

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Gambling

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Abstract: *Introduction. Gambling is a well-known social issue, which seems to address immediate needs of a large portion of population in the entire world. Throughout various periods of curfews enacted by the medical authorities, the society experiences various challenges, a fact that puts a great amount of psychological pressure on gamblers and their families, that is rather difficult to be assessed.*

Aim. The presentation seeks to assess the effects of anti-pandemic social measures, especially those imposed after March 2020, on mental welfare and behaviour of bettors. By assessing the intentions and measures related to sport competitions in the near future, we tried to identify the overall impact on spending routines and lifestyle from any available data.

Materials and method. The paper found sources in the psychological and medical literature in order to identify spending routines of bettors and pathological behaviours, as expressed in DSM-5. The paper also discusses the factors introduced into society by coronavirus and the restrictions that accompanied the phenomenon of gambling. Sources from the international media are used to assess the intended measures upon gambling industry and the possible general impact on the mental health of the Romanian population.

Results. The changes of some social routines, imposed upon population in the context of coronavirus, are simply supposed to be accompanied by increases in depression and anxiety. The new economic and societal challenges bring with them the risk of increasing mental health disturbances among the gamblers.

Conclusion. Worldwide gambling spending has decreased during the pandemic. Various attempts of assessing whether this is a bad phenomenon or not should take into consideration the amount of money left in the economy by these measures, the unpaid taxes from a reduced activity in gambling, the psychiatric impact upon diagnosed gamblers. New lockdowns imposed on the population are possible in the near future, so better ways to deal with the impact upon gamblers are necessary.

Keywords: *bettors, Covid-19 pandemic, lockdown, curfews, gambling.*

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Introduction

Gambling has been known as a widespread social routine, especially among male population in urban areas of developing countries. Pathological gambling is believed to causes family conflicts in poor countries (Iftimie et al., 2014), and this state of poverty worsens during periods of economic downfall (Grigoras & Ciubara, 2021, Izzat et al., 2021). Gambling cause a great deal of trouble within families, but also inside the society as a whole (Luca et al., 2020; Luca et al., 2020). Assessment of disruptions in gambling routines is necessary, as social unrest and mental problems have mounted upon economic problems throughout lockdowns. Gambling can be viewed as a leisure activity as long as it doesn't push forward mental health issues (Luca et al., 2020; Silistraru et al., 2021). Novel societal factors have a great influence on the bettors' behaviour, motivation and decision making in time of Covid-19 pandemic (Auer & Griffiths, 2017, Baroiu et al., 2021).

Research Methodology

The paper uses the medical, economical and mathematical literature relating to gambling in order to find and describe traditional and new factors for pathological gambling, which have sprung into society after coronavirus outbreak and the social restrictions and curfews that followed them. Data from the domestic mass-media are also used to assess the future announced social resets and their possible impact on the spreading of pathological gambling behaviour within the Romanian gamblers (Broda & LaPlante, 2008).

Discussions

Wagering on sports has long been recognised as an important social issue. An economical crisis increases some specific types of gambling. Casino gaming has prevailed over sports betting, as some of the major sporting events have been put off. Great amounts of money were usually put into bets on European Football Championships and Olympic Games, and these expected sums have only partially directed into casino gambling, as many gamblers simply prefer sport bets. Media reported many scams related to sport bets. For example, various channels on social media pretend to possess special tips about some noteless rigged matches, which would ensure great sums provided someone is eager to bet great sums on them. However, for this piece on information, gamblers are asked to pay some small amounts

of money. Although this type of offer is illogical, many beginners, in search for easy money, pay such sums and get to understand the hoax only after the supposed rigged match proves to end otherwise than the promise (Williams & Siegel, 2008; Pandele et al., 2021). Another phenomenon is the migration to online betting and the dangers of compulsive pathological gambling on a new field, where lack of experience can push the newcomers to some great loss. If such common facts are added to a rising unemployment rate during the pandemic, we can easily understand a certain pressure on personal finances and a more difficult experience of paying current expenses in due time, so social functioning was affected in some way or another, as reflected by Gambling Severity Index scale. Some researchers tried to find relations between lower wages and pathological gaming, but in Romania such studies were not intended. Government financial incentives and rumours about a minimal universal basic income are good news for all actors in this field. As online gambling is on an ascending trend for at least two decades, classical brick-and-mortar gambling found itself restrained during this period. As it might sound like a positive fact for these type of old-fashioned gamblers, mainly lottery gamblers, the change in social routines and the decrease in this type of socializing might have pushed them to some mild forms of depressive disorders (Radulescu et al., 2021). This can be view in the light of the exponential increase in betting stores in Romanian towns in the last decade (Ladouceur & Lachance, 2008).

Few data is available in addressing specialised help in overcoming these particular types of addictions. As it is a generally recognised that gamblers are reluctant to spend money for psychological help and psychotherapies which are intended exactly to help them to get a financial equilibrium, studies in the past have shown that most of such gamblers are content with these psychotherapies and treatment suppliers. Data for the extent of this help for pathological gamblers are rather only a project, as they generally reach a better degree of controlling the pathological gambling (Caronni & Sciumè, 2017).

Research Results

Despite the fact that gambling has modified the daily activities of adult males in more than three quarters of world states, a thorough assessment for the impact in Romanian society hasn't been done before 2020. Coronavirus outbreak has dramatically changed the main operations in betting, such as forced closing of physical locations or postponing of major sport events. Although mass media has reported decreases in activities of bet

houses, only small studies have been conducted in this field in Romania (Auer & Griffiths, 2016).

Conclusion

Pathological gambling is recognised as an important social activity, a form of leisure and a great source of income for governments. As great sums are also lost in this huge zero-win business, economists, psychologists and other professionals could do some research in this field. If one bears in mind that huge sums of money get out of the country for a minimal positive impact on the ordinary citizens and big impact on many families, this phenomenon could also draw the interest of some Romanian intelligence services, as gambling is historically well-known as a major way of money laundering. Except for some small-scale studies, none of the above expected studies were published. We hope the future will bring some good news.

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