



# CONTRASTING OFFLINE AND ONLINE ELECTRONIC GAMBLING MACHINE ENVIRONMENTS: FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THOSE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCES

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EXCESSIVE GAMBLING: PROMOTING AND PROTECTING HEALTH IN A  
DIGITALISED WORLD - 5<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
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# **EXCESSIVE GAMBLING: PROMOTING AND PROTECTING HEALTH IN A DIGITALISED WORLD**

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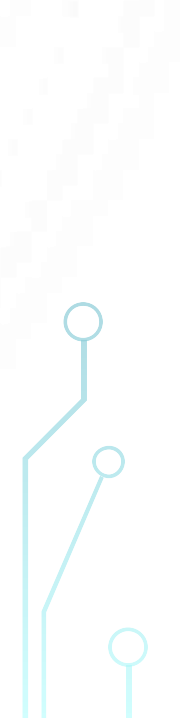
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## **DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS OR RELATIONSHIPS**

I HAVE NO FINANCIAL INTERESTS OR  
RELATIONSHIPS TO DISCLOSE REGARDING  
THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THIS  
PRESENTATION.



# PRESENTATION OUTLINE

1. Context
  2. Objective
  3. Methods
  4. Results
  5. Implications of Results
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# CONTEXT

# ELECTRONIC GAMBLING MACHINES (EGM)

- Considered the riskiest form of gambling<sup>e.g.,1-3</sup>
  - In Canada:
    - Most popular form of gambling, after the lottery<sup>4,5</sup>
    - Provincial EGM density and participation in offline EGMs are by far the two greatest predictors of problem gambling<sup>6</sup>



# REGULATION OF EGM GAMBLING IN QUEBEC<sup>1-3</sup>

- State monopoly – Loto-Quebec
- Offline EGMs:
  - Slot machines: Available in casinos and gambling halls
    - 4 casinos and 2 gambling halls across the province
    - \*Also available in native American casinos (2 casinos; located on native reserves not regulated by Loto-Quebec)
  - Video lottery terminals (VLTs): Available in bars and in gambling halls
    - Around 10 000 VLTs in approximately 2000 establishments spread across the province
- Online EGMs:
  - Available online on Loto-Quebec's website: Espace Jeux
  - Also widely available on offshore gambling websites (illegally)

<sup>1</sup>Loto-Quebec (2024); <sup>2</sup>Research chair on gambling (2018); <sup>3</sup>Research chair on gambling (2019)

# OFFLINE EGM EXPERIENCES

- EGMs have unique characteristics that make them riskier<sup>1-5</sup>
  - E.g., Rapid play, immediate feedback, continuous nature, attention-grabbing audiovisual effects, game customization features that generate an illusion of control, and unpredictable nature of payoffs
- Venues are designed to promote longer gambling sessions<sup>5-6</sup>
  - E.g., layout, lighting, sounds, no clocks or windows, comfortable seating, presence of alcohol

# ONLINE EGM EXPERIENCES

- Few studies have explored the experience of EGM gambling online
  - EGMs online have similar characteristics (e.g., rapid, continuous play, audiovisual effects)<sup>1,2</sup>
  - Wide accessibility 24/7<sup>3</sup>
  - Isolated<sup>3</sup>





# GAP IN THE LITERATURE


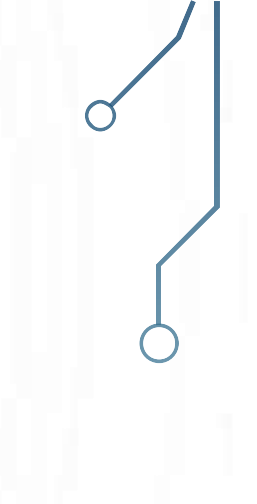
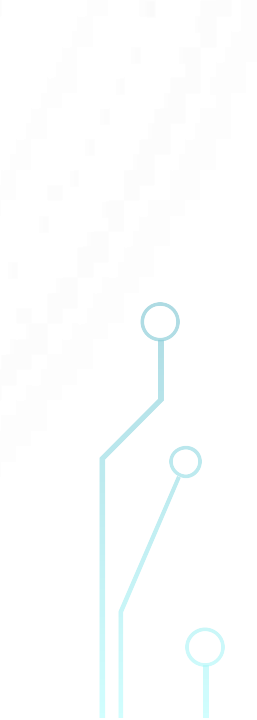
- Little is known about the experience of online EGM gambling
  - No studies have compared the places and spaces in which offline and online EGM gambling takes place
    - Important to contextualize EGM gambling experiences to understand how and why problem gambling can develop
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# OBJECTIVES



