

A Criminological Review of Gambling Practices at the Pangkalan Brandan Police Station

Tomi Elvisa Ginting¹, Isnaini¹, Rafiqi¹

¹Master of Law Program, Graduate School, Universitas Medan Area, Indonesia

Email: elvisa.gintingtomi@gmail.com

Abstract. *This study aims to examine gambling crimes in the jurisdiction of the Pangkalan Brandan Police from a criminological perspective. This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data was obtained through interviews with police officers, community leaders, and gamblers, as well as analysis of legal documents and police reports. The results of the study show that the main factors that encourage gambling include economic pressure, permissive social environment, and culture that considers gambling as a tradition. In addition, weak law enforcement and limited police resources are also obstacles in eradicating gambling. In an effort to counteract, the Pangkalan Brandan Police implemented a repressive strategy through raids and control operations, as well as a preventive strategy through socialization and education to the community. However, the effectiveness of law enforcement is still limited due to changes in the modus operandi of perpetrators and lack of public participation in reporting gambling cases. From a criminological perspective, this study confirms that gambling is a complex social phenomenon and requires a holistic approach in dealing with it. Synergy is needed between law enforcement officials, local governments, and the community to create a more effective strategy in eradicating gambling.*

Keywords: *Criminology, Gambling Crime, Law Enforcement, Pangkalan Brandan Police, Causative Factors, Countermeasures*

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INTRODUCTION

Gambling is a form of crime that has long been a concern in criminological studies. These crimes not only impact the individuals involved, but also have far-reaching social consequences, including increased crime rates, disturbance of public order, and economic and psychological problems for society (Isnawan, 2023). In various countries, including Indonesia, gambling is categorized as a criminal act regulated in the Criminal Code (KUHP) as well as other special laws (Kurniawan et al., 2022). Despite this, gambling practices are still rampant in various regions, including in the jurisdiction of the Pangkalan Brandan Police.

Pangkalan Brandan, which is located in Lalat Regency, North Sumatra, is known as one of the areas that has quite complex social dynamics. The existence of various forms of gambling in this region is a challenge for law enforcement officials, especially the police. Various types of gambling, both conventional ones such as craps and card gambling, and more modern ones such as online-based gambling, are still found in society (Lubis et al., 2022). This shows that legal enforcement against gambling still faces various obstacles, both from legal, social, and economic aspects.

From a criminological perspective, gambling can be studied through various theories that explain why a person engages in this activity. Differential association theory, for example, explains that individuals tend to gamble due to the influence of their social environment

(Abdullah & Parasit, 2023). Meanwhile, anomie theory states that gambling often arises as a result of social and economic inequality, where individuals who feel marginalized or have difficulty in achieving their life goals seek alternatives through illegal activities such as gambling (Hahmann et al., 2021). Thus, understanding the factors that cause gambling is essential in its prevention efforts.

In addition to social and economic factors, the existence of gambling is also inseparable from cultural aspects. In some areas, gambling is still considered a part of tradition or even entertainment (Hidayat & Suryono, 2025). Although the law has prohibited it, this practice is still practiced in secret or even protected by certain parties. In the context of Pangkalan Brandan, the cultural and social aspects of the local community contribute to the sustainability of gambling, so a repressive approach alone is not enough to eradicate it. The Pangkalan Brandan Police as a law enforcement officer has a very important role in tackling gambling crimes in its area. Various steps have been taken, ranging from routine raids, patrols, to law enforcement against gambling perpetrators (Rifat & Yazid, 2025).

However, the effectiveness of these efforts is still a question, given that gambling is still growing and finding various ways to evade detection by the police. Another problem is the alleged involvement of individuals in gambling practices, which makes law enforcement more difficult (Refangga et al., 2025). In some cases, gambling networks are suspected of having links to certain parties who have influence in the legal and government systems. This makes the eradication of gambling not only a legal issue, but also related to the integrity of the law enforcement officials themselves (Santiago, 2017). On the other hand, economic factors are also the main driver for people to get involved in gambling. Many individuals see gambling as a quick way to gain financial gains, especially in the midst of difficult economic conditions (Faradila & Siagian, 2024).

