Strategies for Controlling Gambling Practices in Military Personnel Settings

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Abstract: Gambling practices are vulnerable among the military. There are many risk factors for gambling addiction, including work stress, being away from family and loneliness, low levels of screening from the start of admission, screening during work, and post-placement. This review aims to identify strategies for managing the impact of gambling addiction on personnel in the military environment. A literature review design was used in this study using the ScienceDirect, PsycInfo, and Google Scholar data bases. The articles reviewed are articles published for the 2020-2024 period. There were 5 articles that met the inclusion criteria and were reviewed. The results of this review show that there is no specific strategy for managing gambling addiction in the military environment, but it needs to be designed to control the negative effects of gambling addiction in the military environment.

Keyword: Strategy, Control, Gambling, & Military

INTRODUCTION

The practice of online and offline gambling among the military can be quite a serious issue because it can affect the discipline, performance and mental health of military members. Initially, in society's culture, gambling was a recreational activity that some people found enjoyable and did not cause problems. However, some can cause addiction and impact daily life, even careers in the military (Sharman, 2015).

Previous research shows that the prevalence of gambling addiction in adults is between 0.12 and 5.8% worldwide (Calado & Grifths, 2016). Some research suggesting that gambling is a problem in the military has emerged primarily from North America, focusing exclusively on veterans (Edens & Rosenheck, 2011).

Factors that may be associated with online gambling are early computer use (Hubert & Grifths, 2018). Lelonek-Kuleta, et al. (2020) found that people who use the internet daily are more likely to engage in online gambling. The ease of gaining access is a trigger for carrying out this gambling practice. Not only online, offline gambling practices such as card games are often carried out to fill the free time of fellow personnel (Dowling et al., 2015).

Gambling is often associated with other risky behaviors, such as dangerous addictive substance abuse. Online gamblers are more likely to use or abuse these dangerous addictive

substances, but it is possible that offline gamblers have the potential to use them (Dowling et al., 2015). The negative impact of gambling practices in the military is disciplinary behavior, financial problems and mental disorders, including anxiety and suicide attempts.

Research on gambling practices in the military environment is very limited, in fact no research has been found regarding how to manage human resources affected by gambling. This is most likely related to the stigma surrounding problem gambling which is felt to exacerbate existing difficulties in seeking help and taking further action. Several studies have been conducted on the impact of gambling on mental health, as well as other deviant activities (Paterson; Whitty; Leslie., 2020; Champion, et al., 2022; Pritchard & Dyamond, 2022; Cowlishaw, et al., 2020).

There are very few reviews of the literature regarding the policies and impacts of gambling on military personnel. One of the existing studies was conducted by Paterson, et al., (2020). This study aimed to investigate the dangers of gambling in active military personnel in the "Five-Eyes" countries (United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand). The limitation of this research is that it does not explain in detail how to manage personal strategies affected by gambling addiction.

This review article aims to identify personnel management strategies for the impact of gambling addiction on personnel in the military environment.

METHOD

To summarize the breadth of information from the articles searched, the author used a literature review design. To ensure the quality and transparency of this review, the authors adopted the Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines and included a PRISMA flowchart. However, the author did not assess the quality of the article.

Literature search using ScienceDirect, PsycInfo, and Google Scholar data bases. The keywords and Boolean operators used are "strategy AND identification AND prevention AND control AND online gambling AND military personnel".

The inclusion criteria used were articles published in the 2020-2024 period, English and Indonesian language journals, personnel management, and military personnel, while the exclusion criteria were articles that only presented abstracts and were not open access.

