GAMBLING LEGALIZATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY SYNTHESIS FOR RATIONAL STATE POLICY-A LEGALIZATION READINESS INDEX APPROACH

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ABSTRACT
This interdisciplinary study examines the complex and contentious issue of gambling legalization in the 21st century, a global phenomenon characterized by rapid growth and diverse socio-economic implications. Challenging simplistic approaches of either outright prohibition or complete deregulation, it seeks to establish a rational state policy framework for managing gambling in the contemporary context. Drawing upon a comprehensive synthesis of global experiences from 2001 to 2025, including both successful and unsuccessful country cases, the research identifies critical lessons and impacts. A central contribution is the Legalization Readiness Index (LRI), a novel, multi-dimensional tool designed to enable countries to systematically evaluate their institutional, public health, legal, economic, public engagement, and digital infrastructure readiness for legalization. This study advocates for a public health-oriented approach to gambling policy, proposing six core principles and a five-pillar framework for effective governance, harm reduction, and sustainable management. The LRI serves as a vital instrument to guide policymakers in crafting context-specific strategies, fostering institutional resilience, and ensuring a balanced consideration of economic benefits against social costs.
Keywords: Gambling Legalization, Public Policy, Legalization Readiness Index, Harm Reduction, Institutional Resilience

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