

Temperament and character in a Swiss sample of patients diagnosed with pathological gambling disorder: A preliminary investigation

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Introduction: The present study was conducted in order to investigate the similarities and differences between the temperament and character of patients with pathological gambling disorder, in relation to previously published results on other impulse control disorders.

Method: A group made up of 34 patients (12 women and 22 men) diagnosed with pathological gambling disorder answered the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS - Lesieur & Blume, 1987), assessing excessive gambling, and, answered the TCI-56, a short version of the Temperament and Character Inventory (Cloninger, Przybeck, Svrakic, & Wetzel, 1994). The results obtained with the TCI-56 were compared to those of a control group made up of 211 subjects (Rigozzi & Rossier, 2004).

Results: After controlling for sex, our data shows that excessive gamblers score significantly higher than controls on the Novelty Seeking (NS) scale ($t(33)=2.77, p<.01$) and no different from controls on the three other temperament scales. The group of patients further scored significantly lower than controls on the Self-Directedness (SD) ($t(33)=-2.45, p<.05$), and the Self-Transcendence (ST) character scales, ($t(33)=-3.33, p<.01$). We also found a negative correlation between SD, on the one hand, and both the number of diagnosed DSM symptoms ($r=-.44, p<.05$) and the SOGS score ($r=-.45, p<.05$), on the other hand.

Discussion: Concerning the temperament scales, our results replicate the ones published by Won Kim and Grant (2001). As in substance addiction, excessive gamblers seem to score high in Novelty Seeking. However, contrarily to what is generally observed with other impulse control disorders (Pélissolo, Notides, Pezous & Lépine, 1998), their Harm Avoidance scores (HA) are not lower than the controls'.

Concerning the character scales, excessive gamblers seem to differ markedly from substance addiction patients. Indeed, while the latter express greater than average Self-Transcendence, the former score lower than average on this scale (Rigozzi, 2002). Finally, it appears that the SD scale of the TCI might act as a predictor of severity for pathological gambling.

Conclusion: Although excessive gamblers resemble substance addicts as far as temperament is concerned, they show quite different personality profiles for non-temperament dimensions.

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