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Review Article

Gambling-Related Financial Crimes by Politicians

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ABSTRACT

This article is a narrative literature overview providing a comprehensive analysis of gambling-related offenses committed by politicians. It aims to explore the roles and motivations of politicians involved in such criminal activities and the use of the gambling industry to launder illicit corruption proceeds. The review applies a selective search method, focusing on conceptual-empirical primary materials, and employs a narrative summary for analysis. Politicians within the gambling business engage in a range of gambling-related financial crimes, characterized by distinct typologies such as corruption, embezzlement, money laundering, and bribery. These illicit activities entail improperly utilizing public funds or exerting political influence to secure personal benefits. It reflects that the gambling industry is susceptible to political corruption due to inadequate regulatory measures and oversight procedures. Politicians' involvement in gambling-related financial crimes stems from personal, financial, and political factors, including political ambition, economic burdens, addiction struggles, criminal networks, and lack of supervision. Politicians can act as patrons, facilitating gambling activities and reducing jurisdictional constraints. They may also receive bribes from managers and use money laundering strategies, such as casino chips, fraudulent bets, and intermediaries, to legitimize unlawfully acquired funds.

Keywords: Corruption, embezzlement, forgery, gambling, politicians

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INTRODUCTION

The allegations of money laundering from corruption through the offshore gambling industry against Lukas Enembe, the former Governor of Papua in Indonesia from 2013 to 2023, sparked the authors' curiosity to explore the issue of gambling-related financial crimes by politicians. That is not to say our article will present an empirical

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examination of the Lukas Enembe case or discuss similar cases based on the Indonesian context, but rather explore the broad issue of politicians' gambling-related financial crimes inspired by that case.

The gambling sector, encompassing casinos, sports betting, lotteries, and online platforms, is typically subject to legal frameworks and regulatory measures across various jurisdictions. In Indonesia itself, gambling is an illicit practice that is proscribed by the governing authorities (Curnow, 2012; Nooteboom, 2015; Sallaz, 2008). The occurrence of gambling-related financial crimes by politicians is a serious concern within the realm of politics and the gambling sector.

In the context of the rapid growth of the gambling sector, politicians hold a crucial role in formulating regulatory regulations and overseeing the industry's operations. Nevertheless, there have been instances where politicians involved in the formulation of gambling regulations have been implicated in illegal and unethical conduct. Adopting a government policy that legalizes gambling to generate state revenue is frequently associated with a historical backdrop of corruption and scandal. Consequently, the decision to implement such a policy must not exclusively hinge on a straightforward evaluation of costs and benefits (von Herrmann, 1999).

Financial crimes can encompass several illicit activities within the realm of gambling. These transgressions involve politicians or government officials soliciting bribes to influence gambling legislation. The fabrication of documents to produce licenses or the misappropriation of state funds for personal gambling endeavors are also considered forms of financial misconduct. Gambling has been argued to contribute to the proliferation of corrupt practices (Mason et al., 1989; Mikesell & Pirog-Good, 1990) or heighten the probability of political corruption (Martz, 1997).

Gambling-related crimes cover various criminal offenses rooted in gambling activities. Banks and Waugh (2019) offer a systematic taxonomy to understand the relationship between gambling activities and criminal offenses, ranging from economic crimes such as fraud and embezzlement to violence and money laundering. Gambling-related crimes are often non-violent and income-oriented, such as embezzlement and fraud, but do not exclude the potential for violence to occur as a result of gambling conflicts.

Gambling severity significantly triggers a high frequency of criminal records, especially related to economic crimes such as theft and forgery. Most of the cases involved individuals who faced financial difficulties due to excessive gambling (Lind et al., 2021). The concept of gambling-related crimes also comprises dimensions of money laundering and financial manipulation (Langdale, 2023). Casinos are often a means to launder illicit funds, especially in the context of transnational criminality. Such activity involves organized crime networks, junket operators, and underground financial systems that abuse regulatory loopholes in different countries.

In essence, gambling-related financial crimes embrace a broad spectrum of illicit

activities, spanning from the acceptance of bribes from casino proprietors to the misappropriation of governmental funds for personal gaming endeavors. Consequently, such outcomes may give rise to policy alterations that harm society and erode the credibility of governmental institutions. That is a prevalent practice among businesses and organized criminal organizations to employ bribery schemes targeting politicians to facilitate laundering illicitly obtained funds through gambling activities (Cherniavskyi et al., 2019).

These criminal acts frequently center on the convergence of politics and the gambling industry, contradicting the fundamental tenets of ethical conduct, integrity, and equitable governance. That is due to the illicit nature of such activities, which involve the utilization of funds acquired through gambling or the manipulation of financial systems to enable or obfuscate gambling endeavors. The detrimental influence of corruption exemplifies the tight association between gambling and crime. It is frequently observed in conjunction with both lawful and unlawful forms of gambling (Ferentzy & Turner, 2009).

Gambling-related financial crimes are consequential violations of public integrity. If deemed guilty, wrongdoers are subject to legal ramifications, including criminal prosecution, voluntary relinquishment of office, or the withdrawal of their political privileges. Efforts to address such criminal activities embrace rigorous law enforcement, more openness in funding political campaigns, and robust monitoring mechanisms to mitigate political corruption, one of the societal consequences associated with gambling (Layton & Worthington, 1999).

Politicians' financial crimes in the gambling industry pose an ethical dilemma, as private interests often clash with the interests of society. The enormous economic potential of the industry encourages politicians to seek personal gain, which disrupts public trust in government and the policy process. Such crimes can result in unfair policies, exacerbate social inequalities, and increase the vulnerability of particular communities. The gambling sector also has a wide-ranging impact on individuals and families. The financial crimes of politicians in the industry can affect regulations that protect consumers from the risks of excessive gambling and economic ruin. Gambling is always associated with increased crime, government corruption, a negative impact on legitimate businesses, and a decline in work ethic (Golaszewski, 2004).

This article identifies several forms of gambling-related financial crimes that politicians commit. Its primary objective is to provide an in-depth understanding of the topic: the types of gambling-related financial crimes committed by politicians, the roles and motivations of politicians involved in such crimes, and how the gambling industry is used as a laundering platform for corruption proceeds. The research questions are: (1) What are the global patterns and implications of financial crimes in the gambling industry? (2) How do country-

specific factors shape the prevalence and nature of gambling-related financial crimes? (3) What are the predominant forms of gambling-related financial crimes that politicians commit, and how do these differ across regions? (4) What motivates politicians to engage in gambling-related financial crimes, and how do systemic and individual factors interact in this context? (5) How is the gambling industry exploited as a laundering platform for the proceeds of political corruption, and what mechanisms are employed in these activities?

