Problematic gambling in scratch-card, slot-machine, and casino gamblers

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Declaration of Financial Interests or Relationships

We have no financial interests or relationships to disclose regarding the subject matter of this presentation.

Study aim

- Gambling has become increasingly widespread and **diversified** in the types of games.
- As a result, with the diffusion of recreational or occasional gambling, the number of **problem gamblers** is increasing. Notwithstanding recreational gambling is often without negative sequences, a minority of gamblers experiences significant harm.
- The **Lie-Bet tool** (Johnson et al., 1997), a two-question survey, has proved to be fast and reliable to identify problem gamblers on general population. A meta-analysis (Dowling et al, 2019) on 20 brief screening instruments to identify problem and at-risk gambling showed that Lie/Bet displayed satisfactory diagnostic accuracy in general population and clinical contexts to detected problem gamblers (95% of them were accurately identified)
- The aim of the present study is to compare the profiles on **self-esteem, locus of control, gambling habits and the prevalence of problematic gambling** identified with the Lie-Bet in non-clinical samples: scratch-card gamblers, slot-machine gamblers, and casino gamblers.

Method

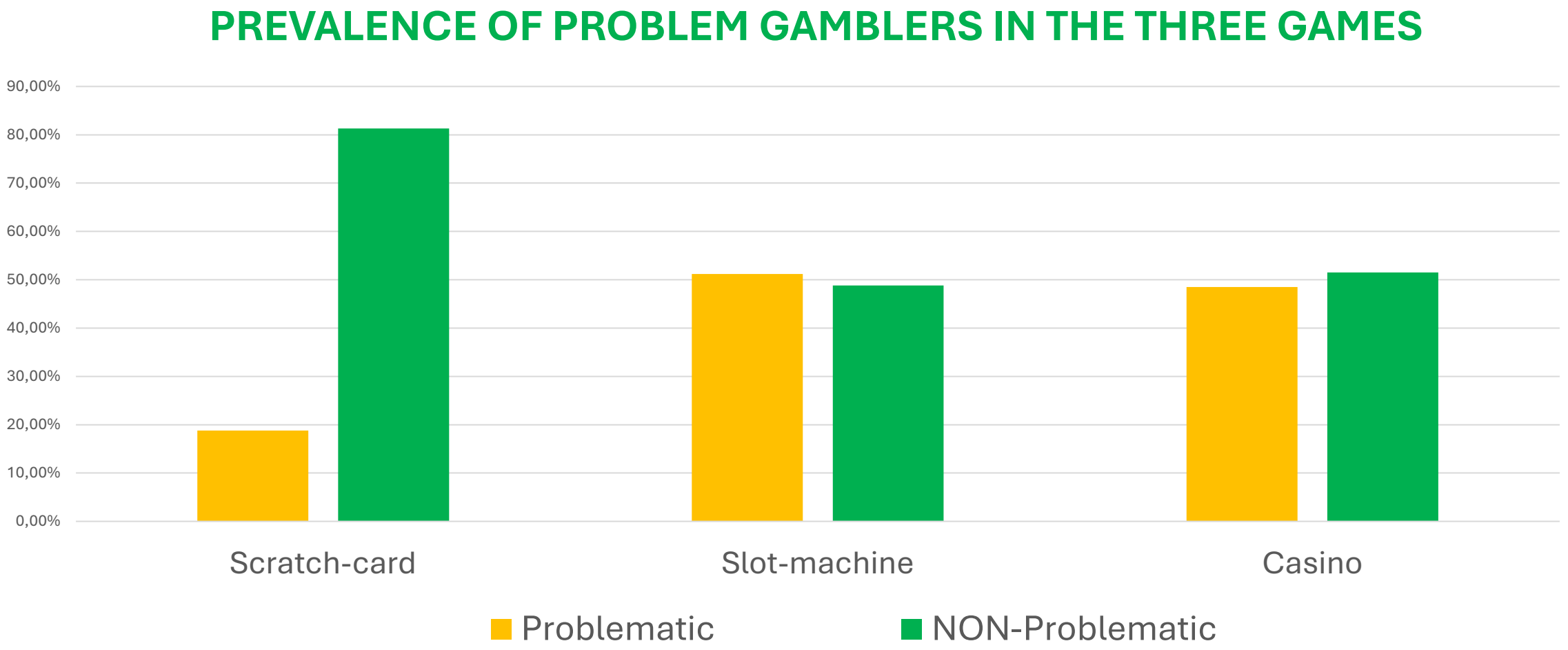
Three versions of a questionnaire distributed in a casino, through scratch-card vendors, and at slot-machines venues.

Respondents: 425 gamblers (45.7% F): scratch-card N = 160, 56.9% F; slot-machine N = 129, 48.8% F; casino N = 136, 55.9% F). Mean age 46.5 (SD = 18.2; range 16–99).

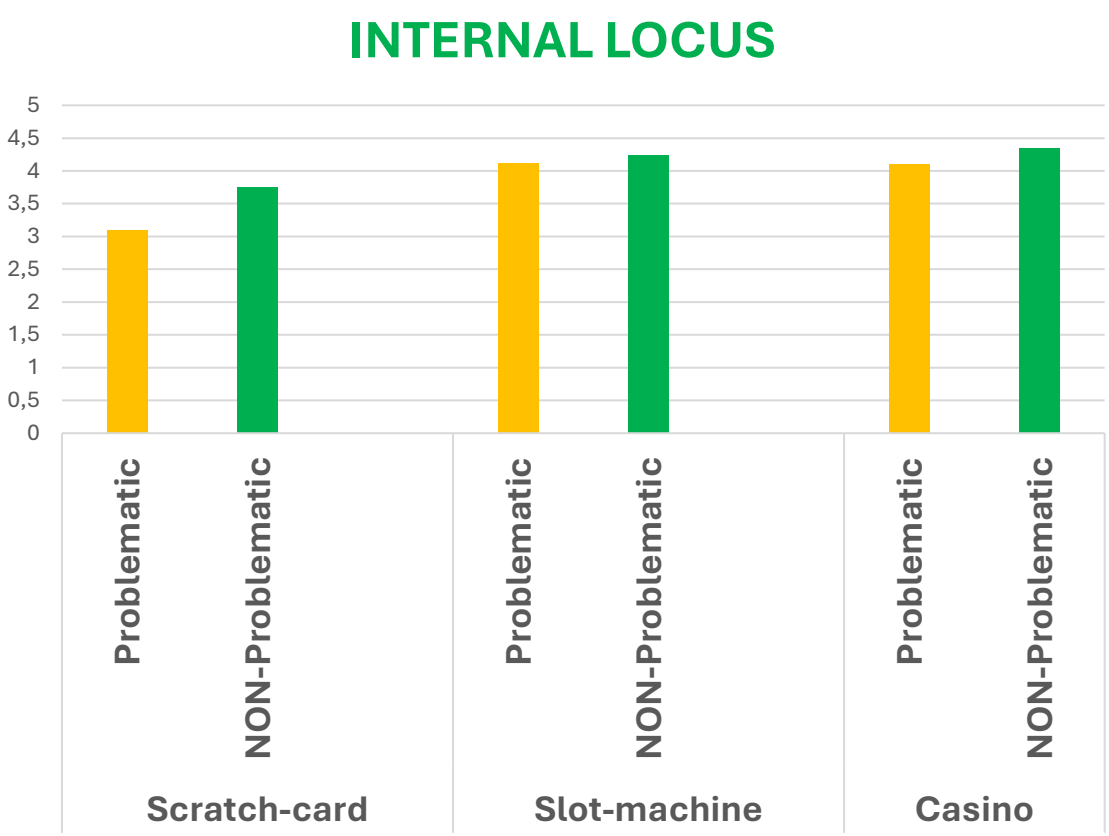
Measures:

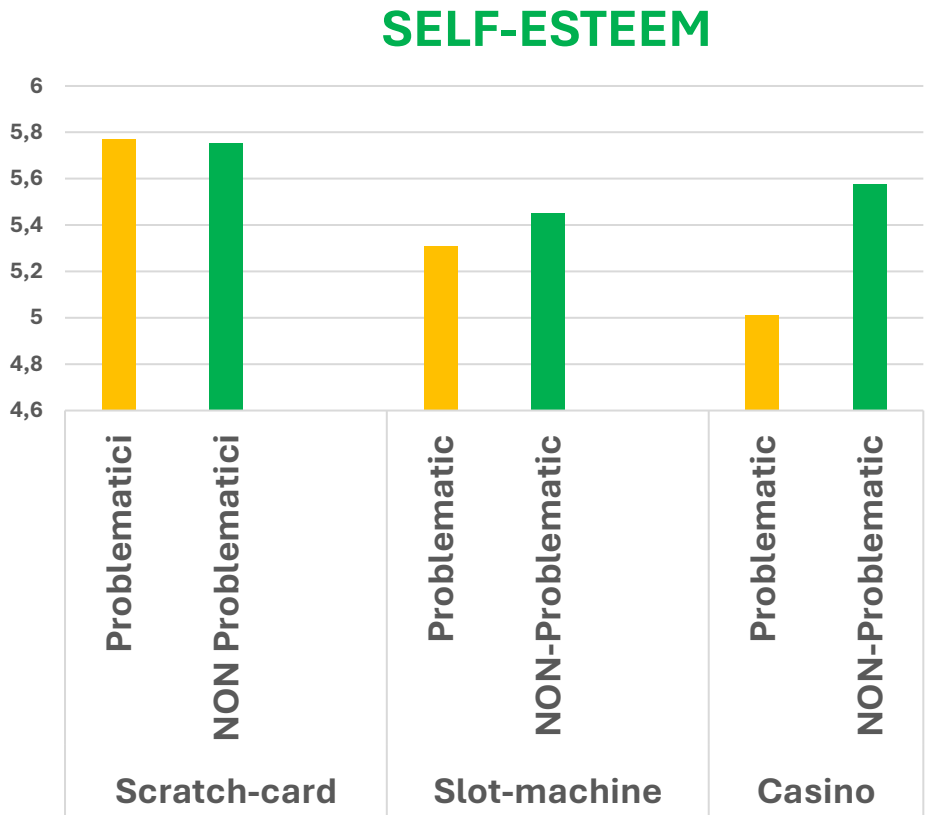
- The *Lie-Bet* two-question (Johnson et al., 1988; Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money? Have you ever had to lie to people important to you about how much you gambled? If Yes to one or both questions, participants are classified as problem gamblers (N = 162, 38.1%) otherwise not (N = 263, 61.9%). At the chi-square test, no gender difference ($\chi 2_{(1,425)} = .876$, $p = .349$).
- *Locus of control*, measured with 6 items of the Mini Locus of control Scale (Perussia & Viano, 2008)
- *Self-esteem*, measured with the Italian adaptation (Prezza, Trombaccia & Armento, 1997) of the 10-item self-report unidimensional Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). A global item was computed averaging the items ($\alpha = .85$)
- *Gambling habits: frequency* (how many times played in the last 6 months; on a 7-point response type-Likert scale from 1-2 times to every day or almost every day), *how many years* they has been playing (less than a year, 1-3 years, more than 3 years), average *money spent* per month in the last six months (7 answer alternatives (less than 10 euros, more than 1000 euros).

Significant difference in prevalence in the three groups at chi-square comparison, higher in slot machine players (51.2%) and casino players (48.5%) than in scratch card players (18.8%); no gender differences at Lie_bet, while women buy scratch cards to a greater extent.

