PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLING IN ROMANIA. 
PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE OF THE ROMANIAN PATHOLOGICAL Gambler

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The book entitled “Pathological Gambling in Romania. Psychological profile of the Romanian pathological gambler” was published by LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing and represents a comprehensive work which comprises a total of 5 chapters detailing aspects of gambling addiction in our country. This publication is recommended by the European Association for the Study of Gambling on its website (http://www.easg.org/website/publication.cfm?id=72), along with others publications regarding gaming and gambling.

The concept of addiction has been broadened in recent years to include appetitive behaviours judged to be excessive in some sense: excessive drinking, drug-taking, gambling, eating and sexuality. Gambling addiction represents a behavioural disorder defined by several characteristics: pleasure of the risk, action seeking, less inhibition and/or boredom susceptibility.

The book author, Rizeanu Steliana, meant to highlight the psychological aspects of the pathological gambling and to draw the first psychological profile of the Romanian gambler.

The first chapter, ”Diagnosis of pathological gambling” defines and explains the diagnostic criteria of this pathology, according to Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder IV, 4th edition and Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder V, 5th Edition, the screening tools that detect and measure problem gambling and the risk factors of pathological gambling. In the current

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Edition (DSM-IV), pathological gambling is classified as part of “Impulse-Control Disorders Not Elsewhere Classified,” which also includes disorders like kleptomania, while in the new edition, gambling disorder joins substance-related addictions in a renamed group called “Addiction and Related Disorders.”

The screening tools that identifies individuals with mild to moderate gambling problems are the following: South Oaks Gambling Screen-SOGS (Lesieur and Blume, 1987); Massachusetts Gambling Screen (Korn & Schaffer, 2004), Gamblers Anonymous 20 Questionnaire, The Problem Gambling Severity Index – PGSI (Disley, Pollitt, Culley, Rubin, 2011), The Inventory of Gambling Situations- IGS (Littman-Sharp, Turner and Toneatto, 2009) and The NORC DSM-IV Screen for Gambling Problems (Hodgins, 2004).

The second chapter, “Preventing pathological gambling” approaches the prevention methods for pathological gambling and reducing the associated risks and the presentation of Responsible Gaming Project in Romania, which promotes a responsible behaviour for the slot gamblers in order to fully benefit of this means of entertainment and fun. In this project, a team of psychologists offer the pathological gamblers and their partners free psychological counseling services in full confidentiality. A responsible gambler is a person exercising a rational and