

Addressing Problem Gambling in the Toronto Somali Community

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to understand the nature and practice of gambling and problem gambling in the Somali community in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and to explore and address the socio-cultural issues of problem gamblers as well as their behaviours and/or preferences in seeking the necessary assistance and support that is needed.

The research was part of a larger project of eight ethno-cultural communities in the Toronto and Windsor/Essex County area with the aim of using the findings to design and develop a greater understanding that presumably will lead to improved problem gambling prevention, education and treatment services. The research project was funded by the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre and administered by COSTI – IAS Immigrant Services under the direction and supervision of Dr. Harold Wynne, the Principal Investigator and Dr. John McCready, the Co-Investigator and Project Manager.

The study was descriptive in nature and employed a Participatory Action Research methodology. Accordingly, a cross-section representation of the Somali community served as the Local Research Advisory Committee (LRAC) and it drove the whole research process from planning to data collection, analysis, interpretation and development of the findings and conclusions. Data for the research was collected using three primary research methods: community survey, focus groups and case study interviews of problem gamblers.

A survey of 159 members of the community was conducted randomly through semi-structured questionnaire. Also, a cross-section sampling population was drawn from the community to serve as focus groups, which had a balanced composition of gender, age and geographic locations and included youth, both male and female, and adults, including seniors and religious leaders, all across the City of Toronto. Furthermore, six problem gamblers were interviewed extensively using open-ended questions that were culturally and linguistically appropriate and acceptable and that encouraged and motivated them to talk freely and honestly.

Although the research project staff faced a great deal of rejection and negative responses, due to the stigma and cultural taboo, yet it was discovered that members of the Somali community in the City practice gambling. More than half of those approached for survey and/or interview turned down the request and declined to participate.

It was also discovered that a few of those who gambled were willing to seek help but were not aware of culturally appropriate facilities in the City. Accordingly, educational and awareness programs of treatment, intervention and prevention, within the context of the community, could serve to mitigate and alleviate the impacts of problem gambling on the community.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In Toronto, as in other major cities throughout the world, problem gambling has been acknowledged to be a very serious emerging socio-economic issue. It has been acknowledged that the gaming industry is the fastest growing industry in Ontario. During the past decade, a surprising and soaring increase in casinos, bingo facilities, lotteries, slot machines, sports betting, and internet gambling have been observed.

Toronto is the most diverse and multicultural city in the world, with approximately 52% of its population representing immigrants from 160 different countries, and with over 100 written and spoken languages and dialects. It also hosts a multitude of games, cultures, civilizations and social settings. The sub-cultural groups practice their own rituals, hobbies and businesses. Each ethnic community has its own norms, values, and virtues. This rich mix of cultures encourages assimilation and interchange of ideas, thereby creating a common pool of derivative games such as gambling.

In November 2000, the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre (OPGRC) put out a call for letters of intent to conduct problem gambling research on some of the ethno-cultural communities in Ontario. The communities and agencies that submitted letters of intent to conduct problem gambling research and others that were invited by the OPGRC to participate included the following:

Toronto

South Asian Community (South Asian Women's Centre)
InterCede and San Lorenzo Ruiz Filipino-Canadian Community Centre
Arab Community Centre of Toronto;
Afghan Association of Ontario;
Greek Community;
Midaynta Association of Somali Service Agencies.

Windsor/Essex County

South Asian Community Centre;
Jewish Community Centre.

One of the key participants and community agency partners, COSTI – IIAS Immigrant Services recommended that Midaynta, Association of Somali Service Agencies, be invited to participate in the project to represent the ethnic communities serving immigrants from Africa.

1.2 Participants

Midaynta, a Somali term which means "family reunification", is an association of Somali service-providing agencies and was established in Toronto in 1993 in an attempt to respond to the community concerns and needs of providing linguistically and culturally sensitive services, especially in the area of reunifying those families that were separated by the civil wars in Somalia. The mission statement of the organization is to improve the quality of life of the Somali-Canadians in Metropolitan Toronto through community consultations, public education, settlement and immigration services, employment and training and community development programs and services.

Midaynta Association of Somali Service Agencies has 19 member agencies, 14 of which are Somali organizations and 5 of which are non-Somali agencies. The members collectively and individually serve the community and maintain strong working relationships that make their services effective, efficient and easily accessible from different sites across the City.

The organization's mandate is to improve the quality of life of the Somali-Canadians by assisting individuals and families with adjustment, settlement and integration while recognizing traditional Somali cultural and family values. The services and programs of the organization include counseling, dissemination of information, orientation of newcomers, referral, advocacy and representation, legal assistance, education, child protection, youth leadership development, housing and mental health support services. In the course of conducting the research project on gambling and problem gambling in the Somali community in Toronto, Midaynta, as the sponsoring agency, has organized and formed a Local Research Advisory Committee (LRAC) comprising of the following:

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|---|
| 1. | Mr. Ibrahim Absiye | Executive Director, Midaynta |
| 2. | Dr. Mohamed Tabit | Program Manager, Midaynta |
| 3. | Mr. Mohamud Khalif | Settlement Counsellor, Midaynta |
| 4. | Ms. Sofia Shire | Job Search Coordinator, CultureLink |
| 5. | Ms. Asha Tifow | Child Protection Counsellor, Somali Immigrant |
| 6. | Dr. Mohamed Ali | Medical Doctor & community leader |
| 7. | Mr. Mohamed Hassan | Religious Scholar & community leader |
| 8. | Mr. Mire Iro | President, Ogaden Somali Community Assoc. |

The consultations, directions and feedback information provided, on constant basis, by the LRAC have kept the research activities on plan, budget and contributed successfully to the collection of high quality data for the project. The research project staff team included the following:

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | Mr. Ibrahim Absiye | Research Coordinator |
| 2. | Ms. Shugri Samater | Research Assistant |
| 3. | Mr. Ali Sharrif | Research Assistant |
| 4. | Mr. Idris Madar | Research Assistant |

Additionally, the research included extensive consultations with the major religious and spiritual centres of the Somali community, particularly Khalid Bin Waleed Mosque staff and other prominent scholars in the Islamic faith.

2. COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Somali community is a relatively new community in Canada. Over 80% of the community in Toronto has been in Canada since 1988. The vast majority came as refugees after civil war broke out in Somalia. The community is unevenly distributed across Toronto. Most Somalis live in Etobicoke and Scarborough, but there are pockets of the community members scattered throughout the City, particularly North York and York communities.

More than half of the community, estimated to be between 80,000 and 100,000, are women and children. The majority of women are single parents with limited educational backgrounds that have difficulties in finding jobs and integrating. The arrival of the Somali refugees, who are more than 99% Muslims, has generated challenges that have been difficult to meet. Large segments of the new arrivals also were from rural Somalia and life in a big city like Toronto presented challenges that these refugees have found hard to overcome ten years after their arrival. Adapting to the Canadian society is a major challenge.

The population of Somalia was approximately 7 million before the civil war that caused many to flee to other lands and hundreds of thousands of deaths. Ethnically and linguistically, Somalis belong to the Cushitic race. They all speak Somali, a language that has been written only in 1973. The conversion of Somalis to Islam happened soon after the religion's arrival in the 7th century. As a result, the country has a long historical association with Arab countries. In the days of Pharaoh, Egyptians called Somalia the "Land of Punt" and they went to Somalia to purchase frankincense and other aromatic cosmetics. Somalis also had a historical trade association with the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula, an association that left its mark on the culture of Somalis.

Language and cultural barriers and immigration restrictions have prevented a smooth path to the integration and settlement process. A significant portion of the community does not speak English, but, according to some studies, engagement in educational pursuits has grown with greater length of residence in Canada. Only about 27%, according to one study, who had been in Canada for 9 or more years, had completed some educational programs in Canada (Opoku-Dapaah, 1995). Many Somalis, particularly those with limited education, still rely on social networks comprised of friends, relatives and Somali community organizations for meeting their settlement needs. Significant numbers of Somalis are still Conventional Refugees and Landed Immigrants because of immigration rules that significantly delay attainment of citizenship. The Department of Immigration created rules that lengthened the waiting period for citizenship because the vast majority came as refugees with no identification papers.

Somalis are racially, religiously, ethnically and linguistically homogenous. They don't have racial and ethnic minorities. Instead of tribes, as in sub-Saharan Africa, there are clans in Somalia. Britain and Italy colonized the East African country in the 19th century. The British ruled north Somalia and Italy the south. As a consequence, Somalis from the south speak Italian as a second language and the northerners speak English. The two colonies united and got their independence on July 1, 1960.

The transplantation of Somali refugees to Canada, a social group whose socio-cultural practices and religious affiliations are at variance with mainstream Canadian values, has

generated challenging hurdles associated with the settlement and integration process. The limited exposure of the refugees to both technology and English language has hampered effective participation in socio-economic activities. On the other hand, those who possess academic qualifications and professional skills have been somewhat unsuccessful in utilizing their education for social and economic progress in Canada due to “lack of Canadian experience” and lack of recognition of their foreign credentials.

The chewing of Qat (*Catha edulis* in botanical terminology), a chewy leaf that acts a stimulant, was part of the social fabric in Somalia. It is also perfectly legal in some European countries like Britain. However, its prohibition and criminalization of the Canadian Government in 1998 has added layers of law enforcement pressures to the anguish and settlement challenges of the Somali community. The action of banning Qat suddenly landed many in trouble. Many found themselves ensnared in the justice system for doing what their ancestors have been doing for centuries; chewing Qat at home as a means of social entertainment.

The prolonged immigration process, which hampers settlement and integration of the community, the exposure to the new western culture and the numerous cultural, communication and racial barriers have resulted in many members of the community to experience significant mental health and adjustment problems. Since 1996 there have been more than 22 cases of suicide in the community. Somali community leaders have frequently expressed deep concerns about the mental health problems in the community, a sharp rise in substance abuse and gambling among the youth. Despite a marked need for mental health care, Somalis are often hesitant to access mainstream mental health services in the City, mainly due to cultural and linguistic barriers. Instead, they seek assistance from settlement workers, religious leaders, respected community elders and/or traditional healers. On the other hand, the community shows a great deal of flexibility in redefining aspects of its culture and creating convergence and harmony with the adopted country. The evolving and changing mores of the community towards certain issues, such as female genital mutilation for instance, promises successful but slow integration process into the society in which they live. While female genital mutilation was a broadly accepted custom in the old country, exposure to western values and human rights education have had an effect and many in the Somali community now feel confident enough to reject the old ways.

Today, the Somali community in Toronto is still trying to adjust to a lifestyle, language and culture very different from its own. The process of cultural evolution goes on slowly amidst die-hard social and traditional mores brought over from the old country. Among the Toronto Somali community are poets and musicians who attract Somalis living in the U.S., Europe, and Asia to Toronto for cultural nights of music and social revival. As Margaret Lawrence wrote of the Somalis when she visited the country in the early 20th century, Somalis are a “nation of poets”.

In spite of the challenges and struggles facing members of the Somalis here in Toronto, community members nevertheless remain optimistic about their future in Canada. The Somali struggle to become a self-sufficient part of Canada’s mosaic society is a struggle that will, over time, become easier as the community slowly integrates.