# OBJECTIVE

- Cultivate a deeper understanding of the lived experience of those gambling on EGMs offline and online through qualitative interviews.
    - 1) Contrast offline and online EGM experiences
    - 2) Explore differences in the places and spaces where offline and online EGM gambling occur
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# METHODS

# METHODS

- Part of a larger mixed-methods project (Phase 1: Quant → Phase 2: Qual)
- Individual semi-structured qualitative interviews (m=88min)
  - Sample Size: 41 participants
  - Time period: April 2022 – February 2023
- Recruitment
  - From the list of participants having participated in the quantitative phase of the project
  - Inclusion criteria:
    - 18+ years old and resident of Quebec, Canada
    - Able to conduct an interview in French or English
    - Have gambled on EGMs both online and offline in the last 10 years
    - Have gambled on EGMs at least 1x/month for a period of 6 months between 2019-2022
  - Participants were selected based on gender, income, region and their score on the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI)

# ANALYSIS

- Interviews were audio-recorded, anonymized, and transcribed verbatim
- Thematic content analysis<sup>1</sup>
  - 20% of interviews were co-coded between myself and a research assistant

<sup>1</sup>Paillé & Muchielli (2016)

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# RESULTS

# CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

	N
Gender	
Man	21
Woman	20
Age	
18-24	2
25-44	14
45-64	17
65+	8

	N
Household income	
Less than \$30 000	8
\$30 000 à \$59 999	10
\$60 000 à \$74 999	6
\$75 000 à \$99 999	7
\$100 000 and up	10
PGSI category	
Non-problem	11
Low risk	9
Moderate risk	10
Problem gambling	11



# RESULTS – THEMES



## Atmosphere

Sounds from Surroundings

Visual Surroundings



## Machines

Visual Effects

Audio Effects

Machine Selection

# THEME 1: ATMOSPHERE

- Offline
  - Festive atmosphere
  - Surrounded by people, lights, sounds and decorations
  - Atmosphere is more attractive
- Online
  - Lack of atmosphere
  - Alone, at home on a mobile device/computer

*“It's really the atmosphere you find yourself in, in the casino, you know, **you're surrounded by opportunities, sounds, lights, entertainment, it's lively.** Whereas online, well it's really much less festive, **it's very transactional.**”*

– Thomas, non-problem [free translation]

# THEME 1: ATMOSPHERE

## Sounds from Surroundings

- Offline
  - Hearing other people talking around them (e.g., conversations, people winning jackpots)
  - Music in the venue
  - Sounds of other EGMs
  - Other perspectives:
    - Bars: Helps to break social isolation
    - Find it overstimulating (e.g., too many ambient sounds, people complaining and/or getting angry at their machine)
- Online
  - Quiet and calm environment

*“Well, it's true that in bars there's... the other atmosphere of the bar, where the **music is louder, people are talking loudly**, [...] and online it's really, **you're alone, you're practically alone with yourself.**”*

— Nathan, moderate risk [free translation]

# THEME 1: ATMOSPHERE

## Visual Surroundings

- Offline
  - Distinction between casinos and bars
    - Casinos: Beautiful decorations, captivating lights and themes, and people are of high social class (e.g., nicely dressed)
    - Bars: Dark and dingy, EGMS in secluded area, and the people are more "addicted" to gambling
- Online
  - Alone, in the decor of their own home
  - Absent of any visual effects