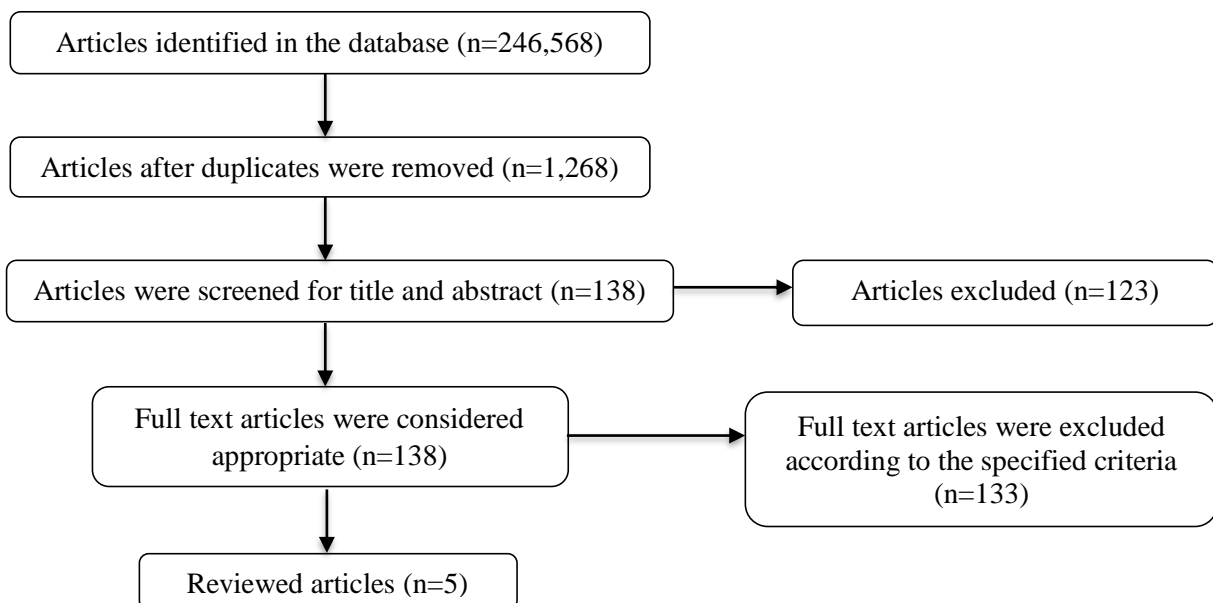The article browsing flow is depicted in the following diagram:

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Articles identified in the database (n=246,568) │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        │
                        ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Articles after duplicates were removed (n=1,268)│
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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                        ▼
┌──────────────────────────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────────┐
│ Articles were screened for title and      │─────▶│ Articles excluded (n=123)│
│ abstract (n=138)                          │      └──────────────────────────┘
└──────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        │
                        ▼
┌──────────────────────────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
│ Full text articles were considered        │─────▶│ Full text articles were excluded  │
│ appropriate (n=138)                        │      │ according to the specified criteria│
└──────────────────────────────────────────┘      │ (n=133)                            │
                        │                           └──────────────────────────────────┘
                        ▼
        ┌──────────────────────────────┐
        │ Reviewed articles (n=5)       │
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Figure 1. Search diagram

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the review data extraction are depicted in the following table:

Table 1. Summary of Quantitative Data from Reviewed Articles

Author/Year/Title	Sample Size	Participants	Location	Results

Cowlishaw., et al (2020).
 	
Gambling problems among military personnel after deployment
	n=1.324	Australian Defense Force (ADF) personnel	Australia	1. The Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI):
				   a. Involved gambling post placement 7.7%.
				   b. Post-placement gambling risk 5.7%.
				   c. Problem groups:
				      1) Age 18-24 years.
				      2) Deployment period 0–4 years of military service.
				      3) Non-commissioned officer rank.
				      4) The land force is superior to the air force.
				2. Psychological pressure (depression) 2.4%.
				3. Alcohol dependence 5.1%.

Robertsa., et al (2020). Gambling problems and the health and personal behavior of British armed forces veterans.	n=7,461 (257 veterans/treatment group: 514 non-veterans/control group).	Armed Forces	English	The veteran group had a significantly higher level of problem gambling than non-veterans (p value= 0.036).

Pritchard & Dymond (2022).
 	
Problem gambling and its detrimental impact on British Royal Air Force personnel
	n= 2119	British Royal Air Force (RAF) personnel	English	1. 12.5% of personnel are involved in gambling, with the PGSI index including:
				   a. 8.0% low risk gambling,
				   b. 2.9% with a moderate risk gambling score, and
				   c. 1.6% with a score indicating problem gambling,
				   d. The problem group is age (18–24 years) with male gender, as well as non-officer ranks.
				2. Most personnel do not have symptoms of depression or anxiety,
				3. Most experience low-risk drinking levels.

Table 2. Summary of Qualitative Data

Author/Year/Title	Research purposes	Method	Results and Recommendations
Paterson; Whitty; Leslie (2020). Exploring the prevalence of gambling harm among active military personnel: A Systematic Review	Identify, describe, and thematically synthesize published literature on gambling harms and related issues among active duty military personnel.	Systematic Review	1. The results of the review of 11 articles vary, but show that online/offline gambling addiction in military personnel has negative impacts, ranging from depression, alcohol addiction, to the risk of suicide 2. Identifying gambling cases is not as simple as identifying drug abuse. 3. The current treatment approach is more punitive than therapeutic. 4. Counseling services need to be facilitated.
Champion., et al (2022). Gambling problems and help-seeking in active duty British military personnel: A qualitative study	Exploring lived experiences of gambling addiction and help-seeking among active duty UK Armed Forces personnel	Qualitative Study	1. Work factors that are dangerous and provide protection; 2. Socio-cultural and personal influences; 3. 3Organizational attitudes towards mental health and help-seeking, and 4. Current support pathways and provisions. Gambling and alcohol use are common in the RAF, and that personnel actively seek to overcome mental health challenges.

