

Romanian Pathological Gambler's Psychology- A Review

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The paper entitled "Psychological profile of the Romanian pathological gambler" aims to achieve the first systematic and comprehensive study regarding the psychological profile of the Romanian pathological gambler, from both a theoretical and a scientific perspective.

In the introduction, I presented the main aspects of a pathological gambling behavior: the definition, the main risk factors according to international studies, the key difference between pathological gambling and social gambling and the co-morbid disorders.

The study was conducted in Bucharest on a sample of 119 subjects diagnosed with pathological gambling who requested counseling for gambling addiction during the Responsible Gambling Project in Romania. This project promotes a responsible behaviour for the slot gamblers in order to fully benefit of this means of entertainment and fun and provides intervention and counselling. The subjects were aged between 17 and 61, with an average of 29.86 years old; 94.11% were men and 5.89% were women; also 79.83% of them were married or in a partnership, while 20.17% were single.

In order to design the psychological profile of the Romanian pathological gambler, I used a semi-structured interview; the South Oaks South Oaks Gambling Screen-SOGS Lesieur and Blume [1]; the Structured Clinical Interview for Axis II disorders in the DSM-IV-TR-SCID II First, Gibbon, Spitzer, Williams and Benjamin [2]; the Hamilton Anxiety Scale [3]; the Beck Depression Inventory Beck, Steer and Carbin [4]; Gambling Related Cognitions Scale Raylu and Oei [5] and Inventory of Gambling Situations [6].

The results showed that Romanian pathological gambler is around 30 years old, has a medium level of education and usually comes from a rural area, with relationship issues, where the father used coercive education methods or was completely absent; he shows depressive disorder, in 76.46% of the cases, an average level of anxiety (64.71%), he has an 86.6% level of intensity of irrational cognitions and often finds himself in the situations of gambling. Also, a percentage of 44.5% of the respondents to the Structured Clinical Interview for Clinical Disorders on the Axis II of DSM-SCID II obtained scores which indicate the presence of a personality disorder: the most frequent personality disorder identified among participants was the narcissistic one (38.7%) followed by obsessive-compulsive disorder (16%) and borderline personality disorder (15.1%).

The Romanian pathological gambler often consumes alcohol (50%), smokes abusively (41.2%) and occasionally consumes prohibited substances (16.8%); his preferred forms of gambling are electronics gaming machines and roulette; he has an average to modest standard of living and his main motivation in gambling is to win a large amount of money in order to have a higher standard of living in the future.

Predisposing factors involve an average level of depression and anxiety; the existence of irrational cognitions about gambling; the existence of a personality disorder, most of the time a narcissistic one; the lack of social abilities and of assertiveness.

In Romania, there are the following risk factors of developing pathological gambling in teenagers: the parents' divorce/separation; the

death of a family member; the disruption of an emotional relationship; a severe psychical disorder of a family member; the presence of a serious accident in the person's history; sexual abuse of children and teenagers [7].

Pathological gambling is a complex phenomenon that requires a permanent diagnostic investigation followed by further interventions or psychotherapeutic counseling. It is therefore timely to encourage those who study gambling and its effects, as well as those in positions to support such research, to pursue empirical studies for further validation and understanding of this public health problem [8,9].

This paper is a guiding manual for therapists and counsellors treating clients with gambling addictions and it also supplies detailed information to help anyone understand gambling behaviours.

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