The lack of employment and low levels of education in some community groups have also exacerbated this situation (Amilia & Ridwan, 2024). For some, gambling is considered a way out of economic hardship, although in reality it more often plunges them into worse situations. In addition to the economic impact, gambling also has a variety of significant social impacts. The presence of gambling in an area is often associated with an increase in the number of other crimes, such as theft, fraud, and even domestic violence (Fiyantika et al., 2024). Individuals who are addicted to gambling often experience psychological distress, lose assets, and damage their social relationships, both with their families and the surrounding community. Therefore, gambling is not only a legal issue, but also a social issue that requires a comprehensive approach in handling it (Hermawan ET AL., 2024).

The government and police need to take strategic steps in efforts to eradicate gambling. In addition to law enforcement, a preventive approach through education and socialization to the community is also very necessary (Kesuma, 2023). The public needs to be given an understanding of the risks and negative impacts of gambling, as well as provided with other more positive alternatives in improving their economic well-being. In addition, cooperation between various parties, including local governments, community leaders, and social organizations, is also urgently needed. Synergy between police officers and the community in reporting and preventing gambling can be an effective step in efforts to eradicate this crime. The success of gambling countermeasures does not only depend on law enforcement, but also on public awareness and active roles (Nurdiansyah et al., 2024).

In the context of criminology, a more holistic approach is needed to understand and handle gambling effectively. A structural approach that considers social, economic, and cultural factors must be combined with a firm law enforcement strategy that still prioritizes the principle of justice (Ariefiani, 2024). Thus, it is hoped that the policies implemented can have a long-term impact in reducing gambling rates in the Pangkalan Brandan area. In addition to legal and social approaches, the government also needs to consider efforts to empower the community's economy as a long-term solution. By creating more job opportunities and providing access to

better education, it is hoped that people will no longer see gambling as the only way out of economic hardship.

In the end, this study aims to analyze the factors behind the rampant gambling in Pangkalan Brandan and evaluate the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts that have been carried out by the local Police. Through a criminological approach, this research is expected to provide more effective policy recommendations in dealing with gambling problems in the region (Ismail, 2019). Thus, this study not only aims to understand the phenomenon of gambling from a criminological perspective, but also to contribute to policy improvement in efforts to eradicate this crime. It is hoped that the results of this study can be a reference for law enforcement officials and policy makers in formulating a more comprehensive strategy in controlling gambling in Pangkalan Brandan.

METHODS

Research Approach

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. This approach was chosen because it aims to deeply understand the phenomenon of gambling in the jurisdiction of the Pangkalan Brandan Police through a criminological perspective. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore the factors behind gambling practices and the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts that have been carried out.

Location and Subject of Research

This research was conducted in the jurisdiction of the Pangkalan Brandan Police, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra. This location was chosen because it is an area that has complex social dynamics and is still rampant gambling practices that are of concern to law enforcement officials. The research subjects consist of several groups, namely: (1) Pangkalan Brandan Police Officers, who play a role in enforcing laws related to gambling; (2) Gamblers, both those who have been arrested and those who are still active, to understand the motives and driving factors of their involvement; (3) Local people, especially those who live around gambling locations, to get a social perspective on this phenomenon; (4) Community leaders and religious leaders, who have a role in shaping social norms and people's views on gambling.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study was carried out with several techniques (Jailani, 2023) that is:

Observation

Researchers made direct observations to the area known as the center of gambling activities in Pangkalan Brandan. This observation aims to understand gambling patterns, social interactions of perpetrators, and community responses to these activities.

In-Depth Interviews

Interviews were conducted with police officers, gamblers, the surrounding community, and community leaders. These interviews are semi-structured to allow for a broader exploration of the factors that lead to gambling as well as the constraints in its enforcement.