Table 3. Theme Mapping

Theme	Sub Theme	Cowlishaw., et al (2020).	Roberts., et al (2020).	Pritchard & Dymond (2022).	Paterson; Whitty; Leslie (2020).	Champion., et al (2022).
Risk factors	Risk group	√	√	√	√	√
	Socio-cultural					√
Comorbid	Mental disorders					
	Alcohol dependence					
	Suicide	√		√	√	
Control	Risk assessment				√	√
	Management/ support				√	√
Theme	Sub Theme	Quote				
Heavy and protective work	Bored	"[Gambling] is now easily accessible via smartphones and smart devices, so you can play at any time . . . Meanwhile, when not on duty, gambling is done when bored and can provide a sensation of pleasure that replaces feelings of loneliness" (Champion, et al., 2022).				

The results of a review of 5 articles illustrate that gambling addiction is common among military personnel in Australia, England and the United States. However, the negative impact of gambling has an impact on career development and personal mental health. There are at least

3 themes in this review, including risk factors, gambling addiction as a reciprocal impact of other problems, and control strategies.

Theme 1 – Risk factors.

The analysis describes a population group that is particularly vulnerable to gambling problems, namely personnel aged 18-24 years, 0-4 years of military service, serving in the Army, and consisting of Non-Commissioned Officers (Armstrong and Carroll, 2017). In this review, there was no significant relationship between gambling and gender, marital status, and education level. However, these findings must be seen from the perspective of a small number of participants consisting of certain subgroups (for example, female gender) for further research development, so that this small phenomenon can provide in-depth information.

Prevalence rates of gambling addiction in men and active duty personnel of the United States Navy, and the risk of pathological gambling increases significantly among men and ethnic minorities (Steenbergh., et al. 2008). Other research shows gambling is increasingly available and impacting military life (Whiting 2016; Whyte 2018; Wilson et al. 2018).

Theme 2 – Gambling addiction is a reciprocal impact of other problems.

Work in the military environment is a job that demands high responsibility and is protective. Moreover, personal responsibilities involve placement in vulnerable areas or even far from family. It is not impossible that boredom, stress and other mental problems will arise, including suicide attempts.

The stress caused by high workloads and long shifts is often compounded by a sense of responsibility and the expectation to perform well. Stress can cause a variety of psychological problems including fatigue, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and behavior, panic attacks, and the inability to perform daily tasks. It is not uncommon for gambling activities and alcohol consumption to be used as a way to deal with stress (Champion, et al., 2022).

Separation and being away from family were identified as other significant workplace stressors. The condition causes loneliness and worsens existing mental health problems. Furthermore, long periods of absence during assignments, or frequent moves put pressure on relationships with family, partners and children. This condition is sometimes exacerbated by the inability to communicate with loved ones while abroad and the inability to several UK bases to provide adequate accommodation for visiting families (Champion, et al., 2022).

Theme 3 – Control strategies.

Currently, in the UK military intake screening process there is no specific screening for gambling involvement, including during active duty or after discharge. Findings also indicate the need for assessment, and screening for potential gambling problems among currently serving personnel (Cowlishaw et al., 2020). Screening can enable early intervention, thereby reducing gambling addiction and its harmful effects (Pritchard & Dyamond, 2022).

Research in this review also shows that the military is quick to reprimand personnel with gambling addictions, but slow to offer help to overcome their addictions. In this literature review, items discussing strategies for identifying and overcoming the dangers of gambling in this population are very lacking, so there is no reliable personnel management picture of how to anticipate and manage personnel who are exposed and at risk of being exposed to gambling practices (Paterson; Whitty; Leslie., 2020). There are many things that need serious attention in managing military personnel. An accurate system, as well as standard guidelines regarding small things that have not been thought about so far but which pose a threat to personal integrity and performance need to be studied further.

CONCLUSION

Gambling practices often occur in military environments. Some of the risk factors that trigger gambling addiction are work stress, being away from family and loneliness, low levels of screening from the start of admission, while working, until post-placement. Currently there is no specific strategy for managing gambling addiction in the military environment. The implication of this review in the management of military personnel is that a special strategy for managing military personnel is needed, starting from initial admission screening to special studies on personnel placement, as well as handling the negative impacts of gambling addiction in the military environment.

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