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Analysis of Consumer Protection Laws Pertaining to Online Gambling Games in India

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ABSTRACT

This study discovers the evolution and increasing occurrence of online gambling games in India, tracing their ancient origins and investigative the legal frameworks currently leading them. With the rise of digital platforms, gambling has become broadly available, revealing consumers to new risks including monetary loss, addiction, and misuse. The study critically analyses the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, evaluating its efficacy in addressing complaints associated with online gambling. Through doctrinal practice and the examination of primary and subordinate sources, the investigate identifies legal dodges, evaluates industry errands, and suggests regulatory improvements. The findings suggest an urgent need to reconsider the acceptability of online gambling in India, considering its broader social evils and the insufficiencies of present consumer safeguards.

I. INTRODUCTION

"Play Rummy and get ₹1000 joining bonus!" or "Win lakhs by playing Ludo online!"—these tempting advertisements have become universal across digital platforms in India. Once viewed as offensive, gambling is now regularized, rapidly evolving from physical dens to digital fields, accessible from any smartphone.

Gambling, in its initial form, was intensely rooted in earliest Indian traditions. Historical texts such as the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* document examples of high-stakes gambling, often associated with royalty. During the Mughal period, games like Chaupar gained extensive popularity among leaders. The overseas era marked a noteworthy shift with the British introducing the Public Gambling Act, 1867, to legalize gambling practices across provinces in India².

In recent years, scientific advancement and digitalization have pushed gambling into the

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² Sakshi Pawar & Naman Lohiya, *Legalising Online Sports Betting in India: Gamble Unto Itself*, 4 Ind. J.L. & Pub. Pol'y 35 (2017).

online sphere. Extensive internet access, joined with the exponential growth of smartphones, has led to a boom in online gaming stages offering gambling rudiments. These include old-style card games, fantasy sports, and digital casino-style games, often monetized via real-money dealings³. As of 2019, a KPMG report projected that the Indian online gaming industry could grow into a ₹250.3 billion market by 2024⁴.

However, with this growth come significant societal encounters. The comfort of admittance to online gambling has led to an increase in gambling habit, monetary losses, and exploitation—specially among the youth and susceptible groups. Relations face devastating impacts due to unregulated digital gambling activities, which are often disguised as games of ability or entertainment.

In contradiction of this backdrop, the need to analyse the legal outline protecting consumers becomes supreme. This research focuses on assessing the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, in the setting of online gambling games. It examines whether current legal remedies are adequate to address complaints of consumers attractive with these platforms. The paper explores enforcement challenges, dodges in existing laws, and the errands of online gambling operators.

A doctrinal procedure has been accepted, relying on constitutional review, academic works, news reports, and judicial statements to construct a comprehensive legal analysis. The core objective is to evaluate how successfully Indian law safeguards consumers in the online gambling ecosystem and whether the activity should be legally stood at all.

II. LEGAL LANDSCAPE: FRAMEWORKS GOVERNING ONLINE GAMBLING GAMES IN INDIA

The legal organization and regulation of gambling in India are tense with vagueness, mostly in the context of online gambling. The Public Gambling Act, 1867, remains the primary central legislation that outlaws the operation of physical gambling houses. However, this law predates the internet and flops to address the shades of digital gambling platforms⁵. The Act also allowances state governments the pleasure to frame their own gambling laws, leading to a disjointed regulatory atmosphere.

Over the years, the Indian judiciary has distinguished between ‘games of chance’ (illegal) and

³ V. Benegal, *Gambling Experiences, Problems and Policy in India: A Historical Analysis*, 108 *Addiction* 2062, 2062–67 (2013).

⁴ KPMG, *The Evolving Landscape of Sports Gaming* (Mar. 2019) (report).

⁵ P. Agarwal, *Online Gambling in India and Its Transformation in the Aspect of Rules, Regulations, and Legislation*, Issue 6 *Int'l J.L. Mgmt. & Human.*, at 5, 1514 (2022).

‘games of skill’ (permissible) under Indian law. In *State of Andhra Pradesh v. K. Satyanarayana*⁶, the Supreme Court held that Rummy is a game of skill, thereby granting it legal protection. Similar judgements have allowed operators of online card games and fantasy sports platforms to contend legality based on the predominance of skill in gameplay.