3. RESEARCH

3.1 Literature Review

There are few studies that deal directly with the socio-economic issues of the Somali community in Toronto. Almost all the available data about the community deals with settlement and integration experiences of the Somali refugees. Hence, this research is the first of its kind ever done on the Somali community.

In this study, background information on the Somali community was often derived from other studies on immigration, culture, religion and socio-economic status of Somalis in Canada. By way of a summary bibliography, the following books, reports and articles have been reviewed to extract relevant information for this project:

Somali Immigrant Aid Organization. A Sense of Belonging: Somali Settlement Experiences in Canada. Toronto: Somali Immigrant Aid Organization, 1988.

Opoku-Dapaah, Edward. Somali Refugees in Toronto: A Profile. Centre for Refugee Studies, York University. Toronto: York Lanes Press, 1995.

Siad, Abdulrazak. Findings on the Somali Community in the City of New York. Toronto: York Community Services, 1991.

Ornstein, Michael. Ethno-racial Inequality in the City of Toronto: An Analysis of the 1996 Census. Toronto: City of Toronto, Access and Equity Unit, 2000.

Israelite, N., Herman, A., Alim, F., Mohamed, H., and Khan, Y. Settlement Experiences of Somali Refugee Women in Toronto. Presentation for the 7th International Congress of Somali Studies, York University, 1999.

Elmi, Abdillahi. A Study on the Mental Health Needs of the Somali Community in Toronto. Toronto: York Community Services and Rexdale Community Health Services, 1999.

Scott, Jacqueline. A Study of the Settlement Experiences of Eritrean and Somali Parents in Toronto. Toronto: Praxis Research and Training, 2001.

Peacebuilding and Health Promotion Team. Horn of Africa Diaspora Communities in Toronto: A Preliminary Review of Health Promotion Issues. Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre, Community Peacebuilding and Health Promotion Program, 2002.

McGown, Rima. Muslims in the Diaspora: The Somali Communities in London and Toronto. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

Rothe, Peter. Understanding Qualitative Research. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2000.

Community Resources Consultants of Toronto, Dejinta Beesha, Midaynta Association of Somali Service Agencies, and Somali Immigrant Aid Organization. Somali Mental Health Resource Guide: A Partnership Project of Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. Toronto: Community Resources Consultants of Toronto, 2000.

In reviewing the above literature and in talking to authoritative writers, historians and academics on Somalia, there has never been a written mention of gambling practices in the Somali community, both in Canada and in Somalia, maybe because gambling (playing Somali poker) was an accepted and unquestioned social practice in the old country. Hence, this research project is the first attempt in documenting the depth and breadth of gambling in the community and will naturally serve as a first step to the development of a greater understanding of problem gambling in the Toronto Somali community.

3.2 Purpose and Goals

The purpose of this research was to understand the nature and practice of gambling and problem gambling in the Somali community in Toronto, and to explore and address the socio-economic issues of problem gamblers as well as their behaviours and/or preferences in seeking the necessary assistance and support that is needed. The findings in this research will be used to advocate for the design and development of prevention, education and treatment services tailored to the needs of the Somali community.

The Somali community based its research on five overarching research goals. These goals were as follows:

1. To describe the nature and practice of gambling as a community socio-cultural activity;
2. To describe the definition, characteristic and pervasiveness of problem gambling in the Somali community;
3. To ascertain community members' perceptions of gambling and problem gambling (i.e. level of awareness, knowledge, attitudes and values);
4. To ascertain help-seeking preferences and behaviours of problem gamblers and concerned significant others; and
5. To develop an "action plan" designed to address problem gambling issues identified through the community research.

The "action plan" is the fifth goal that will be based on the findings of this research, and will be used to develop important preventive, educational and intervention resources, programs and services and pursued as a second phase to the project.

3.3 Research Questions

Within the first four goals, the research questions below formed the guiding framework of the research process and activities, including planning, data collection methods, analysis, reporting findings and conclusions.

Goal # 1: Nature and Practice

- What is the “perceived” prevalence of gambling in the Somali community, and what types of gambling activities do they practice and why?
- Where and when do the community members gamble?

Goal # 2: Definition, Characteristic and Pervasiveness

- What are the behaviours attributable to problem gamblers in the Somali community in Toronto?
- What are the consequences to their families and to the community?
- What do Somali community members define as “problem gambling”?

Goal # 3: Knowledge, Awareness, Values and Attitudes

- How knowledgeable are problem gamblers and the community about problem gambling?
- What are community members’ attitudes and values towards those with gambling problems?

Goal # 4: Help-seeking Preferences

- What are the preferences of problem gamblers and the community at large in seeking help?
- Are there culturally and linguistically appropriate resources available to help those with problem gambling?

3.4 Methods

Data for the research was collected using three primary research methods: community survey, focus groups and case study interviews. Some 159 members of the community completed the survey that was used in this study. Another 60 people participated in the focus groups that discussed and deliberated the issues relating to gambling and problem gambling in the Somali community. Furthermore, six problem gamblers were interviewed on one-to-one basis and their stories recorded and transcribed. A total of 225 people have participated in this study.

Secondary research information was also drawn from reviews of a wide range of literature written about the community as well as from valuable consultations, feedback and advice from members of the Local Research Advisory Committee (LRAC) and community leaders. Researchers’ field notes also captured important issues relating the community’s perceptions and problems about gambling and related social issues.

3.4.1 Data Collection

This research strived to obtain data and information about gambling and problem gambling within the Somali community in Toronto from as large a group as possible. It has also attempted to review and analyze a wide range of literature and documents written about the Somali community in Canada.

Document Analysis

A wide range of material written about the Somali community in Canada was reviewed and analyzed. However, almost all of the documents dealt with the settlement and integration process. There were no written materials about the community's gambling activities at all.

Community Survey

The main research tool was a community survey, which covered five key areas corresponding to the goals of the research: nature and practice of gambling; definition, characteristic and Pervasiveness; knowledge, awareness, values and attitudes; and help-seeking preferences. The survey also included a demographics section that dealt with the community's income, employment, education, legal status and length of residence in Canada. One hundred and fifty-nine (159) people participated in answering this survey, which was offered in both English and Somali languages.

The survey was accompanied by written notes and verbal explanations outlining the goals of the project, the people and agencies involved and the steps taken to keep the respondents' information confidential and anonymous. All respondents were also informed that the research outcome would be shared with them once it became a final and public document.

Focus Groups

Various major components of the community were brought in as focus groups. Five different age and gender groups were selected to participate in the focus groups as follows:

<u>Group</u>	<u>Number</u>	
Male Youth	10	from different high schools/colleges across Toronto;
Female Youth	10	from different high schools/colleges across Toronto;
Adult women	10	from different locations, with different backgrounds;
Adult men	10	from different locations, with different backgrounds;
Mixed seniors & Religious leaders	20	from different parts of the City.

Case Study Interviews

Six case studies were conducted on problem gamblers (PGs), three youths and three adults, who were interviewed extensively over a period of one month. The primary purpose of these interviews was to obtain as much information as possible from the problem gamblers with respect to their addiction to gambling as well as their preferences and behaviours in seeking help for their problems.

The research project team recruited the problem gamblers through contacts and friends. Some of them were located dealing at Casino Rama. Due to the cultural taboo and stigma attached to gambling, it was difficult to persuade these individuals to be interviewed. However, the team has succeeded in convincing the PGs by absolute assurances of confidentiality of their information and anonymity of their identity. They were also entertained and invited to eat out at their choice of restaurants.

The degree of the gambling problems was determined based on what others, who knew them, thought were troubling experiences as well as the concerns of their families and friends, such as their financial debt, poor health, family and other relationship maintenance, and frequency of their gambling related problems.

Field Notes and Observations

The three research assistants kept field notes about their experiences and observations in the process of conducting surveys, focus group discussions and interviewing case study interviewees. A summary of their notes, observations and recollections is presented as part of the findings and conclusions of this study.

3.4.2 Data Collection Tools

Community Survey

The main research tool of this study was the community survey questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed and prepared using the Ontario Problem Gambling Index sample and with adjustments for cultural appropriateness and suitability where necessary (see Appendix I). Furthermore, the survey was printed in English and Somali and conducted in both languages depending on the language preferences of the respondents. The survey was also accompanied by an explanation outlining the goals of the project, the sponsoring agency and what steps would be taken to keep the respondents' information confidential and anonymous.

Focus Groups

The second research data collection tool was a set of focus groups questionnaires prepared both in English and Somali (see Appendix II). The facilitators used the same set of questions for the five different groups that participated in the study. Their responses and discussions were recorded on flip charts as well as cassette tapes. The focus group questionnaires followed closely and were in some cases very similar to the main research questions. They also covered the major research goal topics. Discussions were some times heated and very emotional at other times.

Case Study Interviews

The third research data collection tool involved interview questions for six case studies on problem gamblers. The case study interviews were developed using open-ended questions that were culturally and linguistically appropriate and acceptable and that encouraged and motivated the interviewees to speak freely and honestly about their life history and gambling habit (see Appendix III). The interviews were recorded on tape recorders and conducted both in Somali and English languages, depending on the preference of the interviewees. These case study interviews were conducted on one-on-one basis and with a commitment of total confidentiality and anonymity of the identity of the interviewees. The case studies interview transcripts are provided in Appendix IV.

Field Notes and Observations

Whereas no specific tool was used, a summary of the field notes and observations appears in Appendix V.

3.4.3 Data Analysis

A total of 225 people participated in this study. Sixty-six percent (66%), or 149 were male and 34% or 76 were females. Data and information collected through community survey, focus groups and case study interviews were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Statistical Analysis

The community survey data was analyzed using quantitative analysis. The data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet and tabulated in accordance with the survey questionnaire. The results were totaled for each question and were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages. In this study, the quantitative statistical information is presented in the findings section of this study in the form of tables (Table 1 through 18) for ease of presentation and analysis.

Content Analysis

A great deal of qualitative content analysis of the notes and tape-recorded focus group discussions and case study interviews was conducted. Most of the content analysis involved looking for certain words and phrases that conveyed significant ideas about how respondents reacted to and described certain issues. We tried to analyze practices, perceptions, values and behaviours by quoting the key informants' impressions and attitudes in quotations and/or parenthesis. The translated case study transcripts are attached (see Appendix IV).

3.5 Limitations

There were a few limitations to this study. First, there was reluctance for people to participate in the study and many refused. Second, there was an apparent lack of gender balance in the sample population. Nearly two-thirds (149 out of 225) were male. This was because of the reluctance of Somali women to openly discuss culturally and religiously unacceptable activities such as gambling. These limitations could dilute the results and findings of the study with some degree of bias.

Thirdly, the sample size was too small to give enough representation of the general community. A larger sample could have provided greater confidence of the results.

Fourthly, the relationship between problem gambling and Qat-chewing was obvious from the responses of most of the participants. However, this study did not attempt to find out what proportion of the community actually chews Qat and at the same time gambles. This could warrant a separate a study, as the connection was alarmingly worrisome.

4. FINDINGS

Goal One: Nature & Practice

Question 1: What is the “perceived” prevalence of gambling in the Somali community, and what types of gambling activities do they practice and why?