Academic studies on politicians' involvement in gambling-related financial crimes are still limited. Previous studies have focused more on the impact of gambling on individuals, such as addiction and economic implications (Adolphe et al., 2019; Banks, 2017; Binde, 2016), as well as crimes by criminal syndicates, such as money laundering. In contrast, there has been little exploration of how politicians use the gambling industry for financial crimes. Although some studies have touched on public officials' corruption in gambling (Martz, 1997; Walker & Calcagno, 2013), these studies are still case-specific and do not offer a strong theoretical framework to comprehend the pattern of politicians' financial crimes globally. Furthermore, studies on how regulations and political systems in different countries influence politicians' involvement in illegal gambling are also limited.

This article analyzes 44 papers on gambling-related financial crimes, making a theoretical contribution by identifying the structural and individual factors that drive politicians to engage in illegal practices. Using a combination of rational choice theory and institutional theory, the authors assert that politicians' decisions to engage in illegal practices are often the result of rational calculations of economic benefits and risks (Larmour & Wolanin, 2013; Vannucci, 2017). The specific weaknesses in gambling regulations, high economic incentives provided by the gambling industry, as well as weak political oversight systems, contribute to politicians' involvement in gambling-related corruption, money laundering, and abuse of power (Goldberg, 2018; Pozsgai-Alvarez, 2020; Søreide, 2014).

Through thematic analysis, the authors classify five types of gambling-related financial crimes by politicians: corruption, money laundering, document forgery, embezzlement of public funds, and violation of political ethics. The article thus enriches the comprehension of politicians' gambling-related financial crimes, showing the interaction between institutional structures and political dynamics in shaping corrupt behavior. The findings also have practical implications for policymakers to strengthen gambling regulations, improve political transparency, and reduce the opportunities for politicians to abuse the gambling industry for personal gain.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Investigating gambling-related financial crimes by politicians requires an in-depth comprehension of the relevant theoretical

framework to disentangle the complexities and factors influencing politicians' behavior. Two crucial theoretical frameworks to consider are rational choice theory and institutional theory. Both provide valuable insights into the motivations of politicians as individuals to commit financial crimes and the role of institutions and rules in shaping politicians' behavior within the complex gambling industry.

Rational choice theory emphasizes that individuals, including politicians, act rationally by weighing the costs and benefits of each action (Dowding, 2019). In the context of gambling-related financial crimes, politicians are tempted to engage in illegal behavior such as corruption, money laundering, or bribery because they believe that the economic benefits they gain outweigh the legal risks or ethical consequences (Vannucci, 2017). Politicians who receive kickbacks from the gambling industry may feel that the political or financial gains they obtain through political support or policies favorable to the gambling industry outweigh the legal risks or reputational harm that may arise.

Larmour and Wolanin (2013) demonstrate that corruption flourishes in environments where the risk of detection is low and economic incentives are high. For politicians, the lucrative opportunities the gambling industry provides often surpass the deterrent effect of legal penalties. Research by Rose-Ackerman and Palifka (2016) also emphasizes that politicians frequently engage in corruption when the benefits—such as political donations or personal enrichment—exceed the reputational or legal consequences. It is particularly relevant in jurisdictions with weak enforcement mechanisms. For example, in jurisdictions where regulatory oversight is lax, politicians might rationally align with gambling entities to secure campaign financing or political alliances, leveraging their influence for personal or political gain.

On the other hand, institutional theory highlights the role of institutions and rules in shaping individual behavior in society (Fuenfschilling & Truffer, 2014). In the gambling industry, institutions such as gambling regulation, public policy, and political practices can influence politicians' gambling behavior. Loose rules or policies that benefit the gambling industry may create incentives for politicians to engage in behavior detrimental to the public interest to gain political support or personal gain.

Several gaps in institutional frameworks—such as unclear regulations, discretionary authority, and limited accountability—are key drivers of corruption in the political sphere. These weaknesses are often gauged by actors within the gambling industry to secure favorable outcomes (Søreide, 2014). Entrenched norms of clientelism and lobbying always influence policy decisions that undermine the public interest (Goldberg, 2018), particularly in industries like gambling, where financial stakes are high. In the gambling industry, institutional deficiencies, such as insufficient transparency or ambiguous policy guidelines, can create environments where politicians feel incentivized to

engage in unethical practices. For instance, lenient licensing laws or opaque campaign financing regulations might encourage alliances between political figures and gambling operators.

Combining rational choice theory with institutional theory allows for a comprehensive analysis of gambling-related financial crimes involving politicians. Rational choice theory elucidates the personal motivations driving corrupt behavior, while institutional theory highlights the systemic conditions that facilitate or constrain such actions. Recent scholarly contributions have reinforced such an integrative approach. The intersection of individual rationality and institutional contexts is critical in explaining why corruption persists (Jancsics, 2019), particularly in high-stakes industries like gambling. Even well-intentioned actors may succumb to corruption if institutional safeguards are inadequate.

Addressing corruption requires targeting individual incentives and structural weaknesses, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive anti-corruption strategies integrating deterrence and institutional reform (Jandhyala & Oliveira, 2021). A politician might engage in rationally calculated corruption (e.g., accepting bribes) because institutional loopholes, such as lax reporting requirements or limited judicial oversight, reduce the likelihood of adverse consequences. It demonstrates how individual and systemic factors interact to perpetuate corrupt practices.

By merging rational choice and institutional theories, we can deepen our understanding of the factors influencing politicians' behavior in the context of gambling-related financial crimes. Further research could explore the dynamics of interactions between the rational decisions of individual politicians and the influence of institutions and rules that shape politicians' behavior in the gambling industry. We can also design more effective policies to prevent and tackle gambling-related financial crimes, thereby strengthening integrity and accountability in the political system through this approach.

METHODS

This article constitutes a narrative overview, a specific variant of a narrative literature review. It provides a condensed summary or narrative synthesis of previously published papers through a systematic process involving four key steps: (1) identification of the research questions, (2) setting the inclusion and exclusion criteria, (3) conducting search strategy, and (4) doing data extraction and synthesis (Cangelosi et al., 2024; Sukhera, 2022). The review aims to comprehensively review existing knowledge of various problems. The authors employ a selective search method, focusing on conceptual and empirical primary materials. However, it is worth noting that a well-defined research selection procedure and quality assurance measures are needed.