"I'd say if you go to the casino, well it's a nice atmosphere. Of course, it's different in your living room. **There's the decor, the light shows, the music, the themes.** You definitely go there for a nice outing. [...] On the other hand, at home, well **it's definitely in the décor or your own home. It can be a little less fun.**"

– Daniel, non-problem [free translation]

# THEME 2: MACHINES

## Visual Effects

- Mixed opinions on the graphic quality of offline and online EGMs
  - For some, it varied depending on the machine
- Offline
  - Larger screen
- Online
  - Smaller screen, sometimes difficult to see
  - Some project the image onto their television
    - Larger screen – even more interesting

***“They’re all the same, except for the size of your screen. If I’m playing on, if I’m playing online or on your television, and you’ve got a 55-inch, it’s not bad, but if you’ve got a laptop, it’s a different story, or a cell phone, it’s a different story.”***

– Samuel, problem gambling  
[free translation]

# THEME 2: MACHINES

## Audio Effects

- Offline
  - Louder
    - Appreciated by some participants
    - Some find it irritating
- Online
  - Mixed opinions
    - Little to no ambient sounds: Sounds from machine are more pleasant
    - Can listen to the sound while doing other tasks (e.g. making coffee, cooking, doing laundry)
    - Some prefer gambling without sound

***“When we’re physically in a casino, there’s a lot of ambient noises. [...] and if I add the machine I’m playing on, then there’s all the people talking, and we can hear all the machines, so that, that really gets on my nerves [...]. But when I’m at home, I’m playing on my laptop, in that case I put the sound right in the middle [...]. That way, [...] I go and make myself a coffee, and the game continues, and I hear the little bells.”***

— Jessica, low risk [free translation]

# THEME 2: MACHINES

## Machine Selection

- Offline
  - Ability to walk around and see the different machines, their characteristics, and observe others playing on it
  - Con : Availability of the machines
- Online
  - Vast selection of machines
  - Can go at own pace
  - Possibility of playing without real money
  - Con : Difficult to navigate to see characteristics of machine

*“Yes, **it's walking around and going to see the machines too.** Seeing what's available. [...] I really like going to see if there are other things that might be available, new machines, new things that, when you look online, you're not inclined to do. **There's nothing appealing about saying to yourself ‘Oh, I'll see what that machine is.’** Whereas physically it's sitting in front of the machine and looking at the buttons.”*

– Jessica, low risk [free translation]

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# CONCLUSIONS


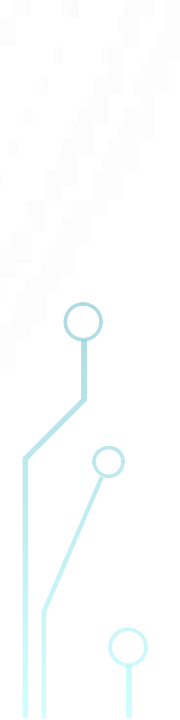


# CONCLUSIONS

- Offline and online EGM gambling environments are diverse, even more than we thought
- EGM gambling offline and online were perceived as two distinct activities
  - Offline: EGM gambling in casinos and bars were also perceived as two distinct activities
    - Casinos: Gambling specific venue, louder environment, surrounded by other people, audiovisual effects, enticing atmosphere, and bigger screens
    - Bars: Dark and dingy, machines located in a hidden corner, and surrounded by other people
  - Online: Comfort of one's own home, quieter environment, alone, and smaller screens



# IMPLICATIONS OF RESULTS

- Clinical:
    - Differentiate different types of gambling and modalities
    - Consider where and how the person gambles on EGMs
  - Future directions:
    - Differentiate different types of gambling within online gambling, and to differentiate different gambling venues (e.g., VLTs in bars, slot machines in casinos)
    - More qualitative studies, especially longitudinal qualitative studies
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# THANK YOU!

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The background of the slide is a dark blue-grey color. It is filled with numerous 3D question marks of varying sizes and orientations, creating a textured, almost isometric effect. Overlaid on this background are thin, light blue lines that resemble circuit board traces or digital pathways, with small circles at the junctions and endpoints. These lines are positioned on the left and right sides of the central text box.

**QUESTIONS?**

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