Community Survey

The survey of 159 members of the Somali community in Toronto showed that, in the past year, 94 (59%) of the respondents gambled. The types of gambling activities the community practiced are shown in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1
Prevalence of Gambling in the Somali Community

Gambling activities practiced by the Somali community in Toronto.	N	%
None	65	41%
Lottery tickets	28	18%
Casino/Bingo	10	6%
Electronic and Internet	4	3%
Sports betting	7	4%
Turub – Somali Poker	40	25%
Others (Billiard, Pool, Slot Machines, etc)	5	3%
Total	159	100%

The survey showed that, of the 94 gamblers who gambled last year, a sizeable portion, 43% played “Turub” – Somali poker, while 30%, mostly women and low-income groups, bought lottery tickets. Eleven percent (11%), mostly youth, gambled at the Casinos and Bingo halls (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
Distribution of Gambling Activities

Types of Gambling practiced by the community	N	%
Lottery tickets	28	30%
Casino/Bingo	10	11%
Electronic and Internet	4	4%
Sports betting	7	7%
Turub – Somali Poker	40	43%
Others (Billiard, Pool, Slot Machines, etc)	5	5%
Total	94	100%

When asked about reasons for gambling, 39% of the gamblers said they did it to win money. Twelve percent (12%) played it for entertainment or fun (see Table 3). However, almost one third (29%), have declined to respond.

TABLE 3
Reasons for Gambling

Main reasons for gambling	N	%
To win money	37	39%
For entertainment or fun	11	12%
As a hobby	8	9%
To kill the time	4	4%
Out of curiosity	5	5%
Others	2	2%
Declined	27	29%
Total	94	100%

When asked how often they participated in a gambling activity within the past 12 months, 17% of the gamblers said they do so on a daily basis, 29% played it weekly and 30% gambled once or twice a month (see Table 4).

TABLE 4
Frequency of Gambling Practice

Frequency of gambling practice	N	%
Daily	16	17%
Weekly	27	29%
Once or twice a month	28	30%
Once in a blue moon	8	8%
Don't know	4	4%
Declined	11	12%
Total	94	100%

TABLE 5
Time Spent Gambling Each Time

Length of time spent on gambling	N	%
1 minute – 480 minutes (up to 8 hours)	54	57%
8 hours – 10 hours	9	10%
More than 10 hours	5	5%
Don't know (cannot remember)	21	23%
Declined	5	5%
Total	94	100%

We then looked at the length of time that the gamblers spent on gambling at each time. As shown in Table 5 below, more than half of the gamblers, 57%, spent up to 8 hours on gambling at each time they gambled within the past 12 months. Another 10% said they spent between 8 and 10 hours, and 23% said they could not remember it.

Focus Groups

Male Youth

Seventy percent (70%) of the male youth group admitted to playing one or more types of gambling within the past year. Most of them mentioned “relieving stress and boredom” as one of the reasons for gambling. “The thrill of winning” was mentioned as well. “To make quick money” and the possibilities of “a sudden cash windfall” came up frequently.

The male youth group identified a long list of types of gambling prevalent in the community. The list included dealing “Turub” (Somali Poker), Casino, Bingo, Slot Machines, Internet, Lotteries, Pool & Billiard, and Sports Betting.

Female Youth

Unlike the guys, the young women in the female youth focus group gave low-key responses. It became evident that gambling was an uncomfortable topic. Women in Somali culture just don’t discuss controversial issues such as gambling and other vices as openly as the men. Because they are future mothers, their natural instinct was to condemn such things as gambling, drugs and alcohol use to protect young ones. Only 20% admitted to purchasing lottery tickets.

So the list of the types of gambling activities practiced by the young women in the community was rather short. It consisted mainly of purchasing lottery tickets “once a while” as one emphasized, and “occasional purchasing of scratch-and-win tickets”, another girl added. There were no experienced gamblers among the young women in the female youth group. Many of the participants gave second or third hand information on the topic. “I know a girl who plays for money and who one day won \$1,000.00 when she bought a scratch-and-win ticket”, said one of the young ladies. “She was so thrilled she started buying the tickets more regularly but soon friends shamed her into giving up the habit she was developing”, she added.

Male Adults

Among the male adults, the list of gambling activities was long. It included Lotteries, Sports Betting, Bingo, Pool/Billiard, Somali Poker and Black Jack. Some of the male adults said they gambled to relieve boredom, to win big and to get out of the poverty. One man said playing Lotto 649, for him, was “the gateway to the Canadian dream”.

Many of the male adult group, 40%, said they wanted to win a lot of money. One of the participants said that Fridays were his favourite day because, “this is the day I go out and, instead of drinking, which my religion and culture don’t allow, play a few rounds of Turub (Poker)”.

Female Adults

The female adults gave different responses than the men. Their responses were much more guarded. Many showed discomfort with the subject. Some laughed nervously, but most of them opposed to gambling of all sorts. They mentioned religion and culture, but above all, they said, “it would devastate the family and could lead to financial ruins”. A vast majority of the adult women said they didn’t gamble.

Three women or 30% admitted to gambling when they said they regularly purchased the Lotto 649. One woman said she picked up the habit from the TV ads that “tell you that freedom is tied to winning millions in Lotto 649. I watched this everyday and I decided

that it is time I tried my luck". She said she had been "hooked ever since, but I don't win anything. I keep thinking that the next time I would win, but I have been doing it for three years with no wins, nothing, zero", she laughed.

The women who admitted to gambling said they bought Lotto 649, which they believed to be a form of a harmless or benign gambling.

Mixed Senior and Religious Leader

Both the mixed seniors and the religious leaders declared their unwillingness to discuss the subject. They questioned the usefulness of the research and the research team's motives. There was a lot of talk about painting the community in negative light. One religious leader said, "we oppose to the use Qat, gambling, drug use, alcohol use and other bad things, but what good will this discussion do us? It will only make our community look bad".

These groups took the position of the religious (Islamic) teachings on gambling and all other vices. "Gambling is simply a sin and wrong", one senior man declared. The senior ladies mostly kept quiet and occasionally whispered to each other to express their disapproval.

These groups had very little knowledge of the types of gambling out there and kept quoting verses from the Quran and the Prophet's teachings that prohibit the practice of gambling. However, most of them were aware that some members of the community were involved in this "sinful game", according to one of the Imaams.

Case Study Interviews

The research project team has conducted extensive interviews of these problem gamblers, using open-ended questions that were culturally and linguistically appropriate and acceptable and that encouraged and motivated them to speak freely and frankly about their life histories and gambling habits.

All six PGs have identified a long list of types of gambling. The lists included Casio, Bingo, Poker and Black Jack, Slot Machines, Sports Betting, Pool/Billiard and Internet gambling games. Each one of them spoke highly of his favourite game and how he has started playing it. Almost all of them played their games for money and for the "hope of winning big one day".

Question 2: Where and when do the community members gamble?

Community Survey

Although the survey did not directly cover where and when do the community members gambled, it is very well known to the community that almost 80% of the gambling activities take place at the Somali social clubs in Etobicoke and Scarborough. These games are dealt exclusively in the night times and especially throughout weekend nights.

Focus Groups

Male Youth

The male youth focus group revealed that some of their friends go to casinos to gamble frequently. One youth participant said, “a friend of mine goes to Casino Rama or Casino Niagara once a month on a chartered bus. He looks like a very important person on the day the bus comes to take him to the Casino”. Another young man said, “we play pool and billiards on the weekends for money at the Banadir Hall in Etobicoke”.

Female Youth

The female youth group was only aware of where to buy lottery tickets, namely the variety stores in their neighbourhoods. Most in the group agreed that these lottery tickets were available at any time any one wanted to buy them.

Male Adults

Almost every one in the male adult focus group was familiar with poker and billiard clubs. They said they go to Somali social clubs in Etobicoke and Scarborough to play pool and poker on the weekends and some time weeknights.

Female Adults

Most women kept talking about what they perceived as problem gambling among their husbands. They said they believed that there was a lot of problem gambling going on in the Somali social clubs. They said their husbands played Turub and chewed Qat every Friday and Saturday night there.

Mixed seniors and Religious Leaders

Although these groups were aware of the fact that gambling activities were taking place at the social clubs, yet they did not want to discuss the subject.

Case Study Interviews

All six interviewees in this group identified their favourite gambling places and times. One of these men mentioned “my Etobicoke social club where I chew Qat and play poker all weekend”. Another one said, “I play black jack at the Casinos regularly”. Most of them were regular customers at the corner store where they couldn’t resist buying a lot of lottery tickets, especially when they saw the ads that said, “today win ten million dollars”.

Goal Two: Definition, Characteristic and Pervasiveness

Question 1: What are the behaviours attributable to problem gamblers in the Somali community in Toronto?

Community Survey

According to the survey, the behaviours attributable to problem gamblers in the Somali community included aggressive borrowing to finance their gambling and lack of will power to cut down, control or quit their gambling activities. Table 6 shows the results of responses to the question of how often have you bet more money than you could really afford to lose. Forty six percent (46%) of those surveyed said they ‘sometimes’ bet more than they could afford to lose. Another 17% admitted they did so ‘most of the time’.

TABLE 6
Betting More than Budget

How often have you bet more money than you could really afford to lose?	N	%
Never	10	11%
Sometimes	43	46%
Most of the time	16	17%
Almost always	5	5%
Don't know (cannot remember)	7	7%
Declined	13	14%
Total	94	100%

In assessing the degree of addiction among those who gambled in the past year, the data indicated that 20% tried to quit, cut down or control their gambling but were unable to do so 'most of the time' (see Table 7).

TABLE 7
Degree of Addiction

Have you tried to quit, cut down or control your gambling but were unable to do so?	N	%
Never	16	17%
Sometimes	11	12%
Most of the time	19	20%
Almost always	11	12%
Don't know	13	14%
Declined	24	25%
Total	94	100%

Focus Groups

Male Youth

Most of the youth agreed that problem gambling is the kind of gambling that leads to "social dysfunction." They defined problem gambling as "addictive gambling" where the gambler has to always have money to gamble. One of the youth said, "problem gambling causes family problems such as divorce, abuse in relationships, homelessness, financial dysfunction and conflict in the family unit."

The male youth group agreed that problem gamblers are always broke and have no money." An 18-year old said that it is easy to start drinking in casinos and eventually start taking drugs because all of these things go hand-in-hand." Another added that even gambling in Somali cultural settings encourages Turub players to get hooked on drugs. "The best example", he said, "is found in poker clubs in the community where men chew Qat while playing Turub for money. Over half of the group agreed that problem gambling exists in the Somali community.

Female Youth

Most in the group agreed that when gambling gets out of hand and starts to consume the individual and his finances, it becomes problem gambling. One young lady said, “when a guy, and it is usually guys, starts spending all his time and money on gambling and it hurts his relations with others, including his family, that is when it becomes a problem”.

Another one said, “when someone starts borrowing money, after spending his own, to fuel gambling, that is when they have crossed the line between gambling and problem gambling”. There were different views on the topic of problem gambling in the room. But most agreed that the impact of problem gambling on the family’s lifestyle, finances and the gambler’s health were the basis of the negative perception of the game in the community.

One of the participants in the group said “when gambling becomes a ‘profession’, the consequences can be severe”. The group agreed that the family can be uprooted from its home when addiction replaces caution in gambling, and children could be hurt and their future affected negatively. Some of the participants said that it was against Islamic tradition to gamble and endanger your family. “The Quran, the holy text of the Muslims, forbids gambling”, said one of the young ladies in the room.

