

PROBLEM GAMBLING: PREVALENCE, PROTECTION AND RISK FACTORS

Survey commissioned by Lottomatica spa

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Motivations**

Problem Gambling

Gambling may become a **problem when it assumes some of the following characteristics:**

inability to control the impulse and urge to gamble

**thinking constantly about gambling
(past experiences, strategies, statistics,
ways of procuring money)**

**ever increasing need to bet higher sums
in order to fuel excitement**

repeated unsuccessful attempts to stop gambling

gambling as an "escape" from problems

**impairment of personal, family, financial and legal
functioning**

Problem Gambling

Pathological gambling is an “impulse-control disorder” that can be diagnosed only by a psychiatrist

Assessment instruments used in studies on the prevalence of compulsive/problem gambling allow to identify persons at risk but CANNOT be used as instruments to diagnose pathological gambling.

When detection of a gambling problem is based exclusively on use of a self-report scale, it is more correct to refer to “PROBLEM GAMBLING BEHAVIOR”.

Estimated Prevalance of Problem Gambling

Stucki and Middel (2007): Studies from 2000 to 2005

**The percentage of problem gamblers varies between
0.2% and 3.5%, weighted average = 1.8% (SOGS)
0.5% and 1.4%, weighted average = 0.8% (PGSI)**

Detailed examination of 32 prevalence studies (1997-2007)

North Europe + UK	0.5%-1.5%
North America	0.7%-2.7%
Australia+New Zealand	0.7%-2.1%

Aims of the Survey carried out in Italy

- Estimate the *prevalence* of problem gambling of a representative sample of the Italian population of gamblers
- Identify the distinctive characteristics of problem gamblers
- Identify the most significant protection and risk factors for problem gambling

Method of Survey

2000 persons representative of the population of Italian adult gamblers

Questionnaire: about 360 self-report items, guided initially by the interviewer.

Interviews realized by GFK Eurisko between June 2008 (pilot study) and July 2008 (extensive study).

Method of Survey

Areas investigated by the questionnaire

- a. Socio-demographic variables**
- b. Economic habits**
- c. Personal and familial habits regarding gambling**
- d. Characteristics of the games**
- e. Perception of advertising and informative material on games, information about games**
- f. Problem gambling behavior**
- g. Personal protection and risk factors**

Screening of Problem Gambling

Two different instruments have been used to assess the prevalence of problem gambling:

South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS)

Has been developed on the basis of psychiatric criteria (DSM-IV) and is the instrument used in most studies to assess the prevalence of problem gambling.

Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI)

Has not been developed on the basis of psychiatric criteria: it focuses more on the consequences and damage caused by problem gambling and less on the related psychological motivations. It is a more recent instrument, useful when used in combination with more traditional instruments.

How many "Problem" Gamblers are there ?

Estimates in relation to the total population of 46,506,000 Italian adults (reliability of the estimate: 99.37%)

1.27%

This percentage is comparable with those of the main prevalence studies

Who are "Problem" Gamblers?

Problem gamblers:

are "omnivorous":

they play more games than other gamblers

they are not interested in or participate in a single game

compared with non problem gamblers, they prefer:

Horse betting/games

Card games

Slot machines/ Video lotteries

Casino

Bingo

Who are "Problem" Gamblers ?

Problem gamblers:

generally dedicate more time to gambling

gamble more frequently and spend more money on gambling

usually, started to gamble at an earlier age

more often, have or have had at least one **parent with gambling problems**

Who are "Problem" Gamblers ?

Problem gamblers:

