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# The link between Early Maladaptive Schemas, Gambling Beliefs and pathological Gambling

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## Introduction

Gambling is defined as "an action whose outcome is based primarily or entirely on chance, and which involves the irreversible betting of money or an object of value" (Ladouceur, 2004).

Concerning occurrences in France 47% of persons practice gambling at least occasionally, of which 4% are moderate risk gamblers and 2% are excessive gamblers (Costes et al., 2011).

Pathological gamblers have more gambling-related beliefs than non-excessive gamblers and are more confident that they will eventually win (Ladouceur, 2004). Generally, three categories of dysfunctional cognitions are present. First, there is the belief that they can control the game in order to win through their knowledge, skills or abilities: this illusion of control can be active (predicting through rituals, lucky numbers, or lucky objects) or passive (predicting based on signs in other features that will be interpreted as luck in the game). Secondly, gamblers also believe that they can guess the outcomes based on their own intuitions or based on previous outcomes: for example, they may think that after many losses, they will have a chance to win. And finally, they may think that they can "make it up" by embellishing their skills and minimizing those of others, despite the independence of events in the game. This interpretive bias encourages continued gambling despite losses and by attributing losses to the influence of others and gains to self (Fortune & Goodie, 2012).

In addition to gambling-beliefs related, we can also take into consideration early maladaptive schemas as gambling vulnerability factors. Young et al (2005) defined them as "A major organizing principle that is intended to explain an individual's experiences. Cognitive schemas are formed in early childhood and adolescence through experiences and continue to be modified by life events, through "various confrontations with the environment" (Rusinek, 2006).

Hypothesis 1: It is assumed that the scores of early maladaptive schema domains differ according to gambling scores.

Hypothesis 2: Supposes that gambling scores are linked to gambling-related beliefs.

## Method

### Participants

Nine hundred and forty-nine people participated in this study, of whom 639 (67.3%) had no gambling problems, 175 (18.4%) had moderate gambling risks and 135 (14.2%) were problem gamblers. The mean age was 30.1 years (SD = 4.3), of which 446 (46.99%) were male and 503 (53.01%) were female.

### Measures

- Anamnestic questionnaire for sociodemographic data
- The South Oaks Gambling Screen Questionnaire (Lesieur & Blume, 1987)
- The Gambling Related Cognition Scale (Raylu & Oei, 2004).
- Young schema Questionnaire (Young, 1998)

### Procedure

Data collection was done online on a secure platform (Sphinx Campus). The link of the questionnaire was relayed on social networks. The participants gave their informed consent, and the protection of personal data was respected. Moreover, the study received a favorable opinion from the ethics committee of the Federal University of Toulouse.

## Résultats

Table 1  
Comparison of early pattern domains by degree of gambling addiction

	No gambling problems		moderate gambling issues		Excessive gambler		ANOVA	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	p
Separation and rejection	59.5**	24.4	65.5	26.7	71.3**	27.2	14.0	<0.001
Lack of performance and autonomy	39.1*	17.3	42.3	17.8	44.3*	21.4	5.72	<0.01
Lack of boundaries	26.1**	9.8	30.2	10.9	31.7**	10.8	23.4	<0.001
Orientation towards others	27.1*	10.0	29.2	10.2	29.2*	10.9	4.40	<0.05
Surveillance and inhibition	28.3**=	10.3	31.4	11.2	31.9*	11.6	10.2	<0.01

Post Hoc \*<0.05; \*\*<0.01; \*\*\*<0.001



Table 2  
Comparison of gambling related cognition by degree of gambling addiction

	No gambling problems		moderate gambling issues		Excessive gambler		ANOVA	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	p
Game-related experiences	10.5***	4.9	13.0	4.8	15.2***	4.6	61.2	<0.001
Illusion of control	6.8**	3.8	7.7	4.2	9.6**	5.5	24.6	<0.001
Feeling of being able to predict the outcome of the game	14.6***	6.5	18.4	6.1	19.9**	6.7	52.2	<0.001
Inability to stop oneself from playing	7.2***	4.1	10.3	5.1	16.2***	7.4	196	<0.001
Belief that one can win back money lost	9.6***	5.4	14.2	5.5	16.8***	5.1	130	<0.001

Post Hoc \*<0.05; \*\*<0.01; \*\*\*<0.001



## Discussion

The results indicate that the domains of early maladaptive schemas are more prominent among excessive gamblers, with higher scores on all schemas domains. But more noticeable for the domains of "separation and rejection" and "lack of performance and autonomy" as well as "lack of boundaries". Therefore, it seems that people with cognitions particularly focused on fears of loss or abandonment and a lack of self-control appear to be at greater risk for a propensity of gambling. In addition, the results also highlight the importance of gambling-related cognitions in pathological gambling. This implies that behavioral and cognitive therapy like cognitive restructuring may be a possible opportunity for the treatment of people with gambling addiction. Indeed, people gambling addicted are more likely to have cognitions related to their gambling experience, they also believe that they are in control and can predict the outcome or that they can win back the money lost, and they believe that they are unable to stop gambling.

In the future it would be worthwhile to explore the mediating role of gambling beliefs between the early maladaptive schema domains and gambling addiction, in order to better understand the links between these different concepts.

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