Male Adults

Over 50% of the men in this group said that they were not problem gamblers. They thought of problem gambling as the type of gambling that only goes on in casino and bingo halls. “If I was a frequent visitor of casinos and bingo halls, then I would be worried. But everything else, if done in moderation, is not problem gambling”, one said.

Many agreed that in Somali social clubs, Turub (poker) is played. Most of the players also use Qat, the leafy twigs used by the people in the community socially for its stimulation. This is because the vast majority of the Somalis don’t use alcohol for cultural and religious reasons. “Qat goes hand in hand with Turub, billiard and pool in Somali social clubs. The gambling is more enjoyable and endurable if people are also using Qat and drinking black tea to enhance it’s effects”, said one man. “The best Turub gambling is where in a small smoke-filled social club where the players have within easy reach a bundle of Qat and a cup of black tea”, said another. “This is the best entertainment for gamblers. Also Somali music plays in the background and a TV set flickers at the corner where no one watches”, he added.

Most of the Turub is played on weekends. This is the time that Qat is available in the black market. Qat is usually smuggled into Toronto clandestinely through the Pearson International Airport mainly on weekends. Most said Qat and Turub have been a traditional combination in the Somali community. It is a form of entertainment that has been going on for generations in Somalia. Somali refugees have brought the custom to Canada in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. Only Somalis play Turub in social clubs where Qat is in use.

Female Adults

The women kept talking about what they perceived as problem gambling among their husbands. They said they believed that there was a lot of problem gambling going on in the Somali social clubs. One said, “my husband plays Turub every Friday and Saturday night. We are constantly fighting about this because he comes home very early the next

morning. On top of Turub, which consumes a lot of our money, he also chews Qat at the social club. Qat is very expensive and cuts holes in our family budget. I don't know how much money he spends on this because he never tells me, but I know that my family is in trouble because we never have enough to spend on our needs at home even though my husband has a full time job that pays relatively well. This is problem gambling for me, but my husband doesn't believe that he is a problem gambler. I have tried to get him to seek help, but he angrily refuses saying he doesn't have a problem and that I am the one with the problems". After this long confession, the woman broke down into tears and cried. Others tried to comfort her and she calmed down after a while.

Mixed Seniors and Religious Leaders

These groups stood firmly against gambling and viewed gamblers, no matter what degree of problem they were in, as sinners. According to this group, there was no difference between gamblers and problem gamblers. They were all wrongdoers and a shame to the community and the faith.

Case Study Interviews

According to the interviewees, the behaviours attributable to problem gamblers in the community could include illusory indulgence. They argued that gambling is a habit and not a problem. They said that it was a hobby, fun and recreation. They paid very little attention to the cultural and religious traditions and ignored the norms of the community.

Almost half of the problem gamblers admitted that it caused a lot in terms finances, time and health, but they said they didn't want to quit it. For them the dream was very real.

Question 2: What are the consequences to their families and to the community?

Community Survey

TABLE 8
Social Consequences

How often has your gambling caused problems between you & family members/friends?	N	%
Never	16	17%
Sometimes	40	42%
Most of the time	3	3%
Almost always	11	12%
Don't know	13	14%
Declined	11	12%
Total	94	100%

The survey data showed that 42% of the people who have gambled admitted that their gambling has 'sometimes' caused problems between them and their family members and friends. Those who said have problems with families and friends 'almost always' accounted for 12% of the gamblers.

When the respondents were asked whether or not their gambling has caused any financial problems for themselves or their families, 17% said 'sometimes', 12% said 'most of the time' and another 12% 'almost always' (see Table 9).

TABLE 9
Financial Consequences

Has your gambling caused any financial problems for you or your family?	N	%
Never	37	39%
Sometimes	16	17%
Most of the time	11	12%
Almost always	11	12%
Don't know	11	12%
Declined	8	8%
Total	94	100%

Focus Groups

Male Youth

Most of the male youth agreed that the consequences of problem gambling to their families and to the community included family problems such as divorce, abuse in relationships, homelessness, financial dysfunction and major conflicts in the family unit.

Female Youth

The female youth all agreed that the impact of problem gambling on the family's lifestyle and finances were the basis of the negative perception of the game in the community. They said the family could be uprooted from its home when addiction replaces caution in gambling, and children could be hurt and their future affected negatively.

Male Adults

The group was united in their assessment that problem gambling exists in the Somali community. They further said that they all knew people who had serious problems with Turub and Qat. They said they knew people who neglected their families and friends so they could play Turub and chew Qat all night.

Female Adults

All the women in the group agreed that there was a problem with gambling in the community. They said this was a threat to family unit and prosperity. The women had a lot to say about Turub and Qat, a combination of popular but costly entertainment that has kept its roots intact in the Somali community. It was mostly men who have indulged, but also some women have been known to play Turub and chew Qat. One woman emotionally said, "when our husbands are chewing Qat and playing Turub, they smoke a lot. They don't eat well. They don't know whether their children ate well or did their school homework."

Mixed Seniors and Religious Leaders

The seniors and religious leaders kept quoting verses from the Quran, "O you who believe! Satan's plan is to incite enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants and

gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of God and prayer: Will you not abstain”.

The groups agreed that it was clear from this verse that gambling has in it the following evils:

- a. It creates hatred and enmity amongst gamblers. Generally the loser will hold a grudge against the winner who has deprived him/her of his/her wealth, which will result in family feuds, killing, murder, etc. “This is a material and worldly loss”, they said.
- b. It prevents the gambler from remembering and worshiping God and he/she becomes heedless of devotion to God. “This is a spiritual and religious loss”, one of the men quoted from the Quran.

Case Study Interviews

One of the Problem Gamblers said that his family members didn’t even know he was involved in gambling. Another one said his family and friends knew about it and they tolerated it because, he said, he provided “everything for my family”. “We are trying to integrate into the Canadian society so we try not to be too influenced by Somali culture”, he added.

All of the interviewees admitted to having family problems at some point in their lives due to their gambling activities, but they all insisted that the situations were always under control. All of the problem gamblers also admitted that they didn’t have many friends in the community and they said they preferred to gamble alone.

Question 3: What do Somali community members define as “problem gambling”?

Community Survey

TABLE 10
Gambling and Drug Use

With your experience of gambling, drugs, alcohol &/or Qat, do you think there is a connection/relationship among these habits?	N	%
Yes	16	17%
No	21	22%
Don’t know	30	32%
Declined	27	29%
Total	94	100%

The survey data showed that there was a direct relationship between gambling and the gamblers’ health. Furthermore, the survey data indicated a relationship between gambling and Qat use. Seventeen percent (17%) of the surveyed gamblers confirmed that there was a connection or relationship between gambling and drug use, including Qat (see Table 10).

In assessing the relationship of gambling and the gamblers’ health, the survey data indicated that just over a quarter (26%) of the gamblers reported that their gambling has

caused them health problems such as stress or anxiety 'sometimes', 'most of the time' and 'almost always' (see Table 11).

TABLE 11
Gambling and Health

Has gambling caused you any health problems, such as stress or anxiety?	N	%
Never	27	29%
Sometimes	19	20%
Most of the time	3	3%
Almost always	3	3%
Don't know	24	26%
Declined	18	19%
Total	94	100%

Further analysis of the survey data indicated that 36% of the gamblers said they had difficulty sleeping, 'sometimes', because of their gambling. Another 5% had difficulty sleeping 'most of the time' or 'almost always' due to their gambling as shown in Table 12.

TABLE 12
Difficult Sleeping Because of Gambling

Have you had difficulty sleeping because of gambling?	N	%
Never	44	47%
Sometimes	34	36%
Most of the time	2	2%
Almost always	3	3%
Don't know	3	3%
Declined	8	9%
Total	94	100%

We also wanted to find out more about the health impacts of the gamblers and the degree of severity. Therefore, in response to the question of whether or not they have seriously thought about attempting or committing suicide, 5% said yes (see Table 13).

TABLE 13
Thoughts of Suicide

In the past 12 months, have you seriously thought about attempting or committing suicide?	N	%
Yes	5	5%
No	56	60%
Don't know	11	12%
Declined	22	23%
Total	94	100%

Focus Groups

Male Youth

Most of the youth in the group agreed that “problem gambling” was the kind of gambling that led to social dysfunction. They defined “problem gambling” as “addictive gambling” where the gambler was always nervous, in poor health, lonely or isolated.

Female Youth

The female youth group defined “problem gambling” as when gambling becomes a ‘profession’ and the consequences are severe. Most agreed that when someone starts spending all his/her time and money on gambling and it hurts his/her relations with other, including his/her family, that is when it becomes a problem.

Male Adults

This group thought of “problem gambling” as the type of gambling that only goes on in casinos and bingo halls. “If I was a frequent visitor of casinos and bingos, then I would be worried, but everything else, if done in moderation, is not problem gambling”, said one man. Almost everyone in the room nodded, in agreement to this man’s assessment.

Female Adults

They felt so strongly about gambling because of the influence of Turub and Qat on their husbands. The women defined “problem gambling” as “family destruction.” One woman emotionally said, “when our husbands are chewing Qat and dealing Turub, they smoke a lot. They don’t eat well. They are suffering from all sorts of mental and psychological disorders. They don’t know how sick they are. They are walking patients. They are really problem gamblers”. All the women in the room gave her a round of applause.

Mixed Seniors and Religious Leaders

These groups defined gamblers and problem gamblers equally as “sinners” and “losers” who have crossed the line of the faith.

Case Study Interviews

The six PGs defined problem gamblers as “wealth seekers”, “dreamers”, “freedom seekers”, and “future millionaires”.

Goal Three: Knowledge, Awareness, Values and Attitudes:

Question 1: How knowledgeable are problem gamblers and the community about problem gambling?

Community Survey

According to the survey, both the community and problem gamblers had some knowledge of problem gambling. Thirty five percent (35%) of the gamblers have admitted that they have been criticized or told that they had gambling problems at one time or another (see Table 14). Another 8% of this group said that they have been criticized or told that they had gambling problems by the community ‘almost always’.

TABLE 14
Criticism of Gambling Behaviour

How often has the community criticized your gambling, or told you that you had a gambling problem regardless of what you thought?	N	%
Never	32	34%
Sometimes	20	21%
Most of the time	13	14%
Almost always	8	8%
Don't know	11	12%
Declined	10	11%
Total	94	100%

Focus Groups

Male Youth

All the youth in this group said that they know about problem by identifying the problems associated with it such as broken homes and relationships, financial dysfunction and homelessness.

Female Youth

The female youth group also understood about problem gambling and problem gamblers. They agreed that it becomes problem gambling when it gets out of hand and starts to consume the individual's health and finances and destroys relations with others such as family and friends.

Male Adults

This group was united in their assessment that problem gambling existed in the Somali community. They said they knew people who had serious health, financial and social problems with Turub and Qat. They said they knew people who neglected their families so they could play Turub and chew Qat all night.

Female Adults

Most agreed that there was a problem with gambling in the community. They said this was a threat to the family unit and prosperity. Some of them identified their husbands as problem gamblers.

Mixed Seniors and Religious Leaders

These groups stood firmly on their religious position about all types of gambling and gamblers. One of the leaders defined gambling as "every transaction that is based on one party's gain and another's loss." He added, "since one party gains and the other loses, it falls under the definition of gambling."

