

UNDERSTANDING CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' GAMBLING EXPERIENCES IN NEW ZEALAND



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Wendy W. Li

WL116@waikato.ac.nz



Supervisors:

Darrin Hodgetts

Dr. Elsie Ho

The University of Waikato

Private Bag 3105, Hamilton.



ABSTRACT

This research investigated Chinese international students' gambling experiences in New Zealand. It explored why some students become involved in gambling and how their gambling behaviour changes over time. Findings suggest that Chinese international students rarely reported that they had problems relating to gambling in China. However, some participants in this study presented as problem gamblers in New Zealand. Socio-cultural factors played a part in participants' initiation to and continued gambling, and their cessation of gambling in New Zealand. This research demonstrates multiple levels of analysis, which adds to our knowledge about the socio-cultural meanings of gambling among Chinese international students. A number of recommendations are made for preventing and reducing the negative consequences of gambling for students.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology and analysis in this study were informed by a narrative approach. Participants in this study were recruited using the following criteria: Chinese international students (CIS) who had gambled at least once during the period of their stay in New Zealand and who were over 18 years of age. Initial and follow-up interviews were conducted with nine male and three female students between May to September 2006. Initial interviews focused on participants' gambling biographies in China and New Zealand, cultural influences on their gambling experiences, and possible links between the development of gambling problems and their study experiences in New Zealand. Follow-up interviews gathered further information on participants' gambling experiences, paying particular attention to their gambling activities over the six months prior to, and then after, the initial interviews.

Recommendations

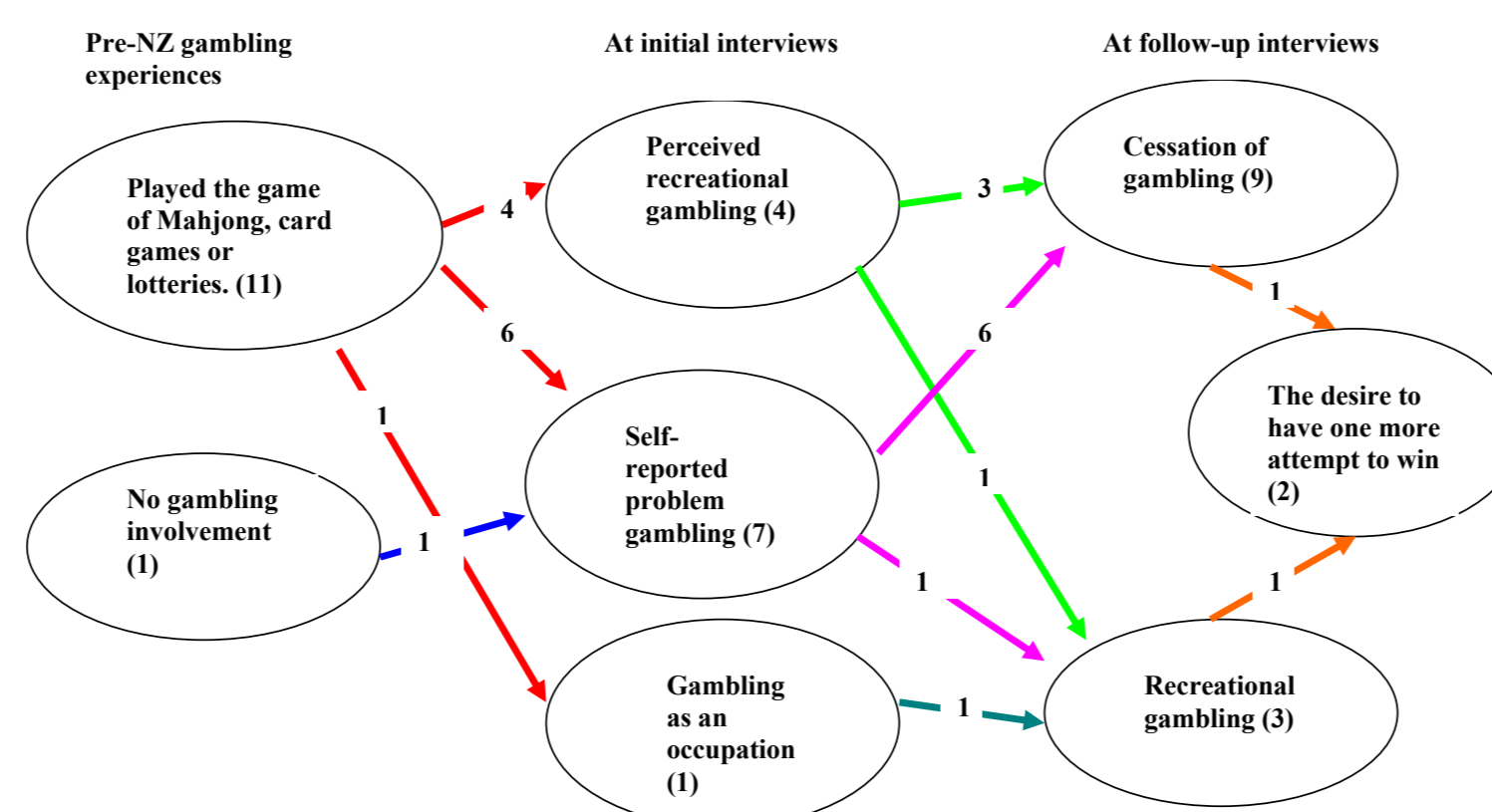
- Promote welcoming attitudes towards CIS in the host society help increase their sense of attachment and belonging to their new environment
- Support the proactive integration of CIS into the larger society
- Provide culturally appropriate counselling models to CIS
- Further research into the effectiveness of interventions in reducing harm caused by problem gambling