The process involves synthesizing or analyzing research findings through a narrative summary (Paré et al., 2015; Snyder, 2019). This overview presents a concise yet comprehensive examination of the

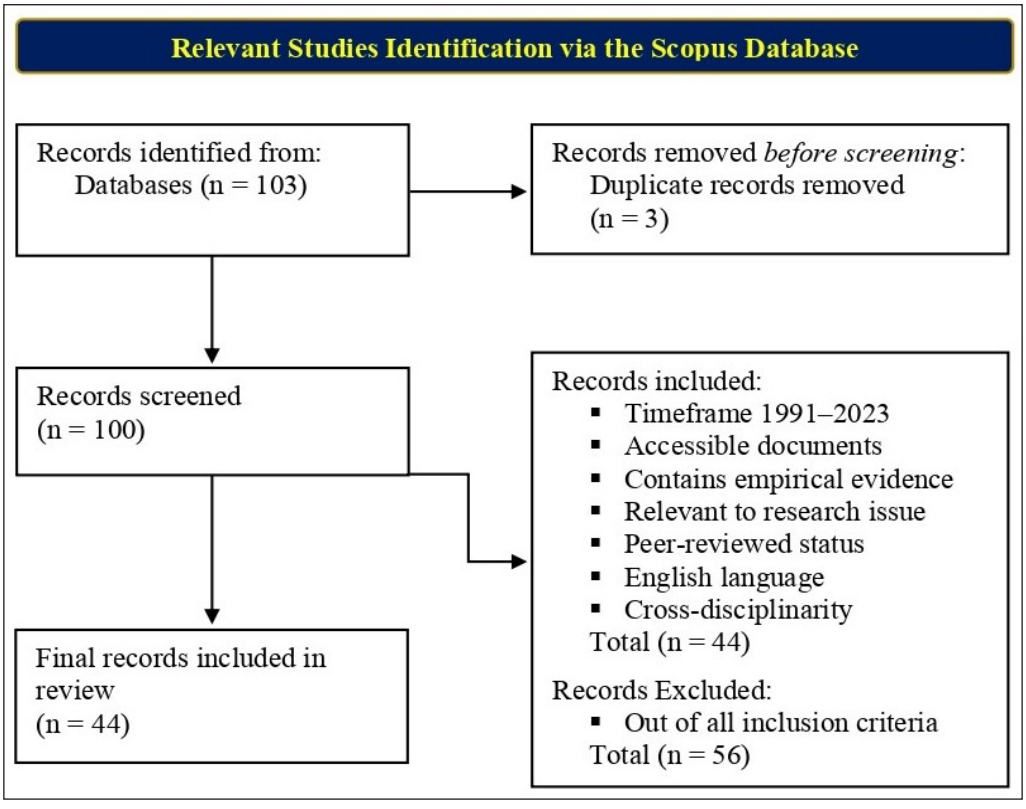

Figure 1. The process of reviewing articles

existing literature on the various categories of gambling-related financial offenses committed by politicians. Additionally, it seeks to explore the roles and motivations of politicians engaged in such criminal activities and the utilization of the gambling industry to launder the illicit proceeds of corruption by politicians (Figure 1).

The article undertakes a non-systematic survey of 44 peer-reviewed social science literature in the Scopus database, as presented in Table 1. The published materials are journal articles and research reports. However, the first type has the highest composition in our review. The authors compiled a narrative overview, adopting the steps of previous works such as Adolphe et al. (2019), Ferentzy and Turner (2009), and Rifai et al. (2024), which cover gambling, gambling-related financial crimes, and non-gambling issues, respectively.

The thematic analysis for interpreting the data involves identifying, organizing, and interpreting the primary thematic patterns from the selected papers. Such a qualitative approach enables the authors to explore the essence of the information contained in the texts. The process began with the data collection stage, where scholarly literature on criminogenic problem gambling and gambling-related financial crimes was collected from the Scopus

Table 1
Thematic categories of prior studies

No.	Author(s) & Year	Approach	Theme
1	Roberts (1969)	Literature Review	Gambling and Organized Crime
2	Mason et al. (1989)	Case Study	Gambling's Economic Burdens
3	Mikesell & Pirog-Good (1990)	Panel Data Analysis	Gambling and Crime Against Property
4	Martz (1997)	Literature Review	Gambling and Corruption
5	Seay (1998)	Literature Review	Gambling and Crime
6	von Herrmann (1999)	Comparative Case Study	Gambling and Policy
7	Layton & Worthington (1999)	Single Equation Econometric Estimation	Gambling Expenditure and Socio-Economic Factors
8	Piscitelli & Albanese (2000)	Trends Analysis	Gambling and Crime
9	Sakurai & Smith (2003)	Case Study	Gambling and Financial Crime
10	Golaszewski (2004)	Literature Review	Gambling and Health Education
11	Lo (2005)	Case Study	Casino Politics and Organized Crime
12	Sallaz (2008)	Comparative Ethnography	Gambling Contests
13	Albanese (2008)	Panel Data Analysis	Casino Gambling and White-Collar Crimes
14	Ferentzy & Turner (2009)	Literature Review	Gambling and Organized Crime
15	Reed & Fontana (2011)	Literature Review	Illicit Financial Flows and Corruption
16	Curnow (2012)	Ethnography	Cultural Perspectives of Gambling
17	Schumacher (2013)	Economic Modelling	Corruption and Trust in Politicians
18	Walker & Calcagno (2013)	Granger Causality Analysis	Casinos and Political Corruption
19	Senia (2014)	Literature Review	Casino Gambling and Money Laundering
20	Lind et al. (2015)	Case Study	Problem Gambling and Crime
21	Levi (2015)	Literature Review	Organized Crimes and Illicit Business
22	Nooteboom (2015)	Ethnography	Everyday Risk-Taking Practices
23	Laursen et al. (2016)	Retrospective Cohort Study	Problem Gambling and Violent-Criminal Behaviour
24	Wang & Antonopoulos (2016)	Literature Review	Illegal Gambling and Organized Crime
25	Binde (2016)	Media Study and Qualitative Interviews	Gambling and Embezzlement in the Workplace
26	Vannucci (2017)	Literature Review	Corruption Study Approaches
27	Rorie (2017)	Literature Review	Gambling and Regulations
28	Cherniavskyi et al. (2019)	Systemic-Structural Methods	International Crime and Cooperation
29	Banks & Waugh (2019)	Literature Review	Gambling and Crime

Table 1 *(continue)*

No.	Author(s) & Year	Approach	Theme
30	Adolphe et al. (2019)	Literature Review	Gambling and Crime
31	Fatima et al. (2019)	Survey	Gambling and Criminogenic Thinking
32	Cohen (2019)	Literature Review	Gambling and Organized Crime
33	Tiwari et al. (2020)	Literature Review	Money Laundering
34	Pozsgai-Alvarez (2020)	Literature Review	Corruption and Power Abuse
35	Simon (2021)	Literature Review	Gambling and Policy
36	Lind et al. (2021)	Survey Data Analysis	Gambling and Crime
37	Bedford (2021)	Literature Review	Gambling and Political Economy
38	Dodge & Pontell (2021)	Literature Review	Political Crime and Corruption
39	Binde et al. (2022)	Court Data Analysis	Gambling and Crime
40	Selin (2022)	Interpretive Political Analysis	Gambling and Policy
41	Kolandai-Matchett & Abbott (2022)	Narrative Review	Gambling and Policy
42	Langdale (2023)	Government Reports Analysis	Casinos and Money Laundering
43	Berdaliyeva et al. (2023)	Sociological and Statistical Methods	Illegal Gambling and Corruption
44	Ukhova et al. (2024)	Critical Literature Review	Gambling and Policy

database. After data collection, the authors read each piece of literature thoroughly to comprehend its context and substance. The next step comprised labeling or categorizing pieces of text reflecting main themes. The process allowed the authors to identify common patterns or differences in all papers (Malterud, 2012; Naeem et al., 2023). Furthermore, the authors organized these themes systematically to portray the holistic shifts and continuities of ideas over time.

RESULTS

Financial Crimes in the Gambling Industry: Global Insights and Implications

Prior studies on the issue of gambling-related crimes have predominantly focused on criminal acts by problem gamblers from certain elements, including prisoners, casino customers, company employees, university and school students, middle-aged women, adolescent males, young adults, immigrants, and others that occur in some regions of the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Australia as a negative consequence of their gambling addiction (Adolphe et al., 2019; Banks, 2017; Binde, 2016; Fatima et al., 2019; Lind et al., 2015).

Empirical studies explicitly focusing on gambling-related financial crimes committed by politicians are limited. Nevertheless, existing research on political corruption and financial misconduct can offer valuable additional insights. Johnston's (2005) and Rose-Ackerman's (1999) books underscore

the globally widespread nature of political corruption while highlighting politicians' vulnerability to financial misappropriation for personal enrichment. Scandals of this kind damage the reputation of political institutions, trigger public disillusionment, and effectively hinder efforts to eradicate corruption (Heidenheimer & Johnston, 2002).

Six studies specifically explore gambling-related crimes by politicians for their involvement in the regulation or management of legal and illegal gambling, namely Banks and Waugh (2019), Berdaliyeva et al. (2023), Martz (1997), Sakurai and Smith (2003), Seay (1998), and Walker and Calcagno (2013). The occurrence of several cases of gambling-related financial crimes by politicians has had a remarkable impact on endangering the integrity of political institutions, eroding public trust, destroying democratic norms, weakening regulatory frameworks, and exacerbating social inequality.

The first study by Martz (1997) highlights the close relationship between political corruption and the legal gambling industry in the US. He reveals that companies such as Primadonna Resorts once offered $20 million to two political figures for a casino license in Indiana. In Nevada, the "state capitalism" system in the gambling industry has raised concerns about lobbyists and contingency-based fees, which eventually came to the attention of the Illinois Gaming Board. Martz identifies two prominent factors in legal gambling-related corruption: economic incentives that discourage corrupt practices and ethical motivations to uphold integrity. Corruption is not a direct result of gambling, but it thrives in states that are more tolerant of corrupt practices. The legalization of gambling creates a dilemma between increasing revenue and reducing crime, but also opens up opportunities for corrupt transactions between businesspeople and public officials. The legalization of gambling has led to scandals and undermined public trust in elected officials. Therefore, moral and economic incentives and revision of anti-corruption regulations are needed to prevent biased decisions. Martz proposed increased supervision, delegating legalization authority to local policymakers, and limiting the monopoly profits of gambling entrepreneurs as optimal steps to suppress illegal transactions.

Other research also highlights that the growth of the gambling industry often increases white-collar crimes such as forgery, fraud, and embezzlement. Seay (1998) found that the phenomenon frequently occurs as casino gambling increases. The social and economic impacts of legalized gambling must be taken seriously by policymakers. Meanwhile, Sakurai and Smith (2003) broaden the comprehension of gambling-related financial crimes by identifying various corrupt practices, money laundering, and fraud occurring in the gambling context, providing a more comprehensive picture of the spectrum of crimes associated with the industry.

Walker and Calcagno (2013) investigate the relationship between the expansion of the commercial casino industry in the United States in the 1990s and political corruption at the state level. The predicted adoption of

Granger casinos statistically contributes to an increase in corruption convictions. Their research supports previous findings of the complex relationship between the casino industry and adverse political behavior. They highlight the potential risks arising from the expansion of the casino industry regarding the possibility of abuse of political power and corruption. Strict regulatory enforcement and careful oversight of the casino industry are noteworthy in preventing abuse of political power while maintaining the political system's integrity at the state level.

Banks and Waugh (2019) classify various gambling-related crimes into seven different categories, providing a foundation for more effective law enforcement and regulation to address gambling-related crimes. These categories include illegal gambling, criminal activities undertaken to fund gambling endeavors, and offenses linked to the expansion of legal gambling. These crimes occur in conjunction with the spatial or situational aspects of gambling expansion or specific gambling establishments, offenses that transpire within the framework of lawful gambling operations, crimes that are behaviorally associated with an individual's engagement in gambling, and instances of graft and corruption aimed at expediting permits and licenses, relaxing gaming regulations, misusing gaming funds, and engaging in influence peddling.

The last study was conducted by Berdaliyeva et al. (2023). Using the theoretical framework of dialectical materialism to explore social and legal realities, they examined criminological strategies to address corruption in illegal gambling in Kazakhstan, where the lack of criminological attributes, characteristics of corrupt actors, and prevention recommendations at the community and criminology levels became the basis of their research to formulate criminological intervention measures and corruption prevention strategies in the gambling industry. High-level corruption in illegal gambling includes lobbying, patronage, nepotism, hidden donations, appointment of former officials, and obtaining special permits or licenses. Factors that trigger corruption comprise weak supervision, abuse of authority, obstruction of justice, excessive regulation, legal loopholes, and closed decisions without clear reasons. Although there are challenges in implementing anti-corruption practices from other countries, gradual integration into Kazakhstani law can be done through regulatory improvements and systematic anti-corruption strategies.

All studies emphasize the significance of influential political figures who succumb to corruption due to their involvement in the gambling industry. Notable research needs a more holistic comprehension of the precise mechanisms that attract corrupt politicians to the casino sector and the efficacy of anti-corruption programs in effectively addressing their engagement in the industry. Those studies also highlight the need for extensive research on the precise determinants contributing to corruption in the gambling industry. These determinants

encompass deficient management controls, misuse of authority, inconsistencies between legal statutes, and deficiencies in regulatory frameworks. Additional research is required to comprehensively understand the intricate interplay between these variables and formulate precise solutions to mitigate the likelihood of corrupt practices. The identified gaps present avenues for more scholarly inquiry to understand the origins and repercussions of corruption within the framework of legalized gambling. These gaps also offer prospects for formulating efficacious measures to mitigate their occurrence.

Country-Based Issues in Prior Studies

Gambling has different social, economic, and political impacts in different countries, creating unique dynamics related to financial crimes. Cross-country analyses confirm that regulation, political culture, and socio-economic conditions are crucial in mapping the antecedents and consequences of gambling-related financial crimes.

In the US, casino legalization is often followed by intensive corruption among public officials (Cohen, 2019; Roberts, 1969). Casino adoption is remarkably associated with increased corruption cases, indicating regulatory capture (Walker & Calcagno, 2013). Regulatory agencies become overly dependent on casino operators, resulting in weak regulation and providing room for crimes such as money laundering and tax evasion. Moreover, Martz (1997) illustrated traditional and modern patterns of corruption in the US. In one case, casino companies offered extraordinary financial incentives to state officials to obtain operating licenses. It designates how legalized gambling is used to buy political influence, which undermines government transparency and accountability.

In Canada, the opening of major casinos, such as Casino Niagara, has triggered an outstanding increase in the number of criminally inadmissible persons attempting to enter the country. After the opening of casinos, the trend of denying entry to criminals increased faster than the border traffic. While casinos raise local economic activity, they also create crucial challenges regarding border control and the involvement of organized criminal groups (Piscitelli & Albanese, 2000).

The UK has taken center stage in money laundering through shell companies. These companies are often used to launder money generated from illegal activities, including gambling. Between 2010 and 2014, shell companies were laundering £80 billion of stolen money. It indicates the weakness of anti-money laundering regulations despite the UK's advanced financial system (Tiwari et al., 2020).

In Denmark, problem gamblers are more likely to commit economic crimes like theft and fraud. Such a group is not only likely to engage in economic crimes but also violent offenses, highlighting the crucial social impact of problem gambling (Laursen et al., 2016). In Sweden, the majority of problem gambling-related crimes involve fraud and embezzlement (Binde, 2016). Middle-aged women are a high-risk group involved in

these crimes, often due to financial pressures from problem gambling (Binde et al., 2022).

Gambling policy in Finland reflects the tension between increasing state revenue and reducing social harms. Selin (2022) analyzed parliamentary debates, showing that politicians often used rhetoric about the harms of gambling to justify the existing regulatory system, while remarkable changes were rarely made. Problem gambling considerably impacts individuals and society. It often leads to financial hardship, encouraging individuals to commit economic crimes such as fraud and embezzlement. These crimes reflect individual and more serious social problems, including economic inequality and weak social support systems (Lind et al., 2015).

In Ukraine, illegal gambling is one of the prominent challenges in the context of organized crime and corruption. The country has become a strategic location for criminal groups to operate illegal gambling and money laundering activities. Various forms of international cooperation have been implemented in the country to tackle gambling-related cross-border crimes, including international legal assistance, extradition of criminals, and information exchange between countries (Cherniavskyi et al., 2019). The government signed international agreements to strengthen law enforcement against illegal gambling by adopting strict human rights standards in legal proceedings.

Kazakhstan faces considerable challenges in tackling illegal gambling-related corruption. Berdaliyeva et al. (2023) note that anti-corruption initiatives involving digital technologies such as blockchain and e-government have been introduced to combat corruption in illegal gambling. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives is still hampered by gaps in law implementation and a lack of transparency within government agencies. In Pakistan, Fatima et al. (2019) highlighted the relationship between gambling and criminogenic mindsets. Gamblers had higher scores in two subscales of criminogenic cognitions: the notion of entitlement and insensitivity to the impact of crime. Gambling affects an individual's economy and exacerbates mindsets supporting criminal behavior.

Gambling in China has a long and complex history, mainly related to the emergence of organized criminal groups that use gambling as a significant source of income. The economic reforms that began in 1978 opened up new opportunities for illegal gambling, which became an essential activity for criminal groups in all regions of China. Relevant studies offer remarkable insights into the dynamics of illegal gambling, criminal organizations, and regulatory challenges.

Wang and Antonopoulos (2016) provide an in-depth analysis of illegal gambling organizations in China, covering three prominent types of entities: local gambling venues, cross-regional gambling networks, and online gambling platforms. These organizations face external challenges, including financing, marketing, debt collection, and police surveillance, but

can achieve optimal efficiency through adaptive strategies. There are undoubtedly close links between gambling networks and other criminal activities, such as money laundering and drug trafficking.

Furthermore, Lo (2005) analyzed the state's role in managing the casino industry in Macau. He illustrates how post-colonial reforms, including intervention by the People's Republic of China, successfully reduced the infiltration of criminal groups in the casino industry. By opening up the casino sector to foreign investors and increasing market competition, the Macau government strengthened its autonomy over local casino capitalists, who had previously had a monopoly on casino management. The study emphasizes the significance of market competition and strict regulation in curbing organized crime in the gambling sector.