Another community leader said, "remember that wealth is a gift of God. It is a trust on which we will be questioned on the Day of Judgment as to how it was earned and where it was spent. We therefore have to make sure we don't get into sin".

Case Study Interviews

All of the six PGs understood very well what it meant to be a problem gambler. Some of them hesitated to call themselves problem gamblers. One of them admitted that he was in trouble and needed some help. All of them did not feel comfortable discussing the subject any further. They didn't want any body to know what they were doing with their lives.

Question 2: What are community members' attitudes and values towards those with gambling problems?

Community Survey

When we asked the gamblers whether or not it was acceptable, according to their culture and values, to gamble, almost half of them (48%) (Table 15) said no. Thirteen percent (13%) said yes, it was acceptable while 29% were not sure.

TABLE 15
Is Gambling Acceptable?

According to Somali culture & values, in your opinion, is it okay to gamble/bet?	N	%
No	45	48%
Yes	12	13%
May be	27	29%
Don't know	8	8%
Declined	2	2%
Total	94	100%

Focus Groups

Male Youth

The male youth had mixed reactions. They were equally divided between those who believed that gambling was against their culture and values and those who said it was up to the individual to make the call. All of them agreed that they did not approve of it and would not associate themselves with those who have problems with the game. "It is a bad image of the community", one said.

Female Youth

The participants in this group said that it was against Islamic tradition to gamble and endanger the family unit. Over 80% of the young ladies said problem gamblers were "bad names" in the community.

Male Adults

Most of the men said they disapproved of gambling and problem gamblers on the basis of cultural values and religion. One man said, "all forms of gambling is prohibited under our religion and frowned upon by our culture." Others repeated the argument that, like alcohol, gambling could lead to other 'sins' and become addictive". They said that when people become addicted, they change; their personalities and behaviours alter, which

leads to other things that make them unhappy and eventually bitter. All the men didn't like to see problem gamblers in the community.

Female Adults

All the women described problem gambling as the equivalent of drug addiction. They felt so strongly about it because of the influence of Turub and Qat on their husbands. The women have unanimously rejected to accept gambling, problem gambling and those who indulged into this game.

Mixed Seniors and Religious Leaders

One of the most respected religious leaders in the community spoke at length about the prohibition Islam placed on gambling. He said, "Islam not only displayed its just and moderate systems in beliefs and devotion, but also in economics and social orders. This religion could not tolerate the unjust seizure of another person's wealth (through games of chance) which resulted in crippling the poor even more and strengthening the rich by accumulation of wealth without any effort, nor could it tolerate the collection of a large amount of money from the poor and making it one person's property without any lawful religious reason. Consequently, gambling was declared unlawful in Islam".

According to Islam, when the Prophet was asked about alcohol and gambling, the verse was revealed that said, "*They ask thee concerning wine and gambling. Say: In them is a great sin and some use for man; but the sin is greater than the usefulness*" (2:219). One of the seniors explained, "it is understood from this verse that these things are undesirable and detestable." Hence, this group unanimously rejected all types of gambling and looked down those who dealt it.

Case Study Interviews

The attitudes and values of this group towards problem gambling were divided. Four of the six problem gamblers said their cultural values didn't allow their games but they enjoyed it any way. The other two were more liberal about it. One of them said that everything was seen through the prism of culture and religion. There was very little room for individual responsibility and our community members ought to understand that in Canada individuals have the power to decide for themselves what they want their lifestyle to look like without interference from community norms and culture."

The other one said, "the trouble with our community is that everything is seen through cultural and religious eyes. There are no grey areas. You either are breaking taboos or sticking to custom and religion. There is no middle ground. I don't buy this".

Goal Four: Help-seeking Preferences and Behaviours

Question 1: What are the preferences of problem gamblers and the community at large in seeking help?

Community Survey

The survey data showed (Table 16) that 36% of those who said have gambled within the past 12 months, have never sought help with their gambling problems. Thirty five percent (35%) declined but another 17% tried to seek help (10% 'sometimes', 5%, 'most of the time', and 2%, 'almost always').

TABLE 16
Help Seeking

Have you ever tried to seek help with your gambling?	N	%
Never	34	36%
Some times	9	10%
Most of the time	5	5%
Almost always	2	2%
Don't know	11	12%
Declined	33	35%
Total	94	100%

TABLE 17
Help Seeking Preferences

If you need help with gambling problems, who would you prefer to turn to?	N	%
Family member	4	4%
Friends	39	42%
Community health facilities	2	2%
Hospitals & Clinics	1	1%
Mosques	31	33%
Don't know	15	16%
Other	2	2%
Total	94	100%

We then tried to find out more about the preference of the gamblers as to whom they would trust and turn to in seeking help with their gambling problems. Forty two percent (42%) of them said they would prefer to seek help from their friends while 33% preferred spiritual healing with the mosques and religious centres (see Table 17). Only 3% said they would seek professional help from health centres, clinics and hospitals.

Focus Groups

Male Youth

A number of young people in the male youth group revealed in their responses that seeking help from friends as their preference was very important. Some of them said they would go to the mosque for treatment. Some suggested to get married and/or change the environment by traveling to Somalia. A couple, (20%) of participants in the group mentioned professional mainstream institutions as their preferences for treatment.

Female Youth

All of the young women in this group agreed that problem gamblers should seek guidance from spiritual counselors and local mosques. They suggested that young addicts could go home (Somalia) and get married. They felt that feeling of family responsibilities could help one to compromise their habits. They also agreed that friends could provide the best advice and guidance to problem gamblers.

Male Adults

All of the men in this group preferred mosques as the best option to treat those who have gambling problems and/or other addiction problems.

Female Adults

Most of the female adult group indicated that spiritual healing; family counseling; and community health clinics were their preferences for seeking help for their husbands.

Mixed Seniors and Religious Leaders

These group all recommended spiritual counseling for those with gambling ambitions and the habit of chewing Qat.

Case Study Interviews

The interviewees were reluctant to discuss their preferences for seeking help with their gambling problems. However, most of them indicated that they didn't mind seeing a spiritual counselor or talk to their friends privately about their problems.

Are there culturally and linguistically appropriate resources available to help those with problem gambling?

Community Survey

When we asked the respondents about their awareness of the resources available in the City and which ones best met their needs for help, a vast majority of them (57%) said were aware of the mosques, while only 4% said were aware of the hospitals.

TABLE 18
Resource Awareness

Which resource or facility in the City best meets your needs for help?	N	%
Hospitals	4	4%
Mainstream Community Health Centres	6	7%
Ethno-specific community facilities	7	8%
Mosques	54	57%
Don't know	21	22%
Other	2	2%
Total	94	100%

Focus GroupsMale Youth

About half of the male youth were aware of mainstream institutions such as hospitals and mental health centres such as the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto. They were also aware of the spiritual counseling at the local mosques.

Female Youth

Some of the young ladies were aware of the professional facilities in the City. Others felt that cultural and community centres and mosques could also offer invaluable counselling

to those who were in the pitfalls of problem gambling. All of them agreed that problem gamblers should go to the local mosques for treatment of their problems.

Male Adults

All of the men in this group were aware of the spiritual counseling at the local mosques as the best option to treat those who have addiction problems. They also said they did not know of any resources that were suitable for treatment of problem gamblers. "Maybe community organizations can provide culturally sensitive support", concluded one gentleman.

Female Adults

The entire female adult group was aware of the treatments and counselling offered by the main mosque in Etobicoke for all types of addictions. Only a couple of them (20%) were also aware of CAMH in Toronto.

Mixed Seniors and Religious Leaders

These groups were aware of, and recommended, only the mosques and other spiritual healing/counselling facilities.

Case Study Interviews

Two of the six problem gamblers were not aware of any help resources in the City. Another two said they were aware of some and said that if they needed professional counselling, they would go to ethno-cultural centres, religious or community organizations, rather than seek mainstream counselling support. The remaining two PGs didn't think they needed help and therefore did not care what resources were available and for what. They declined to discuss this topic any further.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Goal One: Nature & Practice

Question 1: What is the “perceived” prevalence of gambling in the Somali community, and what types of gambling activities do they practice and why?

Gambling Prevalence

Gambling is prevalent in the Somali community in Toronto as 59% of those surveyed practiced some form of gambling within the past 12 months. Also all of the participants of the focus groups and case study interviewees all clearly stated the community’s engagement in gambling.

The types of gambling practiced by members of the community included Lotteries, Casino and Bingo, Electronic and Internet, Sport Betting, Pool/Billiard and most importantly “Turub” or Somali Poker. Gambling is a taboo; it brings shame, a strong stigma and many members of the community felt embarrassed to talk about it.

Reasons for Gambling

The main reason for the community’s gambling activities was to make money. Since the unemployment rate within the community seemed to be quite high, compared to other ethno-specific groups in Toronto (Michael Ornstein’s study of May 2000), it could be concluded that people who failed to join the labour force, for reasons of systemic barriers and/or lack of Canadian experience, were forced to try their luck in gambling.

Question 2: Where and when do the community members gamble?

Gambling Places

The integration process of the community seemed to be very slow as they kept staying together. Almost all of the gambling activities were taking place in Somali social clubs. Very few, especially young people have traveled to the mainstream gambling facilities such as the casinos and bingo halls.

Most of the lottery purchases were done at the shopping malls and variety stores due to their conveniently easy accessibilities.

Gambling Times

Obviously the community is keeping the traditional night time gambling marathons. Typically, the all-weekend gambling and Qat chewing habit is maintained. The impact of this activity on their health and family relationships is a concern to many in the community.

Goal Two: Definition, Characteristic and Pervasiveness

Question 1: What are the behaviours attributable to problem gamblers in the Somali community in Toronto?

Problem Gambling Behaviours

In this study, it was difficult to define behaviours of problem gamblers due to the taboo and stigma attached to this game. However, most of the participants in this study considered such behaviours as “ignoring the community norms and values” as being behaviours that could be foreign to the culture and therefore attributable to problem gamblers.

Other important behaviours identified in this study included: betting more than they could afford to lose; borrowing money to gamble; lying about their gambling and spending long hours on gambling.

Question 2: What are the consequences to their families and to the community?

Consequences

There are a number of consequential problems as a result of gambling by members of the community. The old rule of the family of “man provides and woman cares” was being abandoned. Women (wives) were being victims of men’s gambling. Families were breaking up because men were making dents in the family budget in order to finance their gambling. Youth started to run away from home because of intergenerational conflicts. The community was unable to cope with the side effects of the integration process.

Question 3: What do Somali community members define as “Problem Gambling”?

Definition of “Problem Gambling”

The participants in the study defined problem gambling as “financial and social dysfunctions”, “addictive gambling”, “family destruction”, and as suffering from all sorts of “mental and psychological disorders”. Problem gamblers try to quit, cut down or control their gambling but were unable to do so. They also gambled to escape from family responsibilities and other socio-economic problems.

Obviously, gambling in general is not an acceptable game in the community. It is against their Islamic faith and Somali culture. Yet some members of the community are involved in it. It is therefore considered as a hidden habit, which no one talks about. The secrecy aspect itself could induce more people, especially the youth, to join the rank and file of the gamblers leading to serious consequences.

Goal Three: Knowledge, Awareness, Values & Attitudes

Question 1: How knowledgeable are problem gamblers and the community about problem gambling?

