficiency ideal
 - Culture of silence
 - Reduced trust in the Norwegian authorities and healthcare system



Norwegian Competence Center for
Gambling and Gaming Research

BERGEN ADDICTION RESEARCH GROUP

Faculty of Psychology | University of Bergen



UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN