INTRODUCTION

- Few studies have explored associations between online gambling policies and gambling problems.
- Two hypotheses:
  - A public monopoly operator will allow more efficient protection of consumers against gambling harm.
  - A licensing system could be beneficial despite increased availability as it would enable increased allocation of funding for responsible gambling measures.
- In 2010, France enacted legislation to regulate supply and consumption of online gambling to protect citizens from gambling-related harm.

Objective

- This study aims to assess differences in gambling patterns and gambling-related harm between online gamblers who use licensed versus unlicensed sites.

METHODS

Online Gambling Survey
- 2012 survey of Internet users conducted by French government research agencies (N = 20,107).

Measures
- Self-administered online survey on gambling practices.
- Questions pertaining to game-play patterns, regulatory status of gambling activities, gambling-related problems, and demographic characteristics.
- Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI)2.

Participants
- Subset of 3,860 online gamblers.
- 18-75 years of age.

Analyses
- Pairwise logistic regressions.
  - Legal status of gambling sites, demographic variables, gambling types.
  - Multivariate logistic regression.
- Gambling patterns, legal status of sites.

RESULTS

Problem Gambling Participation on Licensed vs. Unlicensed Sites

- Problem gambling on licensed sites was associated with more intense gambling patterns and more gambling-related problems compared to licensed sites (OR = 0.67, p = 0.001).

Patterns of Gamblers Who Participated in Regulated Activities by Regulatory Status of Sites (N = 3,096)

- **Gambling Involvement**
  - Frequent gambling (a weekly):
    - Licensed: 35.5, 45.9
    - Unlicensed: 57.6, 61.4
  - Important spending (≥ $500/ past year):
    - Licensed: 23.2, 25.5
    - Unlicensed: 33.5, 27.8

- **Problem gambling (PGSI 3+)
- Problem gambling (PGSI 3+)
  - Licensed: 8.9
  - Unlicensed: 15.4

- **Online Gambling Participation by Regulatory Status of Sites**

- **Lifestyle behaviours**
- Sleep disturbances:
  - Licensed: 4.7
  - Unlicensed: 14.4

- **Unhealthy eating**
- Licensed: 5.5
  - Unlicensed: 14.5

- **Interpersonal problems**
- Licensed: 1.4
  - Unlicensed: 1.5

- **Increased concern about substance abuse**
- Alcohol:
  - Licensed: 2.4
  - Unlicensed: 3.5

- **Poker players are more likely to bet on unlicensed sites.**
- **Lottery and scratch cards are the most popular activities on licensed sites.**
- **Those who gamble on regulated activities on unlicensed sites are more likely to:**
  - Be female
  - Be younger
  - Be less educated
  - Be inactive in the labour market
  - Report difficult financial situation

- **Sports betting**
  - Engaging in sports betting on unlicensed sites is associated with problem gambling as well as increased sleep disturbances and unhealthy eating.

- **Horse betting**
  - Horse betting on unlicensed sites is associated with unhealthy eating.

CONCLUSION

- Results provide support for the theory that gambling activities carried out on state licensed sites are associated with less overall harm to gamblers.

Future directions

- Examining the potential benefits and pitfalls of expanding online licensing.
- Triangulation of data and combining multiple data sources.

References:

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