Awareness of Problem Gambling

The community seemed to be aware of and understood problem gambling but in different contexts. For example, most of the women, all ages, considered most men gamblers had problems. The seniors and religious leaders prohibited it totally on the

basis of the religion. Many of the young men in the study were more liberal about problem gambling.

Even under these differing views, problem gamblers are always labelled as “losers” and “sinners”. It could be concluded therefore, because of this negative view of the community about problem gambling and problem gamblers, that the consequences of problem gambling could pass unattended or undetected and damage the community.

Question 2: What are community members’ attitudes and values towards those with gambling problems?

Attitudes and Values

The community had very strong negative feelings and attitudes towards those with gambling problems. A vast majority rejected and said that it was unacceptable to the faith and culture of the community to gamble.

In view of this strong objection of problem gambling by the community, it would seem very difficult for any problem gambler to come out and even seek help within the community. This could very well exacerbate and aggravate the degree of severity of problem gambling in the community, because no counsellor and/or clinician can treat a problem gambling patient without talking, consulting, confessing and proper diagnosis.

Goal Four: Help Seeking Preferences and Behaviours

Question 1: What are the preferences of problem gamblers and the community at large in seeking help?

Help Seeking Preferences

Due to the cultural taboo of gambling in the community, those who might have problems with gambling have always not attempted to seek help from the proper channels. The study found out that the preferences of the problem gamblers, had they decided to seek help, would have been their friends and spiritual healers.

It is important to note that very few of the community would dare talk about their gambling problems openly. This is the cultural norm of the community, and it makes it difficult for any one to determine the degree of tolerance of the definition and measurement of problem gambling in a highly confidential and closed environment.

Question 2: Are there culturally and linguistically appropriate resources available to help those with problem gambling?

Awareness of Help Resources

The results of the study clearly showed that almost 80% of those who gambled within the past year were either aware of the local mosques as resources for help (57%), or did not know what was available in the City (22%).

This could either be an indication of the mistrust the community might have against western medicine, or a manifestation of the cultural stigma about problem gambling and other addictions.

6. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This study, the first of its kind ever about the Somalis anywhere and at any time, showed that gambling was prevalent in the Somali community in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The combination of the excessive abuse of the community 'drug' – Qat, and the game of Turub (Poker) indicated a strong risk factor that could hinder the development of this community. Most importantly, for the Somali community in Toronto, gambling could be interpreted as the 'intended' or 'assumed' solutions to many of their socio-economic problems such as poverty, unemployment, cultural confusion, social isolation and frustration due to failing integration and settlement processes.

Many of the respondents in this study expressed their frustration over the difficulties they could face if and when seeking help from hospitals and mainstream health facilities. A combination of cultural taboos, feeling of shame and lack of language capabilities forces the community into a state of isolation that breed frustration and inertia.

Part of the isolation comes from cultural and linguistic barriers and the shame associated with failing to attain success in the mainstream society. For example, when educated professionals and tradesmen fail to penetrate the job and labour market, many try to hide their destitution and joblessness in Somali social clubs where Turub and Qat chewing goes on.

Given what we know from the findings of this study, the community will have to come out and face the consequences of its culture. It needs to expose, target, and break out of the taboo and stigma through extensive and culturally appropriate and suitable educational programs.

Finally, This project has greatly enhanced the capacity of Midaynta Association of Somali Service Agencies and its project staff team. We have learned a lot in terms of research methodology, interpersonal skills and community issues and concerns, including gambling and problem gambling.

APPENDIX I
Community Survey Questionnaire

MIDAYNTA ASSOCIATION OF SOMALI SERVICE AGENCIES
ADDRESSING PROBLEM GAMBLING IN THE SOMALI COMMUNITY.

COMMUNITY SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction:

Hello, my name is _____ and I am calling from Midaynta, Association of Somali Service Agencies here in Toronto. Have I dialled (repeat the number)? We are conducting a research survey on the gambling activities and attitudes of the Somali community in Toronto and we would like to include your views.

Your response will help researchers better understand gambling behaviour and develop programs and services for Somalis with gambling problems. Your household is one of 250 being randomly surveyed throughout the GTA. First of all, can you tell me how many adults 18 years or older live in this household?

INTERVIEWER: _____ (record the number)
 refused (terminate the call and thank them for their time)

INTERVIEWER: If no one 18 or older in the house, terminate the interview.
 If any one in the household is 18 or older, say:

I would like to speak to that person please, would that be possible?

INTERVIEWER: If no, terminate the call and thank them for their time. But see you can call again
 If yes, say: (**great**) and start talking politely, slowly and clearly as follows:

I would like to interview you and I am hoping that now is a good time for you. The interview will take about 10 – 12 minutes, depending on how many of the questions apply to you.

Before we start, I would like to assure you that your participation is voluntary and that any information you provide will be kept completely confidential. If there any question that you do not wish to answer, please feel free to point that out to me and I will go on to the next question. You have the right to terminate the interview at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns about the survey, you can phone Midaynta and ask to speak to Mr. Ibrahim Absiye, the Executive Director who is also the Research Coordinator at (416) 544-1992 Ext. 29 for further information.

INTERVIEWER: If the person never gambles, doesn't believe in it, etc., say (we understand that not everyone gambles, but your opinions are still very important to us).

1. AGREED to be interviewed (thank them and go to Question 1 of Section 1...)
2. REFUSED to be interviewed (terminate and thank them for their time)

SECTION I - Nature and Practice:

- 1) In the past 12 months, what types of gambling and/or betting have you participated in?
 1. None
 2. Gambling tickets/lotteries
 3. Casino/Bingo
 4. Electronic/internet gambling
 5. Sports betting
 6. Cards/Turub
 7. Other

- 2) In the past 12 months, how often have you participated in a gambling activity?
 1. None
 2. Daily
 3. Weekly
 4. Once or twice a month
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined

- 3) In the past 12 months, how much time have you spent on gambling at each time?
 1. None
 2. 1-480 minutes
 3. 481-8 hours
 4. More than 8 hours
 5. Don't know
 6. Other
 7. Refused

- 4) In the past 12 months, how much money have you lost on gambling/betting?
 1. None
 2. Less than \$100
 3. \$101-\$500
 4. \$501-\$1,000
 5. More than \$1,000
 6. Don't know
 7. Declined

- 5) In the past 12 months, how much money have you won in gambling/betting?
 1. None
 2. Less than \$100
 3. \$101-\$500
 4. \$501-\$1,000
 5. More than \$1,000
 6. Don't know
 7. Declined.

- 6) When you are in the mood to play your game, who do you play with?
 1. No one
 2. With spouse or other family members
 3. With friends
 4. With co-workers
 5. With others (specify)
 6. Don't know
 7. Declined

-
- 7) What are the main reasons why you participate in this game?
1. To win money
 2. For entertainment or fun
 3. As a hobby
 4. To kill time
 5. Out of curiosity
 6. Other (specify)
 7. Declined
- 8) According to the Somali culture and values, in your opinion, is it okay to gamble/bet?
1. No
 2. Yes
 3. May be
 4. Some times
 5. Other (specify)
 6. Don't know
 7. Declined

SECTION 11 - Definition, Characteristic & Pervasiveness:

- 9) How often have you bet more money than you could really afford to lose? Would you say:
1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Most of the time
 4. Almost always
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined
- 10) How often have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble?
1. Never
 2. Sometime
 3. Most of the time
 4. Almost always
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined
- 11) Have you ever felt guilty about the way you gamble, or what happens when you gamble?
1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Most of the time
 4. Almost always
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined
- 12) Has gambling caused you any health problems such as stress or anxiety?
1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Most of the time
 4. Almost always
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined
- 13) Have you had difficulty sleeping because of gambling?
1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Most of the time

-
4. Almost always
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined
- 14) Has your gambling caused any financial problems for you or your family?
1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Most of the time
 4. Almost always
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined
- 15) Have you tried to quit, cut down or control your gambling but were unable to do so?
1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Most of the time
 4. Almost always
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined
- 16) Have you ever lied to your family members or others to hide your gambling?
1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Most of the time
 4. Almost always
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined
- 17) Have you stolen anything or done anything else illegal so that you could have money to gamble?
1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Most of the time
 4. Almost always
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined
- 18) How often have you gambled as a way of escaping problems or to help you feel better when you were depressed?
1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Most of the time
 4. Almost always
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined

SECTION III - Knowledge, Awareness, Values & Attitudes:

- 19) How old were you when you first gambled for money?
1. Never tried gambling
 2. 5-10 years of age
 3. Aged-----
 4. Don't know
 5. Declined

-
- 20) What type of gambling was that?
1. None
 2. Gambling tickets/Lotteries
 3. Casino/Bingo
 4. Electronic/Internet gambling
 5. Sports betting
 6. Cards/Turub
 7. Other
- 21) While gambling, and after losing many times in a row, you are more likely to win:
1. Strongly agree
 2. Agree
 3. Disagree
 4. Strongly disagree
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined
- 22) Please tell me if you agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement:
"While gambling, you could win more money if you used a certain system or strategy."
1. Strongly agree
 2. Agree
 3. Disagree
 4. Strongly disagree
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined
- 23) How often have people criticized your gambling or told you that you had a gambling problem, regardless of whether or not you thought it was true?
1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Most of the time
 4. Almost always
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined
- 24) How often have you lost or almost lost a relationship, a job, or an educational/career opportunity because of your gambling?
1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Most of the time
 4. Almost always
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined
- 25) How often has your gambling caused problems between you and any of your family members or friends?
1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Most of the time
 4. Almost always
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined

-
- 26) How often have you felt irritable or restless when you tried to control or cut down or stop gambling for a while?
1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Most of the time
 4. Almost always
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined
- 27) In the past 12 months, have you used drugs, chat or alcohol?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Declined
- 28) Have you ever gambled when high?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Declined
- 29) In the past 12 months, have you seriously thought about attempting or committing suicide?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Declined
- 30) During this time, did you take medication or antidepressants for your depression?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Declined
- 31) With your experience of gambling, drugs, alcohol and/or chat, do you think there is a connection or relationship among these habits?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Declined

SECTION IV - Help-seeking Preferences and Behaviours:

- 32) If you need help with gambling problems, who would you turn to?
1. Family members
 2. Friends
 3. Community facilities
 4. Hospitals/Clinics
 5. Mosques
 6. Don't know
 7. Other
- 33) Which resource or facility in the city best meets your needs for help?
1. Hospitals
 2. Mainstream community health centres
 3. Ethno-specific community facilities

-
4. Mosques
 5. Others (specify)
 6. Don't know
- 34) Have you ever tried to seek help with your gambling?
1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Most of the time
 4. Almost always
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined
- 35) Were you satisfied with the service providers you went to for help?
1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Most of the time
 4. Almost always
 5. Declined

SECTION V - Demographics:

- 36) What age group do you belong to?
1. 0-20
 2. 21-30
 3. 31-40
 4. 41-50
 5. 51-60
 6. 61 years and above
- 37) What is your marital status?
1. Single
 2. Married
 3. Divorced or separated
 4. Widowed
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined
- 38) What level of education have you completed?
1. No schooling at all
 2. Elementary
 3. Intermediate
 4. Secondary
 5. College/university
 6. Don't know
 7. Declined
- 39) What is your legal status in Canada?
1. Canadian citizen
 2. Landed immigrant
 3. Refugee claimant
 4. Limbo
 5. Don't know
 6. Declined

40) What is your current job status?

