OVERVIEW

Problem gambling is one of the biggest issues youth is facing today as minors participate in gambling activities more than they participate in any other addictive behaviors (Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a). This is alarming for at least three reasons. First, research has shown that minors are at a higher risk for problem gambling than adults (Derevensky & Gupta, 2000; Jacobs, 2000). Secondly, minors are often introduced to gambling by family members, who portray it as harmless and who often have gambling problems of their own. Also, gambling among minors has been linked to a number of negative outcomes.

Adolescents that have reported problems with gambling often indicate that they started gambling around the age of 10, sometimes even younger (Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a; Stinchfield, 2004). Youth also tend to start gambling before they engage in other risky behaviors like cigarette smoking and substance abuse (Stinchfield, 2004).

According to Nowak and Aloe (2014), adolescents have been particularly susceptible to falling into gambling addiction because of the confluence of several different factors, creating a so-called “perfect storm” in what researchers termed as “The Five A’s”: age, with the college years being associated with a wide range of risky behaviors; availability of wide-scale legal (and illegal) gambling, including online gambling; acceptability of gambling operated by various government entities and integrated into mainstream culture; advertising and media which promote, glorify, and glamorize gambling as a sport; and access to monetary funds, especially through numerous credit card solicitations. The result of this perfect storm has been a population group specifically targeted by the media, a vast number of whom have the resources, proximity, and free time to become involved in the myriad options of gambling available, such as casinos, Internet gambling, poker games on- and off-campus, state lotteries and numbers games, instant scratch-off tickets, and sports gambling. The vast proliferation and glamorization of gambling in terms of increased gaming venues, media attention, internet gambling sites, and states’ continued emphases on lotteries and scratch-off cards as a major stream of revenue, etc., all seemingly contribute to the increase in the prevalence rate of gambling among adolescents.
According to Van Brunschot (2009), there are a number of ways in which the activity of gambling may be framed. While one may think of gambling behaviour as the product of individual choice or, alternatively, individual compulsion, this activity has been impacted by structural features that may facilitate or hinder the probability of participating in certain types of gambling, and which may further impact the extent or degree of participation in specific types of gambling. Individual characteristics may set the stage for increasing or decreasing the likelihood that individuals may gamble or, more importantly, gamble too much or with detrimental effects. Along with individual-level factors (consequences and non-consequences of risk behavior, gains and losses of risk taking), structural factors (laws, regulations and enforcement; availability of opportunities to gamble) also impact on gambling activity and serve to increase or decrease the likelihood of its occurrence. With respect to gambling activity, it is important to recognize that there was a gradient or continuum associated with this activity, from non-problematic, or social, at one end of the continuum, to problematic at the other end.

The present study has explored role of individual differences in three types of gamblers viz., Social Gamblers, At Risk Gamblers and Problem Gamblers, grouping put forth by Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM) IV Multiple Response adapted for Juveniles (DSM IV MR-J) Criteria for Pathological Gambling developed by Fisher (2000).

According to Taylor and Hillyard (2009), research has shown that there is a strong correlation between the accessibility of gambling and the prevalence of pathological gambling (Pavalko, 2004). Gambling among minors has not been limited to activities like throwing dice or rolling marbles on the playground; minors can also bet on games of personal skill (e.g., pool or bowling), purchase lottery tickets, wager on card games (e.g., Texas hold 'em), bet on horse, dog, or cock fighting, gamble in arcades, at midway games at the fair, on board games, bingo, and electronic gambling machines (Jacobs, 2000; Turchi & Derevensky, 2006).

The Internet also offers 24-hour gambling access and the allure of sophisticated technologies (i.e., real-time audio and visual games and races). Internet gambling has been particularly risky for minors because underage gambling has been difficult to prevent on-line. This includes gambling using computers, mobile phones, or wireless devices connected to the Internet. Internet gambling has grown
tremendously in the past ten years, and currently represents around 8% of the global gambling market (Global Betting and Gaming Consultants, Britain, 2011; Gainsbury et al., 2013). Mobile gambling (gambling using a cell phone) has become popular with adolescents as it has been discreet and easy to do (Turchi & Derevensky, 2006; Griffiths et al., 2009). The most popular forms of gambling for youth are card games, scratch cards/tickets, and sports pools (Adlaf et al., 2006). Internet provides the possibility for year-round, 24 hours and 7 days a week gambling from the comfort of home (Griffiths et al., 2009). The bottom line is, if youth wanted to gamble, there are many venues available to them.

There are gaps in research on above issues. A scan of research done in this area revealed that most of the studies have been done with adult gamblers. The present study is unique in a way that it has focused on three types of gamblers among adolescents viz., Social Gamblers, At-Risk Gamblers and Problem Gamblers. The study compares these groups on different psychosocial factors.

Problem gambling research is nascent and much more needs to be learnt about factors that influence etiology of Problem Gambling. The identification of risk and protective factors can lead to identifying behavioural markers which make adolescents vulnerable to gambling (Shaffer & Martin, 2011). Very little work has been done in India in this area. The present study is an endeavor in this direction.

There is dire need to focus on Problem Gambling among adolescents for the following reasons:

- Adolescent problem gamblers have higher rates of depression, personality disorders and substance abuse as compared to both adolescent social gamblers and non-gamblers (Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a, 1998b; Marget, 2000, Kessler et al. 2008; Hodgins et al., 2011).
- Adolescent problem gamblers dissociate more frequently when gambling as compared with adolescents who gamble occasionally and have few gambling related problems (Jacobs et al., 1985; Gupta & Derevensky, 1998b).
- Adolescents between the ages of 14–17 with serious gambling problems are at heightened risk for suicide ideation and suicide attempts (Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a; Stinchfield et al., 2006).
- Substantial decrease in academic performance, quality friendships and relationships are often lost by physically and socially isolating oneself and/or
are replaced by gambling associates (Derevensky, 1999; McClellan et al., 2002; Petry & Weinstock, 2007).

- Adolescent problem gamblers remain at increased risk for the development of other addictions or multiple addictions (Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a, 1998b; Winters & Anderson, 2000; LaBrie et al., 2003).

The present investigation is a step taken to identify major risk factors for both social and problem gamblers that may have clear implications for the development of effective prevention programs. So far very few studies have examined these risk factors among adolescents. Most of studies have been done on adults. Also gender differences in different types of gambling have been a neglected area because of stereotype that Gambling is prevalent among males only. The present study has included female gamblers in the sample. So as a pioneering effort, gender differences in different types of gamblers were explored. Attempt has also been made to draw psychosocial profile of different types of adolescent gamblers.