Documentation

This research also uses documentation data, such as police reports related to the arrest of gambling cases, local media news, and legal regulations that regulate gambling crimes. This documentation is used to support the analysis of the effectiveness of policies and legal actions that have been taken.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, which involved the following stages (Saleh, 2017):

Data Reduction

Data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation were selected, categorized, and simplified to identify key themes relevant to the research.

Data Presentation

The data that has been reduced is then compiled in the form of descriptive narratives and thematic categorization. The presentation of this data aims to provide a more systematic understanding of the factors behind gambling and the challenges in its eradication efforts.

Drawing conclusions

The conclusion was drawn based on the results of thematic analysis that correlated empirical data with relevant criminological theories. This conclusion is expected to provide recommendations for police officers and policy makers in handling gambling crimes in Pangkalan Brandan.

Credibility and Validity of Data

To ensure the validity of the data, this study applies the triangulation technique of sources and methods, namely: (1) Triangulation of sources, by comparing data from various sources, such as police officers, gamblers, and the surrounding community; (2) Triangulation of methods, by using more than one data collection technique (observation, interview, and documentation) so that the research results are more objective and in-depth. With this approach, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the gambling phenomenon in Pangkalan Brandan and provide applicable recommendations for prevention and law enforcement efforts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Factors for the Occurrence of Gambling Crimes in the Jurisdiction of the Pangkalan Brandan Police Station

Based on the results of interviews and observations in the field, there are several main factors that cause gambling crimes to still be rampant in the jurisdiction of the Pangkalan Brandan Police. These factors can be categorized into economic, social, cultural, and law enforcement factors.

Table 1. Factors for the Occurrence of Criminal Acts

No	Factor	Explanation
1	Economics	Gambling is often an option for people who experience economic pressure. Some perpetrators consider it a quick way to make a profit, even though in reality it actually causes greater financial losses.
2	Social	A permissive environment towards gambling keeps this practice thriving. Many individuals are affected by friends or family who have been involved in gambling first.
3	Culture	In some community groups, gambling is still considered a tradition or entertainment, especially in certain events such as traditional celebrations or social activities.
4	Lack of Supervision	Despite the actions of the police apparatus, the lack of intensive supervision in certain areas makes gambling continue to develop in secret.
5	Legal Weaknesses	Legal proceedings against gambling perpetrators often do not have a deterrent effect, especially due to relatively light sanctions or peaceful efforts between perpetrators and authorities.

From the results of interviews with gamblers, the majority admitted that they were involved in this activity due to economic pressure. However, social and cultural factors also have an important role in encouraging individuals to engage in gambling. From the results of this study, economic factors are one of the main causes of someone being involved in gambling. Many

perpetrators consider gambling as a shortcut to obtain financial benefits, especially in the midst of difficulties in getting a job. This is in line with the anomie theory put forward by Robert K. Merton, which states that individuals tend to look for alternative means, including illegal means, when they experience difficulties in achieving their economic goals through conventional means (Gomulya, 2023). In this context, gambling is a form of negative innovation carried out by people who are experiencing economic pressure.

Social factors are also a significant driving factor in the rise of gambling. Based on the results of interviews with several gamblers, it is known that many of them first get to know and get involved in this activity through the influence of friends, family, or the surrounding community. This is in accordance with the differential association theory of Hisyam, which states that deviant behavior is learned through social interaction with individuals or groups who are already accustomed to performing such actions (Hisyam et al., 2024). In the case of gambling in Pangkalan Brandan, permissive group norms towards gambling make it easier for individuals to engage in this practice.

In addition, cultural factors also play a role in the sustainability of gambling in this region. In some societies, gambling is considered a part of a tradition or form of entertainment that has been going on for generations. Although the law has banned it, this habit is still practiced because it is considered a social activity that is difficult to get rid of. The theory of social control by Travis Hirschi explains that individuals who have strong social attachments to norms and laws tend to avoid deviant behavior, while those who lack such attachments are more prone to committing criminal acts, including gambling (Khodijah, 2018). In this context, people who still consider gambling as a natural thing have a lower level of attachment to legal norms that prohibit it.

