

Age in Pathological Gambling: Correlations with Personality and Psychiatric Comorbidity

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Aims: over the past few years Gambling has significantly increased in Italy, being considered as an acceptable form of entertainment and leisure activity. Our aim is to study personality traits and the psychiatric comorbidity of gamblers in relation to the different age and the onset of gambling.

Methods: 71 patients affected by Pathological Gambling (PG), who accessed in our service (A. Gemelli Hospital, Rome- Italy), underwent the following assessment tests:

- *Addiction Severity Index (ASI)*;
- *Temperament and Character Inventory-Revised (TCI-R)* to study personality traits;
- *MINI-International Neuropsychiatric Interview* for psychiatric comorbidity.

Results: we found that younger gamblers have higher TCI-R scores in the subscales NS1 (exploratory excitability)($p < 0,001$) and NS3 (extravagance)($p = 0,024$) and lower scores in HA2 (fear of uncertainty) and ST3 (spiritual acceptance)($p = 0,005$). An earlier age of onset of PG correlates with higher scores in NS1 ($p = 0,003$), NS3 ($p = 0,047$), Novelty Seeking ($p = 0,016$) and lower HA2 ($p = 0,034$). Patients with gambling onset before age 20 have more probabilities of playing multiple kinds of games ($p = 0,004$), while lower probabilities of playing passive games ($p = 0,026$); furthermore they exhibit antisocial personality disorder ($p = 0,033$) and addiction familiarity ($p = 0,006$). Late-onset gamblers (age > 45 years) prefer passive games ($p = 0,007$) and usually don't play online games ($p = 0,02$).

Conclusions: gamblers are a heterogeneous population with regard to personality traits, psychiatric comorbidity, familiarity and type of games played. Paying attention to the gamblers' age and the age of onset of PG could be useful to a greater understanding of the individual differences of patients, and to a deeper knowledge of their disorder.