Nevertheless, the line between skill and chance has become increasingly indistinct in online environments. Topographies such as randomized recompense mechanisms, algorithmic adjustments to gameplay, and in-app purchases have introduced elements of chance, making the legitimacy of such platforms argumentative⁷.

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, introduced with the intention of safeguarding digital consumers, defines "unfair trade practices" and provides redressal mechanisms for grievances against goods and services, including those offered online⁸. However, the Act lacks specific provisions to tackle grievances related to deceptive or exploitative practices by online gambling workers. The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has powers to examine unfair practices, but its ability to regulate digital gambling platforms remains partial due to definitional and jurisdictional ancient areas⁹.

Further confusing the landscape is the rise of real currency gaming platforms that concealment gambling as gaming. Many of these apps operate without see-through terms of service or fair-play confirmation, undermining consumer rights and encouraging addictive behavior¹⁰.

A 2023 amendment to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules carried online gambling intermediaries under regulatory scrutiny. These rules mandate Self-Regulatory Bodies (SRBs) to certify allowable real money games and implement user safety through Know Your Customer (KYC) norms and content restraint mechanisms¹¹. While a optimistic step, these guidelines still absence statutory backing and be unsuccessful to address consumer redress in case of deception or game manipulation.

In sum, India’s current legal framework incompetently addresses the consumer protection measurement of online gambling. There exists a regulatory void wherein consumers are left susceptible, and operators function with negligible accountability. The dynamic nature of online gaming needs proactive legislative and policy interventions to fill this gap and bring

⁶ *State of Andhra Pradesh v. K. Satyanarayana*, AIR 1968 S.C. 825.

⁷ Rigged Casino Guide, *Casino.org* (visited May 25, 2025).

⁸ *Consumer Protection Act*, No. 35, Acts of Parliament, 2019 (India), §§ 2(47), 17–18.

⁹ A. Shukla, *Scope of CPA 2019 in Digital Economy*, Int’l J. of Law, Vol. 8, No. 3, at 45–52 (2022).

¹⁰ A.K. Singh, *Laws on Online Gaming and Online Gambling in India: Future Market of India*, SSRN Electronic Journal (2023).

¹¹ Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), *IT Amendment Rules – Online Gaming Notification* (Apr. 6, 2023) (gazette notification).

such stages beneath explicit and enforceable consumer rights obligations.

III. SOCIETAL IMPACT OF ONLINE GAMBLING GAMES IN INDIA:

The rise of online gambling in India has activated reflective socio-economic consequences, unreasonably distressing vulnerable populations, as well as youth and low-income families. The illusion of speedy financial advantage, determined by strategic advertising and algorithmically curated operator experiences, often disguises the exploitative nature of these platforms¹².

One of the severest concerns is the surge in gambling addiction. Studies have shown that the gamification of gambling, with recompense loops and psychological nudges (e.g., near-miss effects), nurtures compulsive use patterns, especially among digital natives¹³. Mobile platforms ensure unceasing accessibility, making it difficult for operators to unfasten or self-regulate their behavior. These behavioral patterns mimic those seen in substance addiction, with similar impacts on psychological health and well-being.

In many cases, the financial consequence is devastating. Users often exhaust personal savings or resort to credit-based play—sometimes indirectly enabled by gambling platforms that offer wallet top-ups and third-party loan incorporations, a practice observed in other jurisdictions but increasingly visible in India too¹⁴. The absence of transparent damage limits or spending caps further exposes consumers to abandoned monetary damage.

A study published by the Koan Advisory Group (2022) highlights the manipulation of psychological susceptibilities through manipulative game design, lootboxes, and microtransactions. These exploitative elements induce dopamine spikes akin to gambling wins, especially in youngsters, leading to unhealthy behavioral loops¹⁵. The World Health Organization (WHO) has already recognized gaming disorder as a clinical condition, characterized by weakened control over gaming behavior and prioritization of gaming over other benefits and daily activities.

From a familial standpoint, many occurrences have been reported in Indian media where children and young adults have spent lakhs of rupees on gambling apps without parental knowledge. This not only creates financial strain but also social distrust, leading to household

¹² R. Sharma & V. Gautam, *New Age Digital Media Consumption: An Exploratory Study Based in India*, IIMA Working Paper Series No. WP-2023-07-01 (July 2023).

¹³ Koan Advisory Group, *Game On: Roadmap for User-Centric Gaming Regulation in India* 12 (July 2022).

