



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE

Hooked on Fruits, Clovers and Aces – Female Problem Gambling in Close-Up

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1. Introduction

- Historically gambling has been seen as a masculine activity
- Pathological gambling has been represented as a male-dominated illness
- Women have gambled less and different games than men because of social, cultural and economic reasons
- The feminization of gambling: more women gamble in different gambling venues; gambling has become a socially acceptable activity for women
- New games, new challenges? Women have expanded their interest in new games; different forms of gambling are marketed for women
- Female problem gambling: clinical evidence of female problem gamblers (at least) since the study of Edmund Bergler (1958)



- How female problem gambling can be defined? What are the key issues within female problem gamblers?
- Data: Finnish surveys (ESPAD 2007, Youth Gambling 2006), eCounselling (A-Clinic Foundation) and Peluuri datas
- Content of the presentation:
 4. Introduction
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2. Female Problem Gambling

- Women start gambling at a later age than men, they progress more rapidly into problem gambling than men ("telescoping") and they gamble to escape problems, emotional stress, etc.
- Gambling behaviour: scope, frequency, the amount of money wagered, the amount of leisure time spent on gambling (Hraba & Lee 1996)
- Predictors of problem gambling: childhood exposure to gambling, family and/or personal histories of trauma and abuse, chaotic and abusive or frequent marriages, residential moves, etc.
- Age, gender and problem gambling: socialization around care-giving, poverty, physical health problems, lack of leisure activities, etc.



- Reasons and motivations: relief from stress, a break from reality, a break from responsibilities or work, an escape from personal pressures; boredom, loneliness, isolation, etc.
- Comorbidity: depression, anxiety, social anxiety, personality disorders, other disorders (anorexia/bulimia, overeating, compulsive shopping), etc.
- Problem gambling: gambling more money than intended, chasing losses, feeling guilty, experiencing criticism, arguing over money, 'borrowing' money, etc.
- Family life, social networks and working life



3. Girls and Risks

- Are boys more involved in gambling than girls? 74% of the Finnish boys (9th grade) and 24% of the Finnish girls (9th grade) had played on slot machines at least once a month (n= 4988) (ESPAD 2007)
- Do girls gamble different games than boys? 14% of the Finnish boys and 2% of the Finnish girls had played sometimes net poker with money (ESPAD 2007)
- Girls' increasing involvement in gambling "reflects the rapidly disappearing moral-social-economic constraints" against their participation (Durand 2004)
- Problem gambling: 6% of the Finnish girls of 12 to 17 years old scored 5+ SOGS-RA points (n= 319) (Youth gambling survey 2006)



- Probable pathological gambling: 26% of the Finnish girls and 74% of the Finnish boys (n= 68) scored 5+ SOGS-RA points (Youth gambling survey 2006)
- Gambling and problem gambling correlate with other risky behaviours (Stinchfield 2004)
- Finnish girls (n =181), who played on slot machines at least once a week, drank more alcohol than girls who gambled less; 38% got drunk at least three times, whereas 70% got drunk at least once during the last 30 days (ESPAD 2007)
- More than a fifth of the Finnish girls, who played on slot machines at least once a week, had tried cannabis and used sedatives or sleeping medicine as drugs (ESPAD 2007)



4. Women and All In

- eCounselling (A-Clinic Foundation): 41 messages sent by women (n= 574)
- Age: the youngest women are under 20 years old, the oldest women are over 60 years old
- Occupation: employees, students, unemployed
- Games: slot machines, table games, online games, tote games, horse betting, etc.
- Frequency and money: at worst every day, thousands of Euros every day
- Gambling venues: super markets, kiosks, gas stations, arcades, Internet (online operators and casinos)



- Other problems/comorbidity/previous problems: health, alcohol, drugs
- Debts: quick loans, unpaid rents, debt recovery procedure
- Lies and secrets: no denial; gambling problem or addiction
- Family members and relatives: fights over gambling and money, partner's anxiety, snapping at one's child
- Need for help: women are afraid of groups and institutional care



5. Elderly Females and Slot Machines

- Many older women with gambling problems experience significant financial hardship and emotional distress (McKay 2005)
- The Peluuri data (2004–2008, n=100): most of the Finnish women over 65 years old played on slot machines
- Those, who gambled the most, gambled several times a week
- Most of the elderly women financed their gambling with their retirement allowance, a loan or by using other ways (e.g. heritage)
- They experienced financial difficulties due to gambling



- In addition, they suffered from anxiety and depression, shame, guilt and stress
- Some of the elderly women suffered from loneliness, mental health problems, alcoholism and debts besides gambling problems
- Elderly women who play on slot machines have become clients of the debt consultation service in Finland (Rantala & Tarkkala 2009)



6. Conclusion

- Finnish girls may gamble less than boys, but their risky behaviour is worth following up
- Finnish young women also have problems with and due to gambling; women may have previous problems that lead to problem gambling
- Many Finnish elderly women experience financial difficulties because of their gambling problem, but some of them also suffer from loneliness and mental health problems
- A female problem gambler is not always an older woman who plays on slot machines



- Gender comparisons of reasons for problem gambling inform both treatment and prevention programs (Hraba & Lee 1996)
- It seems important to differentiate prevention/treatment efforts for women and men (Boughton & Falenchuk 2007)
- Prevention efforts and early interventions are critical with women gamblers (Boughton & Falenchuk 2007)
- Female problem gamblers might want to attend women-only groups (McKay 2005)
- Gender, age, condition, previous and/or current problems, family relations and social networks are the key issues within female problem gamblers