In Indonesia, gambling is often integrated into the local economy despite being illegal. Curnow (2012) describes how practices such as lottery and cockfighting in Flores became a way for local communities to generate income, often with the implicit support of local politicians. It explains how gambling can be utilized as a political-economic tool at the local level (Sallaz, 2008) and a form of everyday risk-taking (Nooteboom, 2015).

In Australia, gambling has always been a popular entertainment (Layton & Worthington, 1999; Sakurai & Smith, 2003). Nevertheless, casinos have transformed into money laundering centers, especially in the VIP market involving junket operators. Langdale (2023) notes that these operators often work with underground banks linked to transnational criminal networks, such as Chinese criminal groups in Hong Kong and Macau. The situation is exacerbated by competitive pressures between casinos that force regulators to relax controls to attract foreign investment.

Gambling is often an entry point for financial crime and corruption, especially in the context of weak regulation and political influence. While in some countries, such as China and Finland, reforms have been made to mitigate the adverse impacts of gambling, many jurisdictions still face challenges in balancing economic interests with the need to protect society. An approach based on transparency, accountability, and vigorous law enforcement is urgently needed to manage the issue effectively.

DISCUSSION

Forms of Gambling-Related Financial Crimes by Politicians

Gambling-related financial crimes by politicians encompass various typologies, providing insights into the diverse ways politicians can use their position for personal gains in the gambling industry. These crimes involve multiple illicit activities committed by public officials who have the political authority to make policies that exploit the gambling industry for personal gain (Bedford, 2021). Such crimes involve corruption, embezzlement, money laundering, and bribery, among others, which often misappropriate public funds by covering up gambling activities or utilizing one's political influence to profit handsomely from the industry.

Corruption represents a highly detrimental and dangerous phenomenon that considerably threatens the overall national security of a state. It reflects illicit activities perpetrated by those in positions of authority who misuse their official capacities and responsibilities to undermine the lawful interests of citizens, society, the state, public service, local self-government entities, businesses, and other establishments (Pozsgai-Alvarez, 2020). Corruption is prevalent in several scenarios associated with the advancement of business enterprises, including gambling. Politicians overseeing or allocating public funds can use their authority to redirect these monies and endorse or enable illicit gambling. That includes the utilization of public funds for the construction of illicit gambling facilities, the provision of subsidies or incentives to unlawful gambling enterprises, or the manipulation of budgets to favor private interests associated with gambling activities.

Graft and corruption are strategic mechanisms to facilitate the expeditious issuance of permits and licenses, ease the enforcement of gaming laws and regulations, engage in improper utilization of gaming funds, and engage in influence peddling (Campbell & Marshal, 2007). Both are criminal activities commonly linked to the governmental processes of licensing and regulating lawful gambling establishments. These activities comprise offering bribes to get licenses or circumvent regulatory inspections, typically involving individuals within government institutions.

Various types of gambling-related financial crimes by politicians can be categorized as white-collar crimes. This concept reflects offenses committed by people of high social status during their term of office. White-collar crimes encompass non-violent and non-clandestine offenses, such as stealing through deceptive means, crimes against public administration, including the obstruction of government operations, and regulatory violations that affect public health, safety, or welfare (Geis, 2016).

There exist three primary categories of white-collar crimes, namely: (1) fraud, which covers acts of theft achieved through deceptive means or the possession of unlawfully obtained property; (2) embezzlement, referring to the act of diverting or misappropriating property that has been entrusted to an individual's care; and (3) forgery, which involves the creation of counterfeit legal documents or the alteration of existing ones, including the counterfeiting of currency. Each offense entails the acquisition of monetary funds or assets through deceptive means or a violation of financial trust, as opposed to using physical force or covert tactics typically associated with street crime (Albanese, 2008).

Embezzlement is a criminal offense of funds misappropriation by an individual with a position of trust within a professional setting (Brightman, 2011). Gambling-related financial embezzlement generally follows a pattern where the gambler's cognitive and emotional state interacts with financial losses and opportunities for embezzlement at work. Gambling becomes part of a criminal lifestyle characterized by

Table 2
Forms of gambling-related financial crimes by politicians

Category	Description
Corruption	Politicians accept bribes or illegal gifts from gambling-related parties to protect their interests or provide unfair business advantages.
Money Laundering	Politicians use the gambling industry as a means to launder the proceeds of corruption or other illegal activities by introducing unauthorized funds into the gambling business.
Fraud and Forgery	Politicians engage in fraud or falsification of gambling-related documents to gain a financial advantage or protect their interests.
Embezzlement	Politicians divert public or gambling-related organizational funds for personal or group interests.
Ethics Violations	Politicians violate ethical codes or norms by accepting gifts, free travel, or other benefits from parties associated with gambling that could influence their political decisions.

the conspicuous expenditure of illicit funds. Problem gamblers who experience financial difficulties due to large losses often turn to criminal activity to obtain funds. Over time, they become increasingly motivated to defraud and conceal the true extent of their gambling activities and the questionable means by which they obtain funds (Binde, 2016).

In summary, the gambling sector frequently encompasses substantial monetary amounts, both wagers and proceeds derived from gambling activities. Politicians in corrupt practices may perceive gambling as a prospective avenue for substantial financial benefits through bribery, illicit gratuities, or extortion. Particularly in cases of inadequate regulation, the gambling sector presents an environment susceptible to political corruption owing to insufficient supervision and transparency. In instances without robust regulatory measures and comprehensive oversight mechanisms, evil or corrupt political actors can harness such a vulnerability to partake in illicit conduct or manipulate their authority. Some forms of gambling-related crimes by politicians are presented in Table 2.

The Role of Politicians and Their Motivations Engaging in Gambling-Related Financial Crimes

Gambling was considered a limited but effective method of acquiring wealth and social standing (Cross, 2000). Consequently, politicians sought to regulate or oversee the gambling business to fulfill this objective. The involvement of politicians in gambling-related financial crimes demonstrates variability contingent upon particular contextual factors and circumstances. However, politicians can assume two primary functions in such practices.

Firstly, as an individual who accepts bribes. There is a possibility that politicians could engage in the acceptance of bribes or illicit gifts from entities associated with gambling, such as casino owners or gambling operators, to exert influence over their political actions in a manner that favors

the gambling sector (Schumacher, 2013). That encompasses issuing operational licenses, modifying gaming regulations, and safeguarding specific commercial concerns. Furthermore, in the role of a patron or facilitator, politicians have the potential to assume the roles of both guardians and facilitators for individuals and organizations engaged in illicit activities associated with gambling. The presence of legal protections can either safeguard or impede law enforcement endeavors in addressing illegal gaming operations or money laundering activities related to the gambling sector (Rorie, 2017).

