

Virtual Casino

More than gambling

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July, 2005 Malmö, Sweden

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March, 2005

A B S T R A C T

On-line gambling is not an isolated event. The multitasking operative systems allow gambling events to be embedded into more standard everyday computer activities.

Internet is a hybrid system conformed by diverse organisms, interconnected in constant change and adaptation, creating correlation and intermittent interaction with multiple applications, and even the reception of unrequested stimuli.

Gambling in Virtual Casino Communities offers a world of entertainment and amusement; the gambling dynamics contain psychological variables not seen in previous gambling environments and yields novel structural advantages to the gambler, who is also exposed to innovative seductive tactics. These make On-line Gambling more attractive but at the same time more dangerous. Certain individuals with specific personality characteristics can develop pathologies, while for others, it can mediate preexistent pathologies.

On-line gambling is a new form of an old pathology but implies different variables derivates from the interaction between the human, the new technologies and the cyberspace where the gambling takes place

The diagnosing of On-line gambling addiction thus brings additional challenges and forces us to understand a new generation of gamblers.

Keywords: Virtual casinos, Virtual Casino Communities, On-line Gambling, On-line Gambling Addiction, psychological variables, seductive tactics.

Structural advantages

- Unlimited access to the games, both in time and space
- Absence of agents of external control
- Anonymity and privacy
- Large pots and bids
- Use of external resources, e.g. software card counters, browsers capable of searching casinos where the probability to win is high
- Easy access to different outlets, increase the number of opportunities to gamble
- Free information
- Free instruction and gaming abilities through applications
- Memorization of game sequences
- Personalized game atmospheres
- Cheating by communicating in private with other players, e.g. via chat, or running several programs in parallel
- Reception of automatic tips when the players are losing.
- Possibilities to erase and change bets

Psychological variables involved in On-line Gambling:

- The disinhibition effect derived from the anonymity and the lack of social, demographic, ethnographic norms and rules, and other restrictions following gender, status and age.
- The possibility to socialize using different personalities.
- Textual communication, post symbolic, iconographical, which characterizes the digital argot of the Internet medium.
- The possibility to avoid intimidation from other players
- The invisibility that reduces the group tension and the game pressure, and eliminates preconceptions of physical aspects, such as age, ethnicity, gender or disability, and let the players experience more control.
- Solitary gambling without time constraints allows the gambler to develop gambling skills.
- Socialization with other gamblers at a more personal level through chats, mails, forums.
- The possibility to personalize the game atmosphere – e.g. by using screen savers, themes, and welcome greetings, music and other sound effects, such as other players' voices, etc, -- contributes to the formation of a feeling of intimacy and comfort.
- The association of graphic and auditory stimuli – e.g. icons, interfaces, sounds of the computer soft wares, such as the Messenger alert, the modem set-up sound -- with the experience of winning.
- The opportunity to play against to an enigmatic opponent adds a mystery element to the game that satisfies the human curiosity.

Seductive tactics used by Virtual Casinos:

- Installation of cookies and ad-ware, those settle quietly in the computer and allow reception of massive advertising without request (spam).
- Association to separate money-managing companies increases the gambler's trust
- Rapid rewards, e.g. quick deposit of price money, condition the gambler behavior.
- Offers of soft wares that make the games more realistic, e.g by increasing the image and sound quality and options to play the game in first or third person
- Offering tactics, and chats with famous gamers.
- Free games, surprises, and bonuses, e.g. for inviting friends.
- The employment of icons and symbols that unconsciously encourage emotions that the players will associate themselves with accepted behaviors.

What is On-line Gambling Addiction?

On-line gambling disorder is a new form of an old pathology but implies different variables derivates from the interaction between the human, the new technologies and the cyberspace where the gambling takes place.

Personality factors that may increase the vulnerability to On-line Gambling Addiction

Personality characteristics

Individuals with handicaps problems

Strong attraction to fantasy

Shyness behavior

Poor self esteem

Easy to be influenced

Loneliness

Young age

Obsessive personality

Poor management of frustration

Passive aggressive personality

Individual that have been rejected from casinos off-line, e.g. due to genus, age.