Acknowledgements

- Trust Waikato Student Community Grants
- Building Research Capability in Social Sciences (BRCSS) Masters Thesis Awards
- The University of Waikato Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) Masters Award

PARTICIPANTS GAMBLING JOURNEY (N=12)

12 Participants were between 20 and 41 years of age, with 5 in universities, 5 in polytechnics, and 1 in a private tertiary educational institution. The 12th was a university student in the first interview but had become a visitor visa holder by the time the follow-up interview was carried out. Participants' length of residence in New Zealand ranged from three to seven years.



Pre-NZ gambling experiences

Gambling has a long history in China with Mahjong being its most popular form. However, gambling was banned when the Communists seized power in 1949. Such social regulations towards gambling were factors that prevented people from becoming problem gamblers. Also, having good networks and supportive relationships with strict parental supervision was of great importance in protecting participants from gambling problems. Therefore, a majority of participants who engaged in playing Mahjong claimed that it was a game they played for social and entertainment purposes, and they seldom became addicted to it.

Comparison of three types of gambling among CIS

At initial interviews, 4 participants presented themselves as recreational gamblers, while 1 reported that he had been a professional gambler. 7 believed that they might have been problem gamblers. The one who perceived gambling as an occupation did not make a living from gambling, and he admitted that his gambling was problematic.

Gambling types (Self-reported)	Modes	Duration of a single session	Indicators of the shift to problem gambling
Recreational gambling (4)	Casino pokies	1 or 2 hrs up to 5 or 6 hrs/session	• Prolonged hour of gambling
Problem gambling (7)	Casino table games or pokies	10+ hrs/session 40+ hrs/wk	• Wagering greater amounts of money • Increased desire to win
Gambling as an occupation (1)	Casino table games	16 hrs/session 112 hrs/wk	• Inability to stop gambling at will

Impacts on the community

This research is the first research into CIS' gambling experiences in New Zealand. It was developed out of a concern about how individual gambling experiences and socio-cultural factors might be related. This research has drawn the attention of policy makers, the public, service providers and the gambling industry.

Socio-cultural factors relevant to problem gambling

Socio-cultural factors influenced the development of self-reported problem gambling. One of these factors was the transition from China, where CIS were highly attached to their community, to New Zealand, where CIS were relatively isolated from the mainstream community. Other factors included: different educational systems which generated study shock, the stress of acculturation, unwelcoming attitudes towards CIS from the host community, failure of fulfilling family and social obligations, and a lack of immediate family support.

The change process and post-change life

At follow-up interviews, 9 participants reported they had stopped gambling, while 3 reported gambled recreationally. 2 out of 12 participants, whose exclusion programmes were still in effect, reported they had a desire to have one more attempt to win.

The loss of beloved ones, an awareness of that family was more important than gambling, their peers' academic and career successes, being accepted at a university, and financial hardship, were reported by some participants, as being responsible for them stopping gambling.

To many participants, the family was the first place they went to when they needed help, especially financial help. Apart from family support, community and social support, and professional support, and exclusion programmes were also important to the participants during the change process.

Participants' post-change life:

- Study in a university
- Join a music band
- Convert to a Christian
- Work part time



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato



TRUST WAIKATO
TEPUNAO WAIKATO