¹⁴ World Health Organization, *Gaming Disorder*, in *International Classification of Diseases* (11th ed. 2019).

¹⁵ J. Farooqui, "Youth Trapped in Online Gambling," *Moneycontrol News*, Apr. 2022 (India).

quarrels and mental health issues among family members¹⁶.

Legal recourse in such cases remains largely ineffective. Consumers, uninformed of their rights under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, often be unsuccessful to seek remedies or are misled by confusing terms and conditions set by gambling service providers. Moreover, these platforms normally operate outside Indian jurisdiction, further complicating enforcement and redressal mechanisms¹⁷.

Given the cultural, economic, and psychological toll of unfettered online gambling, there is a strong argument that its sustained presence represents a social evil. The impact is not merely individual but systemic—eroding trust, distorting financial behaviour, and exposing large sections of the population to undue harm under the semblance of digital entertainment.

IV. REGULATORY ANALYSIS: ENFORCEMENT MECHANISMS AND INSTITUTIONAL GAPS

Notwithstanding the intensifying socio-economic risks posed by online gambling, India's regulatory device remains largely underdeveloped and fragmented. Enforcement mechanisms are either responsive or piecemeal, with no comprehensive central law or authority exclusively regulating online gambling platforms.

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, does provide avenues for complaint redressal, including district, state, and national commissions. However, the statute's pertinence to digital gambling remains uncertain due to the Act's non-specific language and lack of tailored requirements dealing with gambling services or algorithmic deception¹⁸. Furthermore, platforms often present themselves as gaming rather than gambling providers, manipulating the legal distinction between "games of skill" and "games of chance."

The Information Technology (IT) Rules, 2021, as amended in 2023, now require online gaming intermediaries to observe due diligence obligations and institute robust grievance redressal mechanisms. Yet, these intermediaries are often located offshore, complicating jurisdictional enforcement. The rules mandate Self-Regulatory Bodies (SRBs) to certify permissible real-money games, verify operators, and implement user protections such as age

¹⁶ *Consumer Protection Act*, No. 35, Acts of Parliament, 2019 (India), §§ 2(47), 17–18, read with *Consumer Protection (E-commerce) Rules*, G.S.R. 462(E), 23 July 2020 (India) (duty and liability provisions for marketplace and inventory e-commerce entities).

¹⁷ Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), *Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines & Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023*, Rule 4A (adding definitions and due-diligence obligations for permissible online real-money games) (Apr. 6, 2023).

¹⁸ Advertising Standards Council of India, *Guidelines for Advertising of Online Gaming for Real Money Winnings* (Apr. 21, 2022); Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, *Advisory on Advertisements of Online Betting Platforms* (Oct. 3, 2022).

gating and KYC checks¹⁹.

However, SRBs are not up till now fully operational and lack clear legislative authority, raising questions about their impartiality, accountability, and oversight. As a result, consumers remain vulnerable to manipulative practices, such as game rigging, unclear reimbursement policies, and dense algorithms that determine winning probabilities²⁰. These factors not only negotiate fair play but also erode consumer trust in complaint redressal mechanisms.

Further confounding enforcement is the cross-border nature of many gambling platforms. Operating from authorities like Gibraltar, Malta, or Curacao, these entities often evade Indian law entirely. Even when complaints are filed under the Consumer Protection E-commerce Rules, 2020, platforms avoid liability by claiming non-jurisdictional status or by hiding behind complex, multi-layered corporate structures.

While the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) have issued advisories against deceptive advertisements by online gaming platforms, enforcement remains inconsistent. Several apps continue to advertise "guaranteed winnings" and "100% payout," despite lacking indication or transparency to support such claims.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and other global regulatory bodies have flagged the potential of online gambling platforms to serve as conduits for money laundering, terror supporting, and tax evasion. India's current framework, including the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), does not adequately cover virtual currencies or lootbox-based monetization models used in digital gambling²¹.

In effect, India faces a triple challenge: (i) regulating the inherently deceptive nature of many online gambling platforms, (ii) ensuring consumer protection in a cross-border digital ecosystem, and (iii) harmonizing central and state regulations in a federal system where gambling is a state subject.

Thus, while some progress has been made through recent IT Rules and consumer-centric reforms, the implementation mechanisms remain ill-equipped, underfunded, and structurally misaligned with the evolving technological reality of digital gambling.