Obstacles in the Disclosure of Gambling Crimes in the Jurisdiction of the Pangkalan Brandan Police Station

Although the Pangkalan Brandan Police have made various efforts to uncover gambling crimes, there are several obstacles faced in the law enforcement process. These barriers include technical, social, and legal aspects.

Table 2. Obstacles in Disclosure of Criminal Acts

No	Obstacles	Explanation
1	Gambling on the Move	Gambling perpetrators often change locations to avoid raids from the police, making the disclosure process difficult.
2	Involvement of Individuals	It is suspected that there is the involvement of certain individuals who protect gambling practices, thus hindering the investigation and law enforcement process.
3	Lack of Community Participation	Many people are reluctant to report the existence of gambling because they are afraid of threats from the parties involved or because they have become accustomed to the existence of gambling.
4	Resource Limitations	The Pangkalan Brandan Police has limitations in the number of personnel and equipment in carrying out supervision and gambling eradication operations.
5	Light Punishment	Gamblers who are caught are often only subject to light penalties or fines, so they do not provide a deterrent effect.

Interviews with police officers showed that although raids were frequent, gamblers had various strategies to avoid arrest. In addition, the difficulty of proving the involvement of certain parties in the gambling network is also a challenge for investigators. Although the police have made efforts to crack down on gambling in their jurisdictions, this study reveals that there are various obstacles in the disclosure and eradication of gambling cases. One of the main obstacles is the modus operandi of gambling actors who continue to develop and move from location to

location. The perpetrators generally have strategies to avoid police raids, such as using hidden places or utilizing communication technology to notify fellow perpetrators when there is a raid. This makes it difficult for police officers to carry out effective arrest operations.

Another obstacle is the alleged involvement of certain individuals in gambling practices, which makes law enforcement not optimal. These findings are in line with previous research that suggests that gambling crimes often involve a wider network, including the possibility of protection from authorities. In the perspective of organized crime theory, as explained by (Wang & Antonopoulos, 2016), the ongoing gambling practice indicates the existence of a complex and systematic network, involving various parties who have a vested interest in maintaining the sustainability of this illegal business. In addition, this study also found that the lack of public participation in reporting gambling is a challenge in itself in eradicating this crime. Many people are reluctant to report because they are afraid of threats from perpetrators or because they are used to the existence of gambling in their environment.

This is related to the neutralization theory by Sykes and Matza, which states that individuals tend to seek justification for deviant behavior by considering it as something that is not harmful or even part of normal life (Sykes & Matza, 2017). Another factor that also hinders the disclosure of gambling cases is relatively light punishment for gamblers. Based on police documentation, many gamblers are only subject to light penalties or fines, which does not have a deterrent effect. This is in accordance with the theory of deterrence in criminology, which states that the effectiveness of law enforcement depends on the level of certainty, speed, and severity of punishment (Flora et al., 2024). If the punishment given is too light, then it is likely that the perpetrator will return to the same act after being released.

Countermeasures by the Pangkalan Brandan Police against Gambling Crimes

In dealing with gambling crimes, the Pangkalan Brandan Police implement several strategies that include repressive, preventive, and coordinated actions.

Table 3. Strategies Against Gambling Crimes

No	Strategy	Explanation
1	Law Enforcement (Repressive)	The Pangkalan Brandan Police routinely conduct raids and enforcement operations against gambling locations and arrest the perpetrators involved.
2	Socialization and Education (Preventive)	The police collaborate with community leaders and religious leaders to provide counseling about the negative impact of gambling on the community.
3	Patrol and Surveillance	Increased patrols in areas prone to gambling to prevent this illegal activity.
4	Community Economic Empowerment	Seek cooperation with local governments to create alternative jobs for the community so that they are not tempted to gamble.
5	Coordination with Related Agencies	Cooperate with the prosecutor's office, courts, and local governments in handling and following up on gambling cases more firmly.