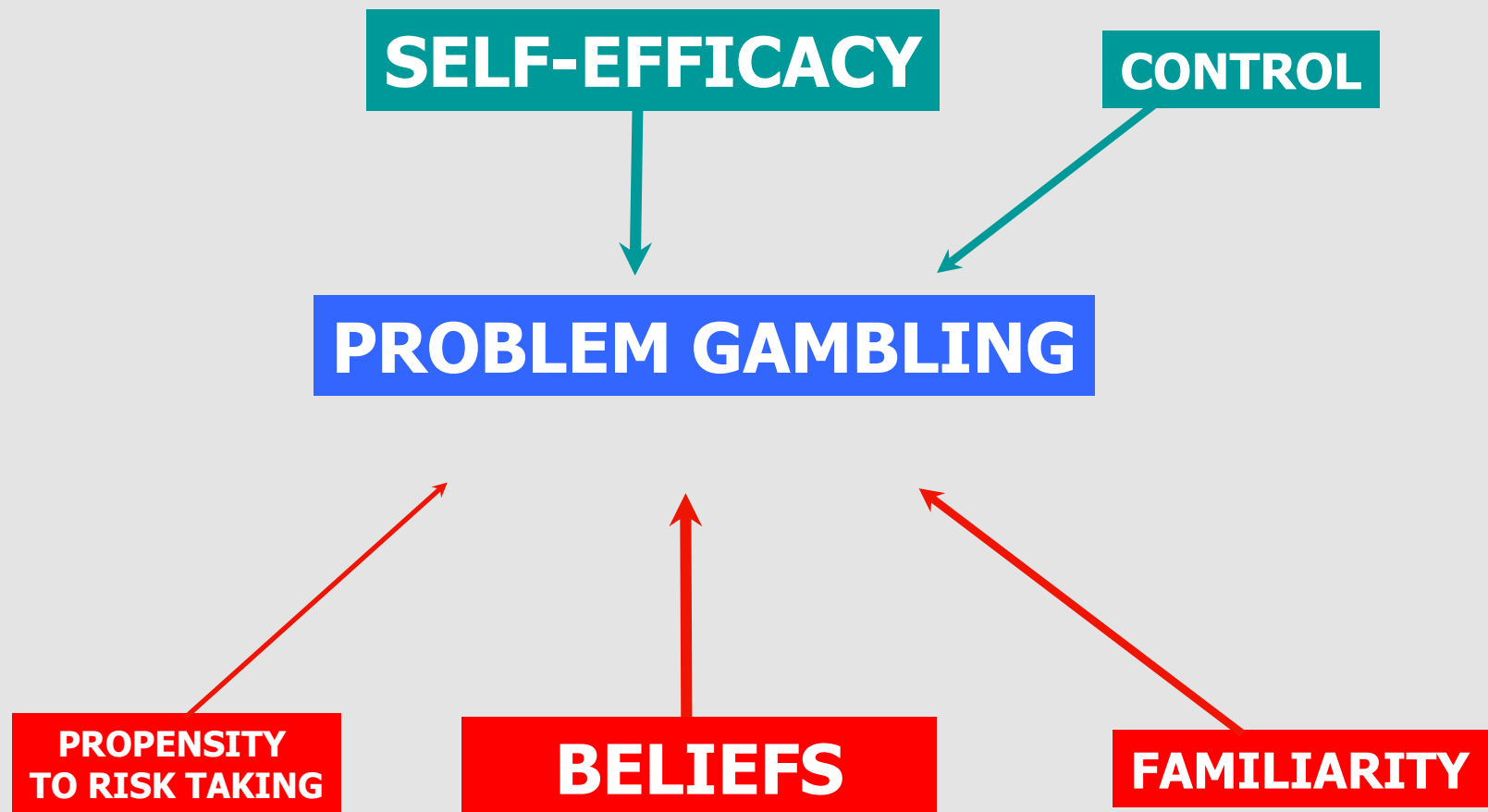
are more frequently **male** and separated

have **more difficulty in managing money**, not only in activities related to gambling

are exposed to a higher risk of **over-indebtedness**

tend to experience a psychological state of **dissatisfaction** and of psychological distress

PROTECTION FACTORS



RISK FACTORS

Who are "Problem" Gamblers ?

The most important factors in determining problem gambling are of **personal** nature:

Impaired self-regulation

Fallacious beliefs regarding the odds of winning, own control of the wager, etc.

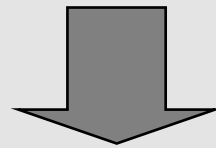
Impulsiveness, low level self-control

Propensity to take risks, underestimation of risks

Final conclusions

What can be done ?

**Educating to responsible gambling, acting on communication in order to increase self-efficacy
(the strongest factor of protection)**

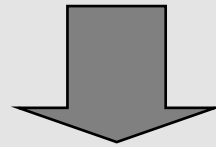


Preparing a guideline of actions that gamblers must be able to carry out in order to gamble in a responsible manner (e.g. stopping when they have lost a pre-established amount of money, maintaining their intention not to gamble, etc.)

Final Conclusions

What can be done ?

Educating to responsible gambling, providing information to reduce fallacious beliefs (the highest factor of risk**)**

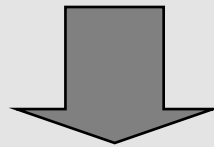


Providing the gambler with objective information (at the sales point, on informative materials on games) regarding the odds of winning, the intrinsic leisure nature of gambling, the real risky consequences of gambling

Final conclusions

What can be done ?

Educating to responsible gambling, through building clear information and advertising messages



Avoid messages that may be misunderstood by problem gamblers (e.g. "you have to be clever to win")

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