1. Employed full time
2. Employed part time
3. Unemployed
4. Student
5. Retired
6. Don't know
7. Declined

41) Which of the following categories best describe your total household income (before taxes) in the last 12 months?

1. Less than \$20,000
2. \$20,001 - \$30,000
3. \$30,001 - \$40,000
4. \$40,001 - \$50,000
5. \$50,001 - \$60,000
6. More than \$60,000

42) Male/Female

1. Male
2. Female

APPENDIX II
Focus Group Questionnaire

Measuring Problem Gambling in the Somali Community in Toronto
Focus Groups Questionnaire

Discussion facilitators will:

- allocate time to each question
- set the ground rules of the day
- lead the discussions in the appropriate direction
- control the flow of the discussions
- record the discussions on tapes
- record all the point/ideas on flip charts in an orderly fashion – corresponding to the question
- explain the questions and keep the focus on the topic of discussion

Discussion Questions
<p>In the blank sheet of paper provided to you, please list all of the gambling activities that you know of or have heard about. FACILITATOR: <i>call around the table & list the responses.</i></p> <p>What types of gambling activities do you practice, if any and why? (Gambling Tickets, Lotteries, Casino, Bingo, Coin Slots, Internet Gambling, Sports Betting, Cards, Others (please specify)</p> <p>Do Somalis travel to Casino Rama? Casino Niagara? Woodbine racetracks where there are coins slot machines? Banadir Coffee at Weston & Lawrence, etc? What is the “perceived” prevalence of gambling in the community?</p> <p>How would you define “problem gambling and the behaviours of problem gamblers?</p> <p>What do think are the consequences of gambling to your family, friends and the community?</p> <p>What is your opinion of gambling and do you approve it or disapprove it and why?</p> <p>Are you aware of any problem gamblers in the Somali community in Toronto and if so have you ever tried to assist them in dealing with it? Why and why not?</p> <p>How and where would you to seek help with any addiction or gambling-related problems, if necessary?</p> <p>What advice would you offer to those members and their families, in the Somali community, who have gambling problems?</p>

APPENDIX III
Case Studies Interview Questionnaire

Measuring Problem Gambling in the Somali Community in Toronto

Case Study Interviews Questionnaire

Interviewer must:

Welcome.

Our intentions – research project

Confirm confidentiality - information and identity

Make client feel relaxed and comfortable

A client could even use an anonymous name

A client could terminate the interview if so desired

Place & time of Interview should be the client choice

Permission for recording conversation

1. Could you please talk about yourself in terms of your:
 - a. Life history
 - b. Career – any career changes since you came to Canada.
 - c. Hobbies – recreational activities, favourite sports.
 - d. Education (schooling)
 - e. Family and friends (including extended family such as uncles, aunts, cousins, etc)
 - f. Life in North America – your immigration to Canada
 - g. Profession and employment history
 - h. Relationships with others – including friends
 - i. Experience in life – both here and back home.
 - j. Marital status – any marriage problems (e.g. with spouse)
 - k. Etc.
2. What types of gambling activities are you involved in (now or in the past) as recreational for whatever reasons?
3. How do you feel when you are gambling?
4. How long have you been gambling and when did you realize it could become problematic?
5. Do you like gambling as recreational activity, pastime, for fun, etc?
6. Tell me about your experiences in this game, in terms of winnings, enjoyment, etc
7. How about the other side of the coin? I mean about any losses (financial)?
8. Have you ever had problems enjoying your game?
9. Who do you play/enjoy gambling with most: friends, family members, anyone?
10. Do your family members approve or disapprove your gambling habits?
11. What about your friends?
12. Have you ever tried to quit or control your gambling habit?
13. What about any side effects. I mean anxiety, lack of sleep. Any negative feeling?

-
14. Have you ever done anything you have regretted later, as a result of your gambling (e.g. committed a crime, abused your spouse, harmed yourself, etc)
 15. Have you sought help in assisting you to quit or overcome the habit?
 16. Where did you get the best response or treatment?
 17. Do know if other members of the Somali community gamble?
 18. If so, where, when and what type?
 19. Let's go back to when your first started gambling. What motivated to start it?
 20. If you try to recall, what was your best experience with this game?
 21. How about the worst ones?
 22. If you would like to add any thing to what we have discussed so far, please feel free to do so?

If you think about any thing that you would like me to know in relation to this project, please call me at any time, you have my card with the telephone, or you can e-mail me if you have access to Internet.

Thank you for

APPENDIX IV
Case Studies Interview Transcripts

Case Study Interviews (Transcripts)

The research project team has conducted extensive interviews of six problem gamblers, using open-ended questions that were culturally and linguistically appropriate and acceptable and that encouraged and motivated them to speak freely and honestly about their life history and gambling habit. Transcripts of these interviews are presented below as cases # 1 - #6 with anonymous names.

Case # 1

The participant, Koshin, said that he gambles by purchasing lottery tickets regularly. "There is no pleasure in doing it, but there's the hope of winning big one day", he stated. He added that he was trying to quit because he has not been a lucky winner.. "I am at a stage now I want to quit because I am beginning to feel that I am wasting my money", he said.

Koshin is an educated man. He said when he came to Canada; he seized the opportunity to further his education, getting a university degree. He said he's single. He adds, "I am a social worker, and also I am a researcher. I have some hobbies that include soccer, some jogging, swimming and playing volleyball. Koshin said he has gone through different stages of employment before he settled into his carrier. He said, "I have worked as a dishwasher, receiver and shipper, and as a receptionist. When I was at university I worked as a researcher and I have also worked at a bank."

He spends \$20.00 a week on tickets. He makes his ticket purchases when he drives by convenient stores and sees the big numbers advertised just outside the store. "I might be driving by a corner store and I suddenly say "Oh, the number is big, why not buy a few tickets". He said he was motivated by the big money when he started buying lottery tickets several years ago. He said, "I saw these ads that said 'today win \$10,000,000' and I said why not".

Koshin doesn't think that he is a problem gambler but admits it isn't easy to stop purchasing the Lotto tickets. He argues that his gambling is a habit, not a problem. The fantasy of winning big doesn't cost him much, he adds. "I spend only \$20 a week on tickets." He said with a laugh, "Sometimes I stay awake at night thinking about what I could do if I won a few million dollars." He added that the possibility of winning millions sometimes makes him "anxious." Like in the Lotto advertisement, Koshin sees a big win as his get way to riches and freedom. He says he knows it may all be an illusion, but he sees no harm in illusory indulgence.

But sometimes his bad luck makes him regret not saving the weekly \$20 dollars he has been spending on Lotto tickets all these years. He said, " I could be close to being a millionaire today if I saved the money I spent on tickets all these years. It could have been my retirement fund." Koshin was not aware of any help-resources, other than the Immams – religious counselors at the local mosques. "I don't need no hospitals or clinics", he said.

He concluded, " But when I see the winning numbers being read on the TV, I want to try again and again. It's endless".

Case # 2

Saeed said he came from Somalia 12 years ago and is very happy to be here in Canada. He said he's a community journalist by profession who has successfully worked in Canada for quite some years.

Saeed's favorite pass time happens to be playing billiards for money at Somali social clubs. He said he also purchases Lotto 649 and plays pool. Like Koshin, Saeed is driven to Lotto ticket purchases by the promise of winning big. He adds that he has been playing the Lotto 649 for the last 12 years. He added "But I don't play for much money. Every week may be \$30. And that's my hobby. It's not really a hobby, it's fun that I like. I feel very good playing this and since I don't spend too much money on it, I can't complain that it's become a problem."

Saeed said his biggest hope is that one day he would wake up and discover that he was a millionaire. Unlike Koshin, however, he has been lucky in small, insignificant ways. He added, "One time I won \$150 and another time \$200 other times \$50. I win often. This is fun and some day, I might just win it big".

Saeed doesn't see his addiction to winning as a problem. He said he thinks of it as a harmless fantasy. He said "I have never thought this would become a problem for me. This is just a pass time for fun and I don't consider it a recreational activity. I just enjoy playing as fun." His ticket purchasing habit hasn't been a drain on his finances, he adds. "I have never felt that this fun time Lotto has been a financial drain on my income. It doesn't hurt me at all. I never buy tickets for friends, family members or anyone else. This is highly personal. I buy the tickets only for me. My family members don't even know I buy these tickets. But I think if they knew they would disapprove and they would probably advise me not to buy the tickets."

They would probably say this is religiously wrong, he adds. They would point out that Islam forbids gambling and the money from it is *Haram* (dirty money), Saeed said. "It's prohibited by the religion and where we come from, Somalia, they don't play the Lotto. I am sure that they would disapprove but it's my personal decision and there's nothing they can do about it."

Saeed said his friends know he gambles on Lotto 649 tickets. They also approve of his ticket purchases and sometimes make fun "of the coming riches. Oh yes, they approve and that's because they expect me to share the money with them and give them some when I win. They play through me and every day at least one of them asks if I won something last week or this week. I think they play too and I encourage them to play but they keep it a tight secret. I don't try to keep it a secret from them but they don't tell me when they play and I don't know if they have won anything."

He has never tried to quit and will never quit, Saeed said. "Why should I? I don't know why I should quit. It's not causing a problem for me. I am not losing a lot of money. I will keep on playing until the end of the world. I never regret anything when I buy these tickets. What's there to regret? I spend only \$30 a week. If I smoked cigarettes or drank beer, both of which I don't do, I would have spent far more money there. So there's no regret or any doubt in mind."

Saeed doesn't consider himself a gambler even though his frequent ticket purchases make him out like one. He said, "I don't consider myself a professional gambler and as long as I am not doing it professionally, I got no problems. I am not afraid that it's a problem for me. That's because personally, I can control my spending. And as a result, I don't seek any treatment. For what? Buying Lotto 649 tickets? Get real!" He said he was not aware of help resources in the city. He didn't care at all because he was in a total denial.

Case # 3

Abdi said he has been gambling for many years. He said he plays black jack and makes visits to the casino. But he has never won big, he concedes. He said he believes gambling to be both bad and good. It can be bad for those who have no control over their habit, he added, and good for those who can. He added, "It can be enjoyable for those who learn how to moderate their habit. Without moderation, anything can turn bad. I have never considered my gambling a problem. Sometimes I have won large amounts of money and other times, I have lost large amounts of money as well."

Bad said he looks at the issue of gambling from a different perspective than most Somalis. He feels it is up to the individual to decide whether it is good or bad for them. He said he tends not to be swayed by religious or moral arguments on gambling. He said he was a grown up man and that he decided what's good for him. The community's outlook and culture don't influence him as much."

Bad believes he doesn't need any outside help to deal with his gambling. His family and friends know about it and they tolerate it because, he said, he provides "everything for my family. My wife works and if my income isn't enough, our two incomes are more than sufficient to cover my gambling losses. And when I win my family helps me celebrate and everybody is happy. We are trying to integrate into Canadian society so we try not to be too influenced by Somali culture. We would rather adopt a Canadian culture because we chose to live here."