¹⁹ Financial Action Task Force, *Updated Guidance for a Risk-Based Approach to Virtual Assets and Virtual Asset Service Providers* (Oct. 28, 2021) (revised AML/CFT standards).

²⁰ *State of Andhra Pradesh v. K. Satyanarayana*, AIR 1968 S.C. 825 (India).

²¹ *Varun Gumber v. Union Territory of Chandigarh*, C.W.P. No. 7559 of 2017 (P&H H.C. Apr. 18, 2017) (affirmed on appeal without comment), citing High Court's classification of fantasy sports as predominantly skill-based.

V. CASE STUDIES AND INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

The legal and regulatory treatment of online gambling has deviated significantly across jurisdictions, reflecting differing social values, supervisory maturity, and judicial understandings. In India, a mix of outmoded laws, state autonomy, and piecemeal judicial judgements has created a complex environment for both users and operators. This section examines major case laws, enforcement trends, and contrasts India's position with international benchmarks, incorporating both historical and recent developments.

A. Indian Judicial Approach: Legalizing Skill, Ignoring Risk

The Indian legal framework historically distinguishes between games of skill and games of chance. This distinction is introductory but increasingly challenging in the online context where algorithms, deceptive user interfaces, and behavioral aiming often obscure the nature of gameplay.

1. **State of Andhra Pradesh v. K. Satyanarayana**, AIR 1968 SC 825 The Supreme Court held that the game of **Rummy** involves significant skill and does not constitute gambling under the Public Gambling Act, 1867. This judgment has served as a cornerstone for numerous online platforms offering Rummy.
2. **Varun Gumber v. Union Territory of Chandigarh**, CWP No. 7559 of 2017 (Punjab & Haryana HC) The court ruled that **fantasy sports** offered by Dream11 involve skillful selection of teams and strategic play, thus qualifying as a game of skill. This judgment has been cited broadly by fantasy gaming companies across India.
3. **Head Digital Works Pvt. Ltd. v. State of Kerala**, 2021 (Kerala HC) The Kerala High Court quashed the state's attempt to ban online Rummy, reiterating it as a skill-based game. Court found the announcement to be arbitrary and violative of Article 19(1)(g)²².
4. **All India Gaming Federation v. State of Tamil Nadu**, 2023 (Madras HC) Tamil Nadu's blanket ban on online Rummy and Poker was struck down for infringing upon the fundamental right to trade. The state's argument that these games were causing addiction was rejected due to their skill component. However, the state has fascinated the ruling in the Supreme Court, where it is currently pending²³.

²² *Head Digital Works Pvt. Ltd. v. State of Kerala*, W.P. (C) No. 7785 of 2021 (Ker. H.C. Sept. 29, 2021) (striking down notification banning online rummy with stakes as arbitrary and a violation of Articles 14 and 19(1)(g)).

²³ *All India Gaming Fed'n v. State of Tamil Nadu*, W.P. No. 12123 of 2023 (Madras H.C. Nov. 9, 2023)

5. **Mahalakshmi Cultural Association v. State of Tamil Nadu**, Civil Appeal No. 10865 of 2013 This pending case before the Supreme Court is poised to decide whether **Poker** and similar games fall under gambling. The Court's final word is expected to shape the legal future of real-money gaming in India²⁴.
6. **Play Games24x7 Pvt. Ltd. v. State of Telangana** (Pending) Telangana's law banning online Rummy has been challenged in court. The outcome will have implications for how far states can go in regulating online skill-based games²⁵.
7. **Recent Developments:**
 - In **Bengaluru**, a techie lost Rs. 3 crore to an online poker platform and alleged collusion and manipulation.
 - In **Odisha**, individuals deceived a businessman of over Rs. 1 crore through fake cricket gambling.
 - The **Mahadev Betting App case** exposed a multi-crore illegal betting ring, prompting ED investigations and calls for central regulation.
 - In **Gujarat**, influencers were arrested for promoting illegal betting apps.

These incidents illustrate the pressing need for a robust and uniform national legal framework.

B. International Case Laws and Regulatory Maturity

1. **Absolute Poker Scandal (USA)** In 2007, Absolute Poker was implicated in a cheating scandal where company insiders accessed user hands, defrauding players of nearly \$1 million. U.S. regulatory bodies imposed strict penalties and urged reforms²⁶.
2. **Reel Deal and Hi/Lo Gambler (USA)** These platforms falsely advertised 100% payout odds, later proven mathematically impossible. Investigations revealed systematic rigging, underscoring the need for fairness audits.²⁷
3. **Lootbox Regulation (Europe)** Belgium and the Netherlands have classified lootboxes as gambling and banned them unless operators acquire gambling licenses. These measures arrange consumer protection and child safety.²⁸

(upholding Act's validity but maintaining rummy and poker as games of skill outside its ambit).