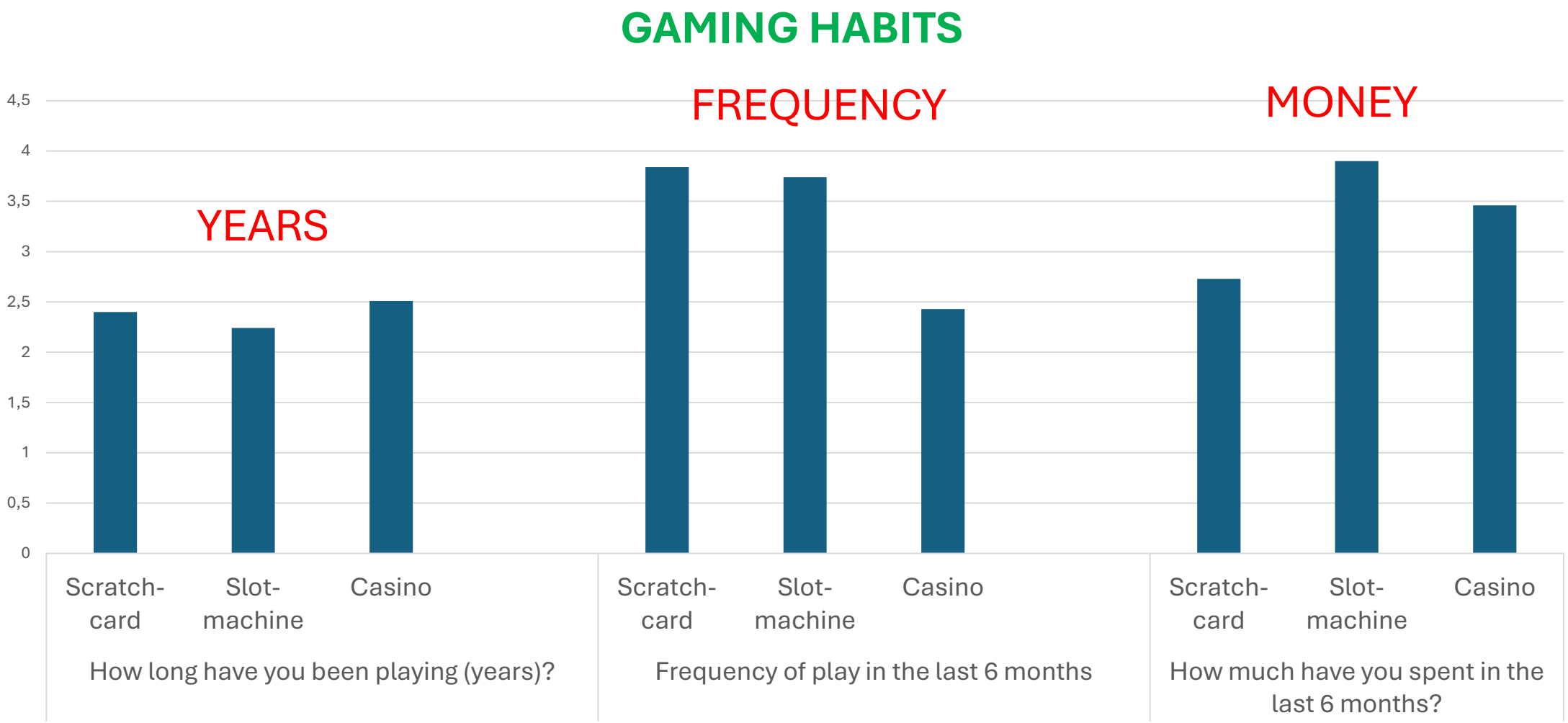


2-way ANOVA: problem gamblers have a more ***external locus of control*** ($F_{(409,1)} = 5.1$, p = .025) and scratch-card players significantly more than the other two types of players ($F_{(409,2)} = 9.2$, p = .001). Controlling for gender and age, no effects.
Self-esteem is significantly ***lower*** in problem gamblers ($F_{(409,1)} = 4.2$, p .04) particularly in casino gamblers ($F_{(409,2)} = 7.7$, p = .001). No gender effects, while for age both the main effect and the interaction with Lie-Bet are significant, confirming previous evidence.





Casino players play for longer ($F_{(423,2)} = 3.1$, $p = .045$), although less frequently ($F_{(423,2)} = 20.7$, $p = .001$), while slot machine players, followed by casino and finally scratch-card players, spend the most ($F_{(422,2)} = 15.5$, $p = .001$). As expected, problem gamblers always have higher values, no interactions. Controlling for age, older gamblers not only gamble for longer, but also gamble more often and spend more. No gender effects.

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