Abdi said he doesn't believe that gambling is a problem for him. Sometimes it has been even profitable and at other times he lost, he said. He added, "When I lose, sometimes I lose big and when I win I win big. So sometimes the winning cancels out the losing streak and sometimes it is the other way around. Thank you. I can't tell you anything more. I can't tell you how much I win or lose. Thank you. "

Case # 4

Ideed started gambling when he was a 17-year-old waiter at the Bar Cuba in Mogadishu, Somalia. Soon after his shift, he said, he hooked up with his buddies and we went off to the social club to play Turub and chew a little Qat. It was fun. "I was very good at Turub. A lot of the times, I won and it was how I subsidized my waiter's income."

When he came to Canada in 1988, he continued playing Turub and chewing Qat. He has been doing this since his arrival, he said. Ideed said he isn't bothered too much by the cultural and religious opposition in his community to gambling. He said he's a Muslim who believes he's also an individual who is responsible for his own actions. "If I am wrong, I am wrong," he added.

But gambling, now that he is older, is just entertainment for him, he added. He said, "I play Turub and chew a bit of Qat with friends and strangers at my Etobicoke social club. When I do this I feel relaxed and I forget my problems. I do this every weekend and my wife has no problem with it. She knows my history with gambling since Mogadishu."

Ideed doesn't think that gambling is really a problem that he cannot handle. He said he can handle it. The largest amount of money he has lost was \$2000 and "I have won up to \$750. That's not bad. I am not addicted to either Qat or gambling. I don't think I need any help with it. I think I can handle it. Gambling hasn't brought financial disaster to me and my household. I am a responsible adult who can determine when something is a problem for me. As such, I don't think I need any help with professional counselling, or any other counselling for that matter".

The people who believe that gambling is bad for all Somalis and Muslims are entitled to their opinion, he said. This, after all, is a free country, he added. He said, "I don't pay any attention to their preaching. I determine my own way of life. My beliefs and my way of thinking are not too influenced by culture and religion. I am my own man, for good or for worse. Gambling is very much like life itself: you lose some and you win some. A perfect balance. It's why I enjoy it so much."

Ideed said he works hard. He makes enough money, he adds, to cover his losses. "And I provide for all my family's needs" he adds. "I am not going to tell you my income, but let me assure you that it is sufficient for me. My wife also works so we are a two-income family. I have enough education to take risks with gambling. When I came to this country I took advantage of the educational system. I am an enlightened gambler, if you will. Education opens your mind to different cultures and perspectives."

Case # 5

Yusuf has lived in Canada for almost two decades. Before that, he was born in Somalia where he got his education up to high school. And when he finished high school, he went to Italy for further education, he said. In Somalia he was just a young teenager. He said he actually grew up into adulthood in Italy where he spent several decades.

He said he played Turub and chewed Qat in Somalia and when he went to Italy with his friends, they continued their lifestyle of Turub and Qat. But they learned other types of gambling in Italy and they started spending some of the money their parents sent for their education on gambling, Yusuf said. It was a risky and dangerous time. Sometimes they lost all their money. He said, "In Italy, we played some kind of lottery called Totto Culture every week. This was some form of sports gambling, betting on soccer."

Every week, Yusuf and friends betted on 13 Italian soccer teams. Their goal was to win big but they never did. It was both exciting and heart breaking, Yusuf adds. He said, "to win big, you had to predict 13 wins by 13 teams. But none of us won. Sometimes we won a little bundle of Lira, Italian currency and other times our combined wins kept us in the money. Our major goal was to go to school but a lot of our money went to gambling. Sometimes we lost even our tuition fees and desperately tried to win this back. It was scary."

Other times, they entertained themselves with Turub and Qat in Italy, Yusuf said. It is impossible to stop shipments of Qat from East Africa to anywhere in the world where the

Somali Diaspora is found. The Canadian government has probably discovered this hard truth after banning Qat in 1998. Qat still comes to Canada even after this ban.

When he came to Canada, Yusuf said, he stopped the habit of Qat and Turub because he married and got a big family to feed. But he admitted that he still plays the Lotto 649 every week. He said, “compared to my gambling habit in Italy, Lotto 649 is a joke. So my family doesn’t mind. They see playing the Lotto 649 as a harmless pass time. I don’t believe it is a problem for me. I don’t think I need counseling. But if I did need professional counseling, I would go to a Ethno-cultural centres, religious centres or community organizations, rather than seek mainstream counselling support.”

Yusuf said he couldn’t remember how much money he lost or won in Italy. He added, “but I have won at least \$1000 in playing Lotto 649. Sometimes I have lost \$10 a week playing the Lotto 649. I know that even Lotto 649 is regarded with suspicion in our community, but I don’t pay much attention to community criticism. I can control my Lotto playing. It is something that I think will not affect my lifestyle unless I win big.”

The problem in the Somali community, Yusuf said, is that everything is seen through the prism of culture and religion. There’s very little room for individual responsibility, he added. He said, “ but our community members ought to understand that in Canada individuals have the power to decide for themselves what they want their lifestyle to look like without interference from community norms and culture.”

But this is wishful thinking, he said. Perhaps Somalis will feel more like individuals when the current generation of Canadian born children grow up and become adults, Yusuf added. He said, “the cultural and religious influence in our community make people look suspiciously at gamblers and Qat chewers.”

Case # 6

Yonis plays Turub and chews Qat. The religion doesn’t allow that, he said he knows, but he does it anyway. There are a lot of people like him, Yonis believes, in the Somali community “as you well know. Even though our culture and religion forbid many things, we still do those things. Our community, like every other community, is made up of individuals. I am just one of those individuals who make up our community.”

While Yonis understands the religious and cultural prohibitions on Qat and Turub, he had never personally considered this a problem weighing on his shoulder. He said, “a lot of people do though. But this is Canada and if you are not breaking the law, you can disregard cultural and religious taboos if you so choose. I choose to be an individual.”

Yonis said he plays Turub in an Etobicoke social club and sometimes during the weekends he chews Qat as he plays Turub with friends. This was his lifestyle, he said, even in Somalia. It is hard to break old habits, he added, so he never even bothers to try. He added “I am single so even if I lost all my money tonight in a game of Turub I will survive. Perhaps people with families cannot afford this sort of freedom. But I am free to do anything that I want without hurting anyone else.”

Does Yonis consider gambling a problem? To this question, Yonis said “I don’t think so. Am I addicted to Turub and Qat? May be, but I don’t consider this a problem. It is merely entertainment. As I said, I am single so if it becomes a problem I will deal with it myself.

No one else will be hurt.” Yonis said he has been playing Turub since he was 17 in Mogadishu and Turub was just part of this entertainment. His friends played for money and they still do, he added, but Yonis never pays attention to the losses. He said he sometimes wins big, like the day after 10 hours of Turub he ended up winning more than \$2,000. He added, “ I loose some money but I don’t keep track of my losses. Life goes on one day at a time, that’s how I operate. I know this is not very organized but it’s my lifestyle. I neither approve of it nor disapprove. It’s just my life. The day when I settle down and marry, then perhaps my life will change. My income is sufficient to support my lifestyle.”

Yonis said he doesn’t really consider Turub and Qat a dangerous combination. What do you do in a country like Canada? He asked rhetorically. He answered his question thus, “ If I stopped playing Turub and chewing Qat what am I going to do with my free time? I don’t think I need help for this. That’s because it is not a problem for me. However, if I considered Qat and Turub as addictions then I would seek help. But I don’t and so I go on with my life. The trouble with our community is that everything is seen through cultural and religious eyes. There are no grey areas. You either are breaking taboos or sticking to custom and religion. There’s no middle ground. I don’t buy this. I believe moderation is the key and I am a moderate gambler and Qat chewer.”

APPENDIX V
Field Notes and Observations

Field Notes & Observations:

Following are the field notes, observations and recollections of the three research assistants

(1) Ali Sharif:

I found the project interesting. The Somali community is hard to communicate with. People have not learned the value of surveys yet. I had anticipated many difficulties interviewing people. That's because I know my community and people are reluctant to be interviewed for anything.

Also people in the community don't trust government or private sector authorities. This comes from the experience of the community at the hands of a brutal dictatorship in Somalia. Many lost their trust in all systems.

Because of the mistrust, our sessions started really slowly. People were reluctant to talk at first. But they soon opened up as we talked more about gambling, problem gambling and the addiction of Qat and Turub, the Somali form of poker.

The interviews got more animated as people grew more comfortable with us. Their input soon became passionate.

I think the people we were interviewing/sampling realized that the connection between gambling and Qat in our community needs to be addressed. Many understood the need to tackle the connection between Qat and Turub. Many said they know that this is a problem for the Somali community. The abuse of Qat is linked to excessive gambling in our community, the people we interviewed understood it very well and were concerned.

(2) Shugri Samater:

When we started the project, I didn't know that Somalis gamble. But after finishing the project, now I know that we have a gambling problem in the community. I also realized that the reason why I didn't hear about gambling in the community is because there is a lot of denial.

I think I understand the denial. I think the denial and cover-up are instigated by "shame". Our culture is very big on shame. Shame is used in our culture to cover up the "problems" our religion forbids. Gambling is 'Haraam' – unlawful in our religion. And people don't want to talk about it.

When I started the project, my eyes were opened to a problem I didn't think was huge. I knew about the Qat and Turub.

The project showed that the denial begins to crumble when it is taken on through focus group workshops and education sessions. Many were beginning to talk about the problem of gambling soon after getting used to us and to our questions.

The program taught me valuable lessons that include the importance of education in addressing traditional taboos in our community. I learned that, with a little

encouragement, our community responds well to education as of the process of integration.

(3) *Idris Madar:*

When I started this assignment, I knew I was up against an up-hill battle. Gambling is a popular game of chance in the Somali community but no one talks about it. And when researchers show up at their doorsteps, they become suspicious and shameful. That's where the fight begins to make people comfortable enough to talk.

I knocked doors and got slammed on my face. There were a lot of "sorry, but I don't gamble" answers, even though I knew there was gambling going on. There was a denial after a denial. The vast majority of those I contacted turned me down.

When I went to Banadir social Club in Etobicoke and told the gamblers about my assignment, some left the game and others cursed their luck to be confronted by "this idiot" as one said of me. Others told me to leave or stop what I was doing.

When I went to the community forums and distributed my questionnaire, explaining my goals, still many people were reluctant to fill out the survey for me.

I observed that many women blamed their husbands for their poverty as a result of their Qat and gambling addictions. Also, I observed that some mothers were aware of their sons' gambling problems but were ashamed of talking about it.

I observed that people quickly referred to the religion's position on gambling and therefore would deny it altogether.

I observed that those who needed assistance will only talk to religious leaders and mosque staff but not to professionals

A number of elders suggested that community organization educate youngsters on the subject of gambling and its effects on the social and economic aspects of the community. And then they clammed up.

I believe it will be difficult to convince people to seek help from any source for gambling. It is just a difficult and sensitive topic for far too many people in the community.

I have learned that there are many other concerns in the community such as:

- increasing school dropouts;
- gang formations;
- high rate of divorce and separation;
- housing problems;
- poverty;
- unemployment;
- lack of access of to government services and programs;
- lack of awareness of what is available;
- lack of information on all issues;

- huge cultural confusion; and
- numerous barriers.

People were willing to talk about all of these issues and concerns, but not about gambling and drug addictions.