ABSTRACT

Gambling is still seen as a socializing leisure activity. Social acceptance, entertainment and apparently easy money earning are the reasons claimed by older people to be spending more and more time inside casinos. Late-life gambling is generally linked with isolation: unresolved losses and mismanagement of personal problems were found to be most significant reasons for gambling at older ages.

Surveys report that older adult recreational gamblers tend to present previous alcohol addiction and better health than the older nongamblers. However, other studies suggest that gamblers at the age of 60 and older present higher odds of having health issues, such as diabetes and hypertension, among several others. Also, it is suggested that senior gamblers have lower probabilities of having pathological gambling, when compared to younger gamblers.

The problem of gambling cannot yet be generalized, once researchers can’t find a connection on how different social backgrounds affect gambling patterns. Withal, disadvantaged populations are known to present a larger amount of addiction disorders’ cases, in consideration of addictions usually starting as an escape from the surrounding reality.

Studies reinforce the fact that training towards gambling and its risks is not properly received, which comes to an extended amount of unmanaged gambling. Gambling prevention and community health campaigns shall raise awareness about how the social isolation of the senior population is an important public health problem. Along with isolation combat, it is important to create social warning movements in order to allow people conscious decisions towards gambling.

METHODOLOGY

1) This research was started by looking at different abstracts and by studying several surveys about the thematic of senior gambling.
2) After we were more informed about this subject, we tried to think of ways to get elders to give us the information we needed. We had already an online test made, so we decided to use it as a way of collecting more answers.
3) We proceeded to spread that questionnaire around online social media and contacted several senior universities through e-mail and phone calls.
4) Noticing that we weren’t getting any response concerning online means, we decided to print out our questionnaires and we took two similar tests: the first one at a local park and the second one at a high class senior residence. We proceeded the same way in both tests: we approached random senior people and asked if they were willing to contribute to our study (the only difference between the two questionnaires were the amount and the organization of the questions). Although people were given the chance to answer the questionnaire by themselves, the great majority preferred to have it vocally asked by one of us.
5) Afterwards, we proceeded to analyze our results and draw our conclusions.

RESULTS

The sample was composed by 36 individuals, where 12 were males. The first questionnaire was applied to 19 people at a local park and the second one was applied to 17 people at the senior residence. The age average was 76 (wherein the younger person was 60 and the oldest one was 96) and results point to an average of 21€ per month spent on gambling (where 6 didn’t reveal the amount monthly spent).

61% of the interviewed admitted to gamble in a monthly basis—in the first test, at the park, results pointed to approximately 63%; in the second test, at the senior residence, results point to 59%. Portuguese average of adult gamblers (older than 18 years old) is about 52%.

Contrary to expectations, married people tend gamble more than widowed—7 widowed admitted to gamble often, while 9 married state the same. 22.7% of the ones who declared to usually gamble were incoherent over the course of the interview.

DISCUSSION

These high levels of gambling incidence among older people is usually due to the fact that most of them are at a fragile time of their lives. Whether it is because the typical feeling of loneliness at that stage of life or just because of the supposedly easy money earning, people end up looking for comfort in places where gambling is a constant, starting going down this dangerous path.

However, we verified that people who were married tend to gamble more than the widowed—this might reflect the fact that people feel more secure to gamble with one another than alone because of the social shame they feel when betting a lot more than they should. Widowed people might also feel resilient about leaving their house, while married people go out together. Having said that, we couldn’t find any other valid reason for this phenomenon.

One of the other main reasons is the fact that most of them don’t feel like they are, in fact, gambling. Most of them don’t think of Euromillions as a gambling game. However, many of the interviewed assume doing it. Others buy scratchers almost in a weekly basis.

Whether it’s because of the social pressure or their education, people do, in fact, feel guilty for doing this. The numbers didn’t make sense when putting the tests together—people who admitted to gamble often, when asked how much they had spent the last month on it, said amounts too low according to the others answers given about the subject.

Surveys consulted:

Pathways to Late-Life Problematic Gambling in Seniors: A Grounded Theory Approach, 2013 (Connie Tira, Alan Conrad Jackson, Jane Elizabeth Tomney)

Cultural and age influences on gambling and problem gambling, 2015 (Mehryeh Subramaniam, Edimansyah Abdin, Shazana Shahwan, Janhavi Ajit Tavares, Jon Grant)

Gambling disorder in older adults: A cross-cultural perspective, 2015 (Gustavo Costa Medeiros, Erik Leppek, Ana Yaezi, Mirella Mariani, Hermano Tavares, Jon Grant)

METHODOLOGY

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