²⁴ *Mahalakshmi Cultural Ass'n v. State of Tamil Nadu*, Civ. App. No. 10865 of 2013 (S.C.) (pending).

²⁵ *Play Games24x7 Pvt. Ltd. v. State of Telangana*, W.P. No. ____ of 2023 (Tel. H.C.) (pending), filed challenging state regulation of online gaming affecting public health.

²⁶ "Absolute Poker Scandal," *Casino.org* (last visited May 31, 2025), <https://www.casino.org/features/rigged-casino-guide/>.

²⁷ "Reel Deal and Hi/Lo Gambler Rigging," *Casino.org* (last visited May 31, 2025).

²⁸ European Parliament, *Loot Boxes in Online Games and Their Effect on Consumers*, in *Particular Young*

C. Comparative Analysis: India vs. Global Standards

Aspect	India	International Approaches
Regulation	Fragmented, state-specific, outdated central law	Central authorities (UKGC, MGA) with clear mandates
Game of Skill Doctrine	Legal but inconsistently applied	Less focus on distinction; emphasis on harm
Transparency	No audit or disclosure norms for algorithms	Mandatory fairness audits, RTP disclosures
Consumer Protection	Weak grievance redress; cross-border loopholes	Effective redressal, self-exclusion programs
Advertising	Poorly regulated; influencer misuse	Strict ad codes and penalties for violations
Financial Oversight	Weak AML enforcement; loan-linked top-ups common	AML laws enforced; credit gambling banned

India's judiciary has shown inclination to uphold constitutionally protected business activity when online games are evidently skill-based. However, this narrow lens has often led to legal legitimization without consumer safeguards. In contrast, global jurisdictions focus not simply on classification but on the actual harm, the risk of addiction, financial exploitation, and technological manipulation.

The legal nothingness in India has resulted in exploitative practices, with users falling prey to algorithmically rigged outcomes, credit-based inducements, and unregulated influencers. Until the Supreme Court delivers a final verdict in the Mahalakshmi and AIGF-Tamil Nadu appeals, the legal status of many such platforms will remain uncertain.

This comparative overview makes it evident that India must adopt a more holistic, harm-based regulatory approach, incorporating transparency, implementation, and accountability into its framework—moving beyond the skill-versus-chance binary to a consumer rights and public health-oriented model.

VI. LEGISLATIVE GAPS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

India's current jurisdictional and regulatory apparatus is ill-equipped to deal with the challenges posed by online gambling, particularly from a consumer protection viewpoint. While various laws touch upon related domains—such as the Public Gambling Act, 1867, the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, and the Information Technology Rules, 2021 (as amended in 2023)—nobody provides a comprehensive framework for regulating digital gambling platforms.

A primary legislative gap lies in the absence of a central statute that clearly defines and regulates online gambling. The Public Gambling Act, being over 150 years old, was never considered to address algorithm-driven gaming, virtual currencies, or mobile-based betting. Further, the Act leaves regulation of gambling to states, resulting in fragmented and inconsistent enforcement across the country. Some states like Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have banned online gaming, while others consent or regulate it, creating legal confusion and jurisdictional sprints.

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, though broadminded in its approach to e-commerce, lacks specificity regarding digital gambling services. As a result, consumers defrauded by gambling apps struggle to obtain relief or refunds, especially when platforms operate from outside India and conceal predetermined obligations behind procedural jargon or one-sided Terms of Use.

Another glaring omission is the lack of obligatory algorithmic transparency. Unlike the UK Gambling Commission, which requires that all licensed operators experience regular technical inspections and disclose odds of winning, Indian platforms face no such obligation. This makes users vulnerable to rigged outcomes and unfair practices.

To address these gaps, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

a. Central Legislation on Online Gambling

A dedicated statute should be introduced that:

- Defines online gambling noticeably from skill-based gaming.
- Establishes national standards for licensing, auditing, and compliance.
- Creates a central regulatory authority similar to the UK Gambling Commission.

b. Strengthen the Consumer Protection Act

Amend the CPA, 2019 to:

- Include online gambling and real-money games obviously under its definition of

“services.”

