

A Work-Individual-Family Inquiry on Mental Health and Family Responsibility of Dealers Employed in Macau Gaming Industry

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Abstract : While there is growing reflection of the adverse impacts instigated by the flourishing gaming industry on the physical health and job satisfaction of those who work in Macau casinos, there is also a critical void in our understanding of the mental health of croupiers and how casino employment interacts with the family system. From a systemic approach, it would be most effective to examine the 'dealer issues' collectively and offer assistance to both the individual dealer and the family system of dealers. Therefore, with the use of a mixed method study design, the levels of anxiety, depression and sleeping quality of a sample of 1124 dealers who are working in Macau casinos have been measured in the present study, and 113 dealers have been interviewed about the impacts of casino employment on their family life. This study presents some very important findings. First, the quantitative study indicates that gender is a significant predictor of depression and anxiety levels, whilst lower income means less quality sleep. The Pearson's correlation coefficients show that as the Zung Self-rating Anxiety Scale (ZSAS) scores increase, the Zung Self-rating Depression Scale (ZSDS) and Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) scores will also simultaneously increase. Higher income, therefore, might partly explain for the reason why mothers choose to work in the gaming industry even with shift work involved and a stressful work environment. Second, the findings from the qualitative study show that aside from the positive impacts on family finances, the shift work and job stress to some degree negatively affect family responsibilities and relationships. There are resultant family issues, including missed family activities, and reduced parental care and guidance, marital intimacy, and communication with family members. Despite the mixed views on the gender role differences, the respondents generally agree that female dealers have more family and child-minding responsibilities at home, and thus it is more difficult for them to balance work and family. Consequently, they may be more vulnerable to stress at work. Thirdly, there are interrelationships between work and family, which are based on a systemic inquiry that incorporates work- individual- family. Poor physical and psychological health due to shift work or a harmful work environment could affect not just work performance, but also life at home. Therefore, a few practice points about 1) work-family conflicts in Macau; 2) families-in- transition in Macau; and 3) gender and class sensitivity in Macau; are provided for social workers and family practitioners who will greatly benefit these families, especially whose family members are working in the gaming industry in Macau. It is concluded that in addressing the cultural phenomenon of "dealer's complex" in Macau, a systemic approach is recommended that addresses both personal psychological needs and family issue of dealers.

Keywords : family, work stress, mental health, Macau, dealers, gaming industry

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