

## Declaration of Financial Interests or Relationships

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



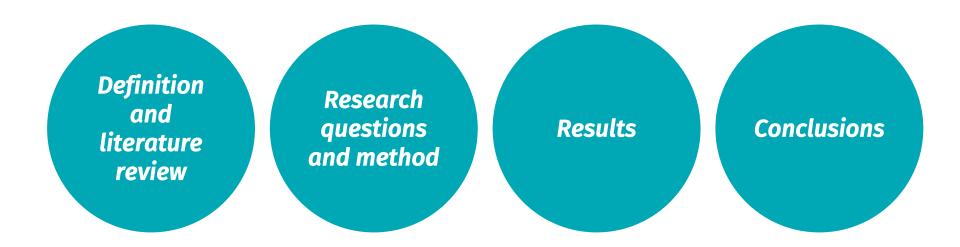
# New forms of gambling: the spread of gambling-like games

Excessive Gambling: Promoting and Protecting Health in a Digitalised World

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## **Outline**





## What are gambling-like games (GLGs)?

- Gambling-like games are games that contain mechanisms similar to those found in gambling
- Loot boxes are items commonly found in video games and mobile applications that provide players with randomized virtual rewards (Xiao et al., 2022; Rockloff et al., 2020)
- These items are usually purchasable with real currency, and the prizes contained within them vary in value and drop rate

## **Example – EA Sport FC**



PROBABILITÀ PACCHETTO	×
LE PROBABILITÀ VISUALIZZATE SONO PER SINGOLO P	PACCHETTO
50 FC Points	100%
Bonus:	
Giocatore GEN 103+	100%
Giocatore GEN 103	50,39%
Giocatore GEN 104	25,2%
Giocatore GEN 105	12,6%
Giocatore GEN 106	6,3%
Giocatore GEN 107	3,15%
Giocatore GEN 108	1,57%
Giocatore GEN 109	<1%

## Are GLGs and gambling similar?

- Gambling criteria (Griffiths, 2018):
  - i. something of financial value is risked
  - ii. the outcome is partially or entirely random
  - iii. redistribution of wealth without any creation of value
  - iv. losses can be avoided simply by not participating
- Without the possibility of cashing out, the combination of spending and randomness of rewards is not sufficient to equate loot boxes with gambling (UK Gambling Commission, 2017)
- According to the Belgian "Research Report on Loot Boxes", loot boxes
  purchased with real money may meet the Belgian criteria that define
  gambling and are therefore prohibited without a specific license
  (Belgian Gaming Commission, 2018)

#### Literature review

- Several studies have identified a link between spending on loot boxes and gambling behaviour (Brooks *et al.*, 2019; Zendle *et al.*, 2019; Zendle & Cairns, 2019a; Zendle & Cairns, 2019b; Li *et al.*, 2019)
- The increased accessibility of gambling, according to Balszczynski and Nower, is a factor related to the growth in the prevalence of problem gambling (Blaszczynski & Nower, 2002)



# Research questions and methodology

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## **Research questions**

- 1) How widespread are loot boxes among apps in the Google Play Store in Italy?
- 2) In games containing loot boxes, how frequently is information regarding the odds of winning disclosed?
- 3) In games containing loot boxes, are mechanisms in place to restrict access by younger users, such as recommended age classifications?

## Research questions and methodology

#### Research method

- For this research, I drew inspiration from two similar studies conducted in the UK (Zendle et al., 2020) and China (Xiao et al., 2021)
- I downloaded the 60 highest-grossing games in Italy from the Play Store and measured three variables:
  - 1. Presence of loot boxes purchasable with real money
  - 2. Presence of information on the odds of loot box prizes
  - 3. PEGI (Pan-European Game Information) age rating



#### Table 1

PEGI	Total number of games (cumulative)	Number of games that feature loot boxes (cumulative)
3+	30	13 of 30 (43%, CI = 0.27-0.60)
7+	40	20 of 40 (50%, CI = 0.35-0.65)
12+	51	31 of 51 (61%, CI = 0.47-0.63)
16+	53	33 of 53 (62%, CI = 0.49-0.64)
18+ and <b>'!</b> '	60	40 of 60 (66%, CI = 0.54-0.77)

- 66% of the games contain loot boxes. A test for the difference in proportions revealed no statistically significant difference (p = .33) compared to the UK (58%), while the percentage was significantly lower (p < .001) than that reported in China (91%)
- Among the 51 games rated 3+, 7+, or 12+, 61% includes loot boxes, a percentage closely aligned with the UK finding (58.9%, 56 of 95) and significantly lower (p < .001) than the Chinese result (90.5%, 57 of 63)

#### Table 2

	PEGI					
Does it feature loot boxes?	3+	7+	12+	16+	18+	Tot
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Yes	13	7	11	2	7	40
	(32,5%)	(17,5%)	(27,5%)	(5%)	(17,5%)	(100%)
No	17	3	0	0	0	20
	(85%)	(15%)	(0%)	(0%)	(0%)	(100%)

77.5% of GLGs are deemed suitable for children of 12 years of age.

The test of difference in proportion reveals that this percentage is not significantly higher (p = .09) than the Chinese case, where the percentage was 62.6% (57 of 91), but significantly lower (p = .009) than in the UK, where 93% (54 of 58) of such games fell into this age group.

#### Table 3

Category	Number of application
Generic symbol	18
Symbol and step	9
Specific symbol	5
Automatic	2
Graphic symbol	2

Of the 40 GLGs, 36 report their in-game win probabilities. Specifically, the table indicates the disclosure format.



# **Conclusions**

## **Conclusions**

- Loot boxes may pose risks to young people, both by potentially familiarizing them with gambling-like mechanics and due to evidence from prior studies suggesting a positive association between loot box use and gambling-related problems
- This research highlights a lack of specific protections for adolescents: age ratings do not appear to be influenced by the presence of loot boxes, raising concerns about regulatory oversight
- This research has limitations, including the relatively small sample size and the risk of false negatives in identifying games containing loot boxes

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