- Mandate platforms to offer clear disclosures about odds, terms, fees, and withdrawal policies.
- Enable fast-track adjudication for online gambling disputes through online consumer dispute redressal portals.

c. Implement Mandatory Self-Regulation with Oversight

While self-regulatory bodies (SRBs) are a step forward, they must:

- Be backed by statutory recognition and governmental oversight.
- Comprise stakeholder participation (including consumer groups).
- Be subject to regular performance audits and public accountability.

d. Introduce Algorithmic Impartiality and Audit Requirements

Online gambling platforms should be legally required to:

- Endure independent fairness testing of game logic and disbursement systems.
- Reveal win/loss odds for all gambling mechanics including lootboxes.
- Prevent deceptive features such as “near-misses” and infinite retry loops.

e. Address Financial Exploitation and Addiction

Plagiarizing from EU models:

- Mandate spending caps, cooling-off periods, and self-exclusion options.
- Ban platforms from offering credit or loans for gambling activities.
- Prohibit gambling promotions targeting minors and high-risk populations.

These measures, if applied, will ensure that India is not left behind in the global movement toward responsible digital gaming governance. They also align with the constitutional vision of preservation the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21, which includes the right to be free from manipulative and addictive practices that can destroy an individual’s financial and mental health.

VII. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The emergence of online gambling as a ubiquitous component of India’s digital entertainment landscape marks a dangerous shift in socio-economic and legal paradigms. Once a prohibited or clandestine activity relegated to physical betting dens, gambling is now digitally

repackaged and mass-marketed as skill-based, entertaining, and socially acceptable. This transformation, however, is far from benign. Behind its sleek interfaces and algorithm-driven engagement lies a potent mechanism for exploitation—especially of the young, the unemployed, and the economically vulnerable.

This research has demonstrated that India's current legal and regulatory frameworks are inadequate to deal with the scale, complexity, and inherent harms of online gambling platforms. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, though forward-looking in its digital consumer provisions, does not provide adequate safeguards for users of gambling or real-money gaming services. The Information Technology Rules (2021, amended 2023), despite introducing due diligence obligations and self-regulatory mechanisms, are limited in scope, non-binding on foreign operators, and underdeveloped in enforcement mechanisms. These realities leave consumers exposed to algorithmic manipulation, data misuse, financial loss, addiction, and psychological harm.

Further, the judiciary's reliance on the outdated skill-versus-chance dichotomy as the primary legal test has created significant interpretational gaps. In a digital environment, the boundaries between skill and chance are increasingly blurred by algorithmic design and behavioural engineering. Online platforms can manipulate gameplay through hidden probabilities, programmed loss sequences, and immersive psychological cues, making it difficult for users to even distinguish the nature of the game they are engaging in. The legal fiction of skill dominance is therefore no longer acceptable in this environment and must be re-entered.

The stakes are not simply legal or economic—they are deeply human and societal. Cases of youngsters spending family savings, college students accruing debt, and working-class users becoming addicted to online gambling have become terrifyingly frequent. In the absence of adequate safeguards, many users fall into spirals of compulsive gambling, borrowing, and emotional distress, often leading to irretrievable damage to families and livelihoods.

As such, this paper strongly supports the intention that online gambling is an unnecessary evil that must be systematically eliminated through comprehensive legal reform, public education, and rigorous enforcement. The following suggestions are offered as part of this conclusion to direct policymakers and regulators toward a more protective and unbiased digital gaming ecosystem in India.

A. Enact a Comprehensive Central Law on Online Gambling

First and foremost, India needs a dedicated central legislation to regulate online gambling. This law must:

- Clearly define “online gambling,” “real-money gaming,” and “games of chance” in the digital context.
- Establish a national regulatory authority with authorization over all digital gambling operators, including those based overseas but accessible in India.
- Require mandatory licensing, continuous inspecting, and compliance certification for all platforms offering real-money games.
- Provide penalties for non-compliance, deceptive practices, and cross-border dodging.

Such a law must also predominate or complement with inconsistent state laws, providing clarity and uniformity across the country. Gambling may be a state subject, but digital platforms transcend borders, making central misunderstanding essential for effective governance.

