

# Materialist Values, Loneliness and Gambling Problems: A Socioeconomic Approach

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# About the research project

## ”Gambling in the Digital Age“

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- Project aims:
  1. the role of the internet in gambling
  2. the fusion between gambling and digital gaming
  3. the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gambling and gaming
- Longitudinal survey (panel) data
  - (NT<sup>1</sup> = 1530; **NT<sup>2</sup> = 1200**; NT<sup>3</sup> = 1095; NT<sup>4</sup> = ?)
- PI: Prof. Atte Oksanen
- Researchers: Iina Savolainen (PhD), Eerik Mantere (MSocSc), & Ilkka Vuorinen (MSocSc)
- Tampere University Faculty of Social Sciences, Unit of Social Research (Social Psychology)
- Part of the **Emerging Technologies Lab**
- Funded by The Finnish Foundation for Alcohol Studies (2021– )

# Background

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- People with lower SES are more vulnerable to gambling problems (e.g., Latvala et al., 2021; Raybould et al., 2021; van der Maas, 2016)
- Humans have an innate need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995)
  - How to belong in a materialistic society?
- *Status syndrome*: ” the psychological experience of inequality – how much control you have over your life and the opportunities you have for full social participation – has a profound effect on your health” (Marmot, 2004)
- Gambling as justice-seeking behavior of the relatively deprived, a potentially quick way to improve one’s situation? (Callan et al., 2008)

# Background

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- Compared to gamblers with no gambling problems, those seeking treatment for gambling problems were more materialistic, pursuing happiness through material possessions (Eyzop et al., 2019)
- Materialism strongly associated with a self-concept that is overly focused on financial success, which in turn predicts gambling problem severity (Tabri et al., 2017)
- Among adolescents and young adults, materialism was positively associated with gambling problems in a clinical sample, yet the association was negative in a community sample (Estévez et al., 2021)

# Background

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- Bidirectional relationship between materialism and loneliness (yet loneliness contributes more to materialism) (Pieters, 2013)
  - “Material substitutes and compensations are often readily available, immediately rewarding, and less anxiety provoking than attempts to reconnect.”
- Loneliness is a possible risk factor for gambling problems (Sirola et al., 2019; Edgren et al., 2016; Botterill et a., 2016)

# Research question(s)

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- How are materialistic values and loneliness related to gambling problem severity in groups of different educational backgrounds?
- Possible interaction between materialism and loneliness?

# Measures

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- Problem gambling severity index (PGSI):
  - 9 items, 4-point scale: 0 (*never*) – 3 (*almost always*)
  - A time period of the last 6 months (before the measurement)
  - e.g., "Have you bet more than you could really afford to lose?"
- Material values scale:
  - 9 items, 7-point scale: 1 (*strongly disagree*) – 7 (*strongly agree*)
  - e.g., "The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life"; "I like a lot of luxury in my life"; "I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things"
- UCLA loneliness scale:
  - 3 items, 3-point scale: 0 (*hardly ever*) – 2 (*often*)
  - e.g., "How often do you feel isolated from others?"

## Controls

### (binary items):

Partnered (marital status):

- "Married" or "in cohabitation"

Work situation:

- Unemployed

Low income:

- Under 2000€/mo (gross)

Tertiary education:

- Bachelor's degree or higher

# Descriptives

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<i>Continuous</i>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b><math>\omega</math></b>
Gambling problems	1.17	0-27	3.15	0.93
Materialism	19.16	0-54	10.34	0.86
Loneliness	1.74	0-6	1.70	0.85
Age	48.85	18-76	16.11	

<i>Categorical</i>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Gender (M:1)	609	49.25
Partnered	720	60.00
Unemployed	90	7.50
Low income	448	37.33
Tertiary education	478	39.83



# Gambling problems by education

<b>PGSI scoring</b>	<b>Elementary and secondary education</b>	<b>Tertiary education</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>0</b> (no risk)	511 (70.8 %)	380 (79.5 %)	891 (74.3 %)
<b>1–4</b> (low risk)	133 (18.4 %)	72 (15.1 %)	205 (17.1 %)
<b>5–7</b> (moderate risk)	34 (4.7 %)	16 (3.4 %)	50 (4.2 %)
<b>8 or more</b> (problem gambling)	44 (6.1 %)	10 (2.1 %)	54 (4.5 %)
<b>Total</b>	722 (100 %)	478 (100 %)	1200 (100 %)

# Correlations

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	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Gambling problems	1							
2. Materialism	0.20***	1						
3. Loneliness	0.22***	0.24***	1					
4. Age	-0.16***	-0.40***	-0.22***	1				
5. Gender	0.11***	0.03	-0.08**	-0.03	1			
6. Partnered	-0.08**	-0.01	-0.22***	0.10***	0.07**	1		
7. Unemployed	0.05	0.09**	0.18***	-0.07**	0.02	-0.12***	1	
8. Low income	0.03	0.08**	0.24***	-0.15***	-0.14***	-0.19***	0.34***	1

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

# Findings from T<sup>2</sup> data

Dependent variable: PGSI score (gambling problems)

	Elementary and secondary education			Tertiary education		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$
Unemployed	.91	.47	.07	-.62	.54	-.06
Low income	.08	.28	.01	-.25	.28	-.04
Partnered	-.03	.27	-.00	<b>-.54*</b>	.23	-.11
Gender (M:1)	<b>.67***</b>	.01	.09	.32	.22	.07
Age	<b>-.04***</b>	.49	-.19	<b>-.00**</b>	.01	-.02

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

R<sup>2</sup>: 0.05

R<sup>2</sup>: 0.01

# Findings from T<sup>2</sup> data

**Dependent variable: PGSI score** (gambling problems); added materialism and loneliness

	Elementary and secondary education			Tertiary education		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$
Materialism	<b>.04**</b>	.01	.13	.02	.01	.09
Loneliness	<b>.33***</b>	.08	.16	<b>.21**</b>	.07	.15
Unemployed	.60	.46	.05	-.86	.54	-.08
Low income	-.01	.28	-.00	-.30	.27	-.05
Partnered	.09	.27	.01	-.36	.23	-.07
Gender (M:1)	<b>.79**</b>	.26	.11	.37	.22	.08
Age	<b>-.02*</b>	.01	-.09	.01	.01	.03

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$       R<sup>2</sup>: 0.09

R<sup>2</sup>: 0.03

# Conclusions and next steps

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- Materialism is associated with gambling problem severity among people with elementary and secondary, but not tertiary education
- Loneliness is associated with gambling problem severity, stronger association among people with elementary and secondary education
- No significant interactions were found
- Other confounding factors (such as basic psychological needs)
- T<sup>4</sup> incoming by the end of this year -> longitudinal design

# References

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