Both roles are expressions of their misuse of political authority. Politicians implicated in gambling-related financial crimes invariably abuse their power and authority to derive financial advantages from the gambling industry (Kolandai-Matchett & Abbott, 2022). They have a crucial part in the governance of the gambling sector, encompassing many responsibilities: formulating policies, granting licenses, and ensuring adequate operational supervision. Politicians' participation in corrupt activities can result in the exploitation of their authority and sway for personal enrichment or specific factions within the gambling realm (Dodge & Pontell, 2021).

White-collar crime includes fraudulent activities such as embezzlement and forgery, which are frequently observed among politicians involved in the gambling sector. It establishes a noteworthy connection between their official responsibilities and financial misconduct. Politicians may be granted preferential treatment as a gesture of gratitude for their active participation in the oversight and administration of the gambling industry, regardless of its legality (Pierce & Miller, 2004). Such a treatment manifests in financial incentives, complimentary travel arrangements, and various other perks bestowed upon them by industry stakeholders.

Politicians have been known to partake in acts of bribery when they accept illicit payments from gambling operators in return for enacting legislation, granting licenses, or making regulatory decisions that are advantageous to these companies. These actions threaten the integrity of the democratic process, undermine public confidence in governmental institutions, and engender an inequitable environment inside the gambling sector. Accepting bribes and kickbacks constitutes a breach of ethical and legal responsibilities, potentially leading lawmakers to prioritize the concerns of gambling operators above those of the general public (Simon, 2021).

Politicians are said to receive financial remuneration or material favors from gambling enterprises or affiliated persons, purportedly in return for extending support or safeguarding their illicit operations (Pierce & Miller, 2004). These illegal payments can exert influence on gambling policies, get operating licenses, or circumvent law enforcement. Politicians who engage in illicit gaming operations will abuse their positions to help the process of money laundering. Illicitly acquired cash from gambling operations may populate

Table 3
Motivations of politicians engaging in gambling-related financial crimes

Category	Criteria	Description
Internal Factors	Political Ambition	Politicians with significant political ambitions may engage in gambling-related illicit activities to gain campaign funds or gain financial advantages to enhance their political standing.
	Financial Gain	Politicians involved in gambling activities may view the gaming sector as a profitable avenue, abusing their power to manipulate regulatory processes or secure financial resources for personal gain.
	Economic Pressure (Debt)	Politicians facing economic strain or personal debt may gamble to secure funds.
	Personal Addiction	Politicians may resort to gambling to manage personal challenges, such as gambling addiction, which can lead to poor financial decisions and criminal activities.
External Factors	Involvement in Criminal Networks	Politicians implicated in gambling-related financial crimes may be linked to criminal networks involved in illicit gaming, potentially collaborating for money laundering or monetary gain.
	Lack of Oversight and Transparency	Insufficient supervision and transparency in the gambling sector can lead to politicians engaging in illicit financial activities, misappropriating public funds, or harnessing their authority for personal gain.

fictitious personal or corporate accounts, allocate investments in lawful enterprises, or navigate intricate financial transactions to obfuscate their source (Tucker, 2022).

Politicians who are involved in gambling-related financial crimes might exhibit diverse motivations, typically stemming from personal, financial, or political factors (Adams, 2007). Several internal and external factors can encourage politicians to engage in these crimes, including individuals' political aspirations, the pursuit of financial benefits, economic burdens such as debt, personal struggles with addiction, engagement in criminal networks, and inadequate supervision and transparency within the gambling sector (Orford, 2019). Not all politicians partake in illicit financial activities associated with gambling, and these variables represent only a fraction of the potential incentives. The description of these internal and external factors is presented in Table 3.

The Gambling Industry as a Laundering Platform for Corruption Proceeds of Politicians

Can politicians use the gambling industry to launder their corruption proceeds? The answer is, of course, yes. Politicians may rake the gambling sector to launder illicit gains from corrupt activities. Money laundering is the systematic procedure of transforming illicitly obtained money into

assets that appear legitimate (Tiwari et al., 2020). That pertains to an alternative classification of financial crimes committed by politicians that revolve around the use of gambling establishments, such as casinos or online betting platforms, as a means to launder unlawfully obtained funds (Wang & Antonopoulos, 2016).

This criminal activity threatens the financial system's integrity and can smooth out organized criminal operations. The illicit gambling sector frequently exhibits ties with broader crime syndicates, encompassing drug trafficking, money laundering, and various other unlawful endeavors. Politicians implicated in corrupt practices may become entangled in such networks, leveraging the gambling sector to launder illicitly acquired funds or secure backing and safeguarding from criminal organizations (Comolli, 2018). Money laundering is hiding the source of funds that have been gained unlawfully by transferring them via a maze of intricate banking transfers or business deals (Chandna, 2017). Criminals use casinos, online gambling sites, or other betting locations in the gaming industry to convert illicit earnings into honest or legal money. Politicians engage in the illegal practice of injecting unlawful cash into the gambling system, using a sequence of transactions to create an illusion of legitimacy, and afterward withdrawing laundered funds, therefore effectively concealing the initial illegal source of the funds (Schneider, 2020).

Politicians can potentially employ casinos or other gaming facilities to legitimize the illicit gains derived from actions such as corruption or embezzlement (Walker & Calcagno, 2013). By depositing these unlawfully obtained proceeds into the gambling system, politicians might engage in a process commonly referred to as money laundering, wherein the funds are effectively legitimized and appear to have been acquired legally. Money laundering within the gambling industry enables illicit behavior and presents a substantial threat to the soundness of the financial system and the security of a nation (Senia, 2014).

The gambling sector possesses characteristics that make it an appealing avenue for money laundering. These variables include substantial transaction volumes, intricate transaction processes, limited transparency, and a widespread operational reach on a global scale. The gambling sector encompasses significant financial transactions in the form of wagers and distributions of wins. Politicians seeking to conceal their illicit gains can gauge the substantial transaction volumes within the gambling sector as a means to obfuscate the unlawful source of these monies (Wang & Antonopoulos, 2016). The gambling sector frequently embraces intricate transactions, including the movement of funds between many accounts, the involvement of intermediaries, and the acquisition of gaming chips or credits. The complicated nature of corruption enables politicians to obfuscate the origins of illicit funds and impedes the efforts of competent authorities to trace and uncover the money trail effectively.