Comorbidity. Personality disorders

Problems with impulse –control

Abuse of substances

Border line personality

Compulsive obsessive traits

Social phobias

Bipolar disorders

Hyperactivity disorder

Risks of on-line gambling

- Perception of the reality and stimulation of dissociative reactions.
The absence of physical contact with other people during gambling, and the manipulation of virtual objects.
- Alter perception of the space of time.
Our subjective sense of time is intimately related to proportions of physical changes that we observe. The Internet is in constant transformation – e.g. virtual communities appear and disappear.
- Weakened notion of the size of losses.
Virtual money transfers.
- Formation of fantasies, irrational beliefs about the game and ongoing excessive gambling.
The cascades of information at low cost; the possibility to communicate with other players; and the high exposure to advertisement.
- Abstinence symptoms.
For the anxiety to play new games, gambling in diverse sites, know new people, gambling versus batters or worst gamblers.
- Tolerance symptoms
Big bet and pots. Internet is an open space. There will always be new virtual casinos communities to explore.
- Emotional states
Quick changes; establishing and loosing contacts; experiencing truths and lies, etc.
- Prevalence symptoms.
The positive perception of Internet as a medium through which it is possible to satisfy different needs and obtain status.
- Accelerate dysfunctional behavior.
Several on-line rewards, large number of gambling outlets and stimuli associations.
- Options to parallel lives and seeking refuge in the cyberspace.
The anonymity, the invisibility and the possibility to adopt different on-line roles.
- Depersonalization
Development of an online identity that starts taking over the player's identity offline.
- Lie and hide dysfunctional gambling.

It is easy because the access to the gambling is through the computer in privacy.

- Substitution of relationships off-line
The possibly to socialize in the cyberspace, to identify with people having the same interests and the possibility to talk secrets.

A priori diagnostics of on-line gambling addiction

To consider:

1. On-line gambling does not exclude consumption of substances.
2. Determinate the level of decrement of the social, familiar, health, economic and quality of life are affected for on-line gambling.
3. Internet gamblers may be more likely to have serious gambling problems.
4. Chat applications are considered one of the most addictive on the Internet, which make social gamblers more vulnerable than in traditional environments.
5. On-line gambling can take place in workplaces, homes, and public areas with many outlets
6. Constant influences of marketing and on-line friends can maintain dysfunctional behaviors.
7. On-line gambling is not an isolated event from everyday life.
8. It cannot be expected that the gambler stops using Internet.
9. The members of the “net-generation”, which have grown up with the computer, and members of previous generations react differently to digital media
10. The possibility to substitute social off-line relationships with on-line relationships.
11. The feedback that the gambler receives from software can be seen as a form of operation conditioning to further gambling.

To detect and observe:

The time when gambling problems started

The environment in which the gambler began playing

The experience level of the gambler.

Quantity of time and frequency of occasions spent gambling on-line

The use of other Internet-entertainment applications.

Physical symptoms derived from computer manipulations, e.g dry eyes, back- and headache and tendonitis.

Which primary and secondary needs that are satisfied trough the gambling?

Which stimuli are important for the player, e.g. sound, 3D-imagines, environment?

The use of different identities.

Display of aggressive on-line behaviors

Socialization with other players

Environmental stress factors

Perception of the off-line world

Management of frustration and aggression

CONCLUSION

On-line gambling addiction is not a new pathology but involves different variables derived from the interaction between the human, the new technologies and the cyberspace where the gambling takes place.

Problem and pathological players with Internet gambling experience have more serious levels of problematic gambling behavior.

The level of the On-line Gambling addiction should be diagnosed in relation to the degree of negative consequences for the gambler.

It is important to learn how the gambler perceives the different aspects of the Internet medium in relation to possibilities to win money; socialize; escape from problems and discharge tension and frustration.

For this reason, we should closely observe the use computer habits, especially of young people belonging to the Net-Generation. They has grown up together with the computer, internet, video games and toys that simulate be alive, grow and die. Members of this generation have easily accepted Internet as a medium for socialization, information access, entertainment and work; they are accustomed to the constant reception of stimuli and have learned to handle diverse software and mediums at the same time and have enough flexibility to play fantasy multiplayer games; to interact in virtual communities; to play easily with different identities. Since they are naturalized citizens in the digital culture they are also accustomed to a special digital language for communications with others as emoticons, abbreviations, syllogisms, etc, that often adults don't understand.

Actually we don't have enough studies about the consequences that the quick changes and the interaction with the technology provokes in the human, but it is necessary to formulate and reformulate formulas to cross **the Hanging Bridge** in this period of adaptation. Considering that we can be judging the present time in an incorrect way because we appreciate it through a substantially old logic, and what is abnormal today can become normal tomorrow.