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Hooked on gambling

 by Gary Boyle

Read the following story by Suwittha Chaiyong from the *Bangkok Post*. Then, answer the questions that follow.



Photo from Royal Casino

Tik Kanitsarin -- a well-known TV personality and participant of Big Brother in 2006 -- started online gambling, a habit that left her with huge debts.

TIME TO QUIT

Tik became addicted to baccarat, a type of card game typically played in casinos. However, she is not the only person to

lose money while gambling. In fact, the problem is so severe that there is a Facebook page by the name of "Quit Baccarat: Online Gambling", which serves as a support group for its 31,000-strong members to help online gamblers quit their unhealthy habit.

According to Chulalongkorn University's Centre for Gambling Studies, over 30 million Thais gambled in 2019 -- 21% of whom were youngsters between the ages of 15 and 18 and nearly half were between 19 and 25. Moreover, the Thailand Youth Institute also revealed that due to the coronavirus pandemic, the number of online gambling websites has increased from 240 in January to over 580 in June. The most popular game is "Shooting Fish", followed by the illegal lottery, slot games and baccarat.

Online gambling is dangerous because results come out in a few minutes and gamblers are able to play again immediately, whereas other forms such as football gambling involve a 90-minute wait for results. Moreover, each game is designed to look like it can be won easily and most players believe they have a 50-50 chance of winning. When they lose, they immediately want to play again which usually leads to more trouble.

Additionally, in casinos, there is table limit for placing bets but no such limits exist in online gambling, according to Thanakorn Komkris of the Stop Gambling Foundation (SGF). To attract new players, gambling websites advertise on many platforms and employ word-of-mouth strategies.

"The gambling industry tries to lure in players in different ways. We noticed that frequent gamblers often share the Line ID of agents with their friends and when they register, they receive credits to play the first round for free. Gambling websites also advertise on Facebook. A study revealed that this strategy is quite effective as 15% of people who see such advertisements end up on gambling websites," said Thanakorn.

Besides being illegal, gambling has negative effects on society as well. So, why can't the state stop this problem?

"Police usually claim that website domains or companies that operate gambling sites are based in other countries. In such cases, there are options available to the cops such as co-operating with internet providers to put pressure on gambling websites or shutting them down completely, but priority is not placed on this problem," explained Thanakorn.

LYING ABOUT MONEY

Yet not all gamblers are addicts. Dr Supara Chaopricha, a psychiatrist and the director of the Mind and Mood Clinic, points out. Some people gamble occasionally but that does not mean they are addicts.

"We have routine activities that we must do to take care of ourselves such as having meals, showering and sleeping, but gambling addicts give up even these basic tasks. They don't bathe or sleep and their social skills and employability take a hit because they spend time thinking about gambling. The most noticeable disorder amongst gamblers is lying about money," Dr Supara said.

"Problem gamblers do nothing but obsess about gambling. Like alcoholics and drug addicts, gamblers crave gambling and develop a tolerance for it. With each passing day, they have to gamble and spend more to satisfy themselves."

Addicts can try contacting the hotline 1323, by the Department of Mental Health, which focuses more on mental health issues but offers some gambling-related advice.

Section 1: Write the correct answer in the space provided.

1. Which game was Tik addicted to?
2. 21% of Thais gambled in 2019. True or false?
3. The number of online gambling websites more than doubled in June. True or false?
4. Casinos limit the amount you can bet. True or false?
5. Gambling adverts online are not effective. True or false?
6. Where does Dr Supara work?
7. Dr Supara compares gambling addiction to alcoholism. True or false?
8. The 1323 hotline focuses on gambling advice. True or false?

Section 2: Write the noun form of the following words in the space provided.

9. addicted
10. increased
11. easily
12. frequent
13. develop

Section 3: Read the following passage. Then, fill in the blanks with the correct words from the choices given.

"Gambling addicts must stay away from ...14... environments. If they ...15... in a place that that can trigger their ...16... to gamble, they may not be able to control themselves. Treatment will ...17... include medication and mental therapy. But there should also be a law to ...18... underage gambling and other laws to keep gambling under control so that people will be afraid or not be as ...19... to engage in the activity," the psychiatrist added.

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 14. A. tempt | __B. tempting | __C. temptation |
| 15. A. be | __B. remain | __C. was |
| 16. A. craving | __B. needing | __C. trying |
| 17. A. never | __B. normally | __C. usual |
| 18. A. produce | __B. prevent | __C. predict |
| 19. A. tempting | __B. tempted | __C. temptation |

Section 4: Find words that match the following definitions.

20. money that you owe somebody
21. rooms or buildings where gambling games are played
22. risks of money on the outcome of an event
23. an illness or medical condition
24. the ability to deal with something

For the answers, find the story online at www.bangkokpost.com/learning. If you have any questions or feedback, please contact the Editor at garyb@bangkokpost.co.th