Certain areas within the gambling business may disclose a diminished degree of openness about the provenance of the cash employed. Hence, politicians seeking to engage in money laundering can harness such a legal loophole to covertly introduce illicit cash into the casino sector without being detected (Levi, 2015). Casinos face enduring risks from international criminal activities due to the substantial amounts of money illicitly funneled through them (Langdale, 2023). The casino sector is often associated with organized crime, which encompasses many illicit activities such as money laundering, loan sharking, prostitution, and other forms of triangular transactions (Lo, 2005, 2020). Moreover, casinos can attract a disproportionate percentage of individuals characterized by low levels of self-control, which may include individuals with a criminal background (Piscitelli & Albanese, 2000).

The gambling sector exhibits a propensity towards cross-border operations. Politicians engaged in corrupt practices may use gambling establishments in foreign nations to launder illicitly obtained funds and obtain lawful assets beyond the reach of their jurisdiction (Reed & Fontana, 2011). Money laundering through gambling is a core mechanism used by politicians to legitimize their illicitly acquired funds from corruption. It contains a sequence of deliberate steps to transform funds derived from illicit endeavors, such as acts of corruption, into legal assets. This practice embraces various methods, rather than relying on a singular approach, that include the acquisition of casino chips, fabrication of fictitious wagers, investments in gambling enterprises, utilization of intermediaries, and engagement with corporations (Block, 2020).

Politicians can utilize illicit funds to acquire casino chips, afterward engage in gameplay, and subsequently convert the chips back into cash, creating the illusion that the funds originated from gambling proceeds (Davies, 2021). They divert illicitly obtained funds into fictitious wagers made at casinos or online gambling platforms, strategically losing these bets to transform unlawfully acquired assets into seemingly lawful earnings. Politicians implicated in corrupt practices often use the illicit gains from their unlawful activities to engage in lawful gaming enterprises, thereby utilizing these ventures to enhance the perceived legitimacy of their holdings.

It is not uncommon for politicians to exert intermediaries to obfuscate the sources of their illicit gains. These intermediaries may establish new entities or exert control over existing corporations, thereby concealing the trustworthy source of the earnings. These corporations are utilized to acquire real estate, high-value assets, or enterprises involved in gambling activities, establishing an additional level of complexity that hinders the traceability of illicit funds.

Research Implications and Recommendations

This article reveals the involvement of politicians in gambling-based financial

crimes, which have serious implications for governance and public trust. The findings show that weak regulation, ineffective supervision, and high economic incentives in the gambling industry create opportunities for politicians to engage in corruption, money laundering, and embezzlement of public funds (Berdaliyeva et al., 2023; Langdale, 2023). These insights are relevant to academics and have major implications for policy formulation in various countries, especially in tightening gambling regulations to prevent the abuse of power by politicians.

The weak oversight mechanism of the gambling industry causes a high number of cases of financial crimes by politicians. Cohen (2019) asserts that the legalization of casinos in the US is often accompanied by increased corruption due to excessive dependence between regulators and casino managers. To overcome it, the government must implement stricter transparency standards in granting gambling licenses, including reporting the source of investment funds, and strengthen "Know Your Customer (KYC)" and "Anti-Money Laundering (AML)" policies to prevent money laundering by politicians (Tiwari et al., 2020).

One of the primary motives for politicians to engage in gambling-based financial crimes is the need for campaign funds. The expansion of the casino industry has contributed to increased bribery and illegal funding in state politics in the US (Walker & Calcagno, 2013). Therefore, political funding regulations should be tightened by ensuring transparency of campaign funding sources, limiting contributions from gambling companies, and increasing oversight of political funding flows that potentially originate from illegal activities (Reed & Fontana, 2011).

In many countries, law enforcement against financial crimes in the gambling industry is still weak. For example, casinos in Australia have become money-laundering centers for international criminal syndicates due to weak oversight systems (Langdale, 2023). Policies need to focus on increasing the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in detecting and prosecuting corruption, money laundering, and misuse of funds involving politicians through the establishment of special investigation units, increasing the capacity of supervisors, and cross-country cooperation in dealing with transnational money laundering (Berdaliyeva et al., 2023).

In addition, given the high potential for conflicts of interest, restrictions on politicians' involvement in the ownership or management of gambling businesses must be considered. Politicians' engagement in this sector often triggers corruption scandals that undermine the integrity of democracy (Martz, 1997). The government can implement regulations prohibiting active politicians from owning shares or being directly involved in gambling to reduce the risk of abuse of power.

The lack of public awareness and participation in monitoring politicians' activities is also an obstacle to eradicating gambling-based financial crimes. Corruption in this industry often occurs due to weak public supervision and a lack of access to transparent information (Cherniavskyi

et al., 2019). The government must encourage public participation in reporting suspected corruption in the gambling sector by providing whistleblower protection and ensuring open access to information regarding the relationships between public officials and the gambling industry.

Through these policy steps, the government can minimize the risk of politicians committing financial crimes in the gambling industry, strengthen the political system's integrity, and increase transparency, accountability, and public trust in government institutions.

CONCLUSION

Gambling-related financial crimes by politicians undermine political integrity, destroy public trust, and potentially harm society at large. The direct threat to democratic values of transparency and accountability arises from the engagement of politicians in gambling-related financial crimes. Elected leaders are responsible for serving the public interest and making decisions promoting collective welfare. The act of prioritizing personal gain through unlawful operations inside the gambling sector poses a serious threat to the fundamental democratic principles upon which society is founded. In other words, the participation of politicians in such activities erodes public confidence and contravenes democratic tenets.

The involvement of politicians in gambling-related financial crimes incurs substantial costs, given their considerable authority and influence in the regulation of the gambling sector and the development of relevant laws. Recognizing and preventing such practices through effective regulation, strong oversight, and strict enforcement is essential. Governments must implement comprehensive legislation to combat corruption, encompassing precise definitions and criminalization of bribery, embezzlement, and money laundering. The legislation must address several specific measures to address these illicit activities inside the gambling industry. The severity of penalties for infractions should be sufficient to serve as an effective deterrent for potential offenders.

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