The results of the observations show that although law enforcement efforts have been carried out, their effectiveness still needs to be improved by strengthening cooperation between the police, the government, and the community. In addition, the provision of heavier sanctions against gambling perpetrators is also expected to be a more effective step in preventing gambling in the Pangkalan Brandan area. In dealing with gambling, the Pangkalan Brandan Police has implemented various strategies that include repressive, preventive, and coordinated approaches. The repressive approach is carried out through raids and control operations against places suspected of being gambling locations. This operation is carried out periodically to minimize the movement space of gamblers.

However, the results of the study show that the effectiveness of this approach is still limited because the perpetrators are always looking for ways to avoid raids. The preventive approach carried out by the police includes socialization and education to the public about the negative impact of gambling. This socialization is carried out in collaboration with community leaders, religious leaders, and social organizations. This effort aims to build public awareness so that they do not get involved in gambling and dare to report gambling practices that occur around them.

In addition, the police also conduct intensive surveillance and patrols in areas known as centers of gambling activities. This patrol aims to provide a preventive effect for perpetrators not to carry out gambling activities in the area. However, the study found that these patrols are still not effective enough due to the limited number of police personnel in supervising all their jurisdictions. Another effort that has begun to be carried out is community economic empowerment in collaboration with local governments. Through skills training programs and increased access to employment, it is hoped that people will have other alternatives in earning income, so that they are not tempted to engage in gambling. This is in line with the strain theory by Agnew, which states that one way to reduce crime is to provide better economic opportunities for people who are vulnerable to deviant behavior (Agnew, 1992).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been carried out, it can be concluded that gambling crimes in the jurisdiction of the Pangkalan Brandan Police are a complex problem and are influenced by various factors. The main factors that drive gambling in this area are difficult economic conditions, permissive social environment, culture that still considers gambling as part of tradition, and weak law enforcement. These findings are in line with criminological theories put forward by Edwin H. Sutherland, Robert K. Merton, and Travis Hirschi, which highlight how economic, social, and weak social control factors can encourage individuals to engage in criminal acts. In the context of law enforcement, this study found that there are various obstacles faced by the Pangkalan Brandan Police in efforts to eradicate gambling. These obstacles include the modus operandi of perpetrators who are increasingly sophisticated and move locations, the alleged involvement of individuals in gambling networks, lack of community participation in reporting gambling cases, and legal sanctions that are still relatively light so that they do not provide a deterrent effect for perpetrators. This situation reinforces the theory of deterrence, which states that the effectiveness of law enforcement is highly dependent on the severity of sanctions and the certainty of the punishment applied. In facing these challenges, the Pangkalan Brandan Police has implemented various strategies to tackle gambling, both through repressive, preventive, and coordinated approaches. Repressive efforts are carried out through raids and enforcement operations against gambling locations, although their effectiveness is still limited due to the adaptation patterns of the perpetrators. A preventive approach is carried out through socialization and education to the public to increase awareness about the negative impact of gambling, while patrols and supervision continue to be carried out to reduce the movement space of the perpetrators. In addition, economic empowerment efforts have also begun to be implemented as a long-term solution, collaborating with local governments to open business opportunities for people who are vulnerable to gambling.

SUGGESTION

From a criminological perspective, this study emphasizes that gambling control cannot rely solely on repressive measures, but must be carried out holistically by strengthening social control, improving people's economic welfare, and ensuring stricter law enforcement. Therefore, synergy is needed between the police, local governments, community leaders, and the community itself so that gambling practices in the jurisdiction of the Pangkalan Brandan Police can be controlled and eventually eradicated effectively. By strengthening coordination between law enforcement and the community, as well as improving a more comprehensive approach to addressing the root of the gambling problem, it is hoped that this crime can be suppressed so as

to create a more conducive and safe environment for the community. This study also emphasizes the importance of periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of gambling policies and strategies, so that they can be adjusted to the evolving social and economic dynamics.

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