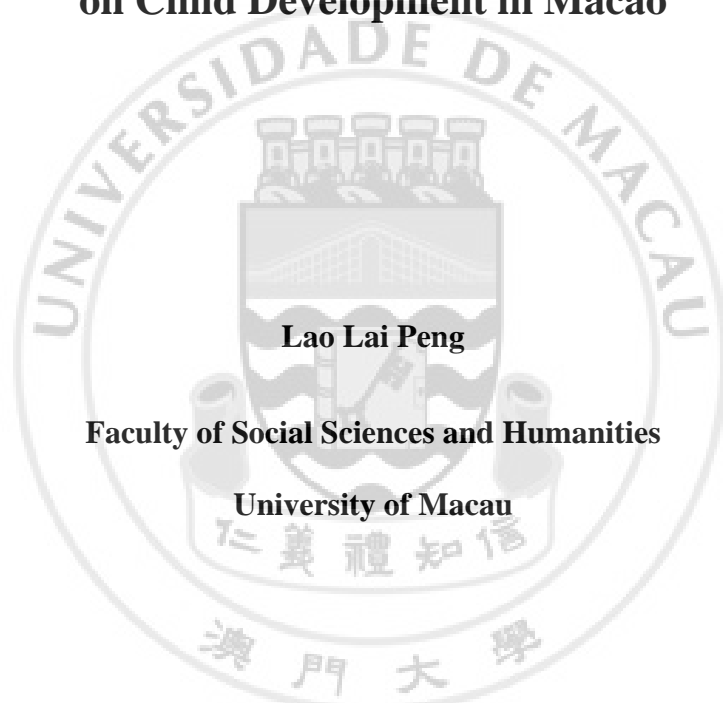




**The Impact of Parental Problem Gambling
on Child Development in Macao**



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Declaration

I, Lao Lai Peng, hereby declare that this thesis is my own and original work, apart from where references are clearly stated. None of the materials in this thesis have been used (partially or wholly) in fulfilling the requirements of any degree of qualification in this or other universities prior to this submission.

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Date: 28/05/2012



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Abstract

In recent years, Macao has undergone great development in the economic sphere, which has caused a trend of an increasing number of problem gamblers. Problems associated with gambling affect not only the gamblers themselves, but also family members and family functionality. This qualitative research provides a deeper understanding of the experiences of children in families where there is problem parental gambling through in-depth interviews with 11 Macao residents: members of three families and their social workers. The various kinds of impact encompass physical, behavioural, and psychological aspects of children's developmental process, including economic hardship, personality disorder, poor social relationships, poor school performance, and negative perceptions of gambling and marriage. In addition, this research discusses immigrant and gender issues in problem gambling families and how children deal with these impacts. This research has two central findings: (1) limited differences in impact on the family exist based on whether the problem gambler is male or female because of the change in family structure and the emergence of dual income families, and (2) children in problem gambling families appear to have antagonistic feelings towards gambling. These results differ from those of prior research. This research contributes to the understanding the influence of problem gambling on families and the relationship between individuals and society.

Keywords: Problem gambler, family, child development, gender difference, emotional cost, financial cost

Introduction:

Since Macao is a society with a legalized gaming industry, gambling-related advertisements and promotions are pervasive. In recent years, casinos have been built one by one, and several of them were built in residential community areas. The number of casinos increased from 11 in 2002 to 33 in 2009. A study showed that among residents aged 15 to 64, 4.3% were problem gamblers in 2002, and by 2007, this percentage had already increased to 6%. That is, 24,000 people developed some degree of problem gambling within these five years, a 1.7% growth in the population of problem gamblers. This increase was more significant than the increases in Hong Kong and Singapore (UMISCG, 2007). These figures imply that the trend for more and more people to be influenced by problem gambling. As problem gamblers often spend much of their time gambling, this leads to the potential breakdown of family relationships and family functionality. It can cause serious problems in a family, including financial risk, broken relationships with family members, depression, etc. However, people may have only a limited understanding of problem gambling's influence on the family. Therefore, it is important for us to acknowledge the actual situation of a problem gambler's family.