B. Reform the Consumer Protection Act to Include Gambling Services

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, should be amended to:

- Obviously include online gambling and real-money gaming within the definition of “services.”
- Empower the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) to take suo motu awareness of unfair gambling practices, misleading advertisements, and manipulative game mechanics.
- Permit collective redress mechanisms such as class action suits for sufferers of large-scale gambling deceptions or algorithmic rigging.
- Command online dispute resolution (ODR) mechanisms for quicker and more reachable consumer complaint redressal.

This would place the interests of Indian users on equivalent footing with those in more developed authorities and restore the essential function of consumer law: to protect the vulnerable from unfair commercial conduct.

C. Ensure Transparency and Accountability in Gameplay Algorithms

One of the most treacherous aspects of online gambling is the opacity of its algorithms. Platforms often function “black box” systems where players have no idea how odds are premeditated or consequences determined.

To counter this:

- All licensed gambling platforms must be required to disclose odds of winning, especially for lootboxes, card draws, and other chance-based mechanisms.
- Regular independent audits of game fairness must be authorized, with reports published visibly.
- Algorithmic practices such as near-miss triggers, win-delay cycles, and exploitative nudging should be disqualified or tightly controlled.

These transparency measures are indispensable to reestablish informed user consent and data accountability in a space presently dominated by asymmetrical knowledge and power.

D. Introduce Consumer Protection Features Like Spending Limits and Self-Exclusion

Drawing from global finest practices, India should introduce:

- Daily, weekly, and monthly deposit and wagering caps based on user verification stages.
- A lawfully obligatory self-exclusion registry, where players can voluntarily slab themselves from all gambling platforms for quantified durations.
- Cooling-off periods after large losses or excessive play sessions.
- Obligatory pop-up warnings after continuous play intervals, informing users of time and money expended.

Such features, already used in the UK, Sweden, and Australia, have publicized measurable impact in dropping obsessive gambling behaviour and promoting responsible user engagement.

E. Ban Credit-Based Gambling and Payday Lending for Gaming

A foremost enabler of addictive and harmful gambling is the unintended provision of credit. While most platforms do not offer direct loans, many work together with fintech apps or wallets to allow top-ups using BNPL (Buy Now, Pay Later) models, instant credit, or third-party micro-loans.

India should:

- Prohibition of all forms of credit, deferred payment, or loan-linked deposits for gambling activities.
- Prohibit platforms from collaborating with non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) to offer pre-approved credit for gaming.

- Require imbursement intermediaries to flag and slab transactions that simplify debt-based gambling.

This would ensure users do not fall into liability deceptions under the appearance of entertainment.

F. Ban or Strictly Regulate Gambling Advertisements and Influencer Promotions

One of the most manipulative tools used by online gambling operators is advertising. Supported influencers, celebrities, and social media movements encourage gambling platforms using misleading claims of guaranteed wins, instant withdrawals, or zero peril.

India should:

- Prohibit the practice of influencers, actors, or celebrities in gambling advertisements.
- Mandate disclaimers cautioning about addiction and financial peril.
- Prohibition of advertisements targeting minors, students, or low-income groups.
- Necessitate all gambling platforms to comprise prominent “Gamble Responsibly” banners and hotline relations.

The role of publicizing in standardizing gambling cannot be exaggerated, and its regulation must be a topmost significance for both media ethics and public safety.

G. Launch Nationwide Awareness Campaigns on Gambling Harms

Finally, the government, civil society, and educational institutions must work together on launching a nationwide awareness movement. The public must be made aware of:

- The psychological and monetary risks of online gambling.
- How to distinguish the signs of addiction and where to seek help.
- Available authorized and grievance redressal mechanisms.

This campaign must influence schools, colleges, public transport, digital media, and social networks—ensuring that prevention becomes as important as regulation.

This paper reiterates that online gambling is not a harmless form of entertainment, but a digital manifestation of a manipulative structure that provender on psychological vulnerability, economic desperation, and legal ambiguity. Its existence within India’s digital economy proposes an urgent menace to public health, financial security, and social cohesion.

It is, therefore, imperative that policymakers adopt a zero-tolerance stance towards unregulated online gambling. An amalgamation of legislative action, technological

safeguards, consumer empowerment, and regulatory vigilance is necessary—not to simply control online gambling, nonetheless to eliminate it as a systemic social hazard.

Only then can India uphold its constitutional promise to protect the self-esteem, safety, and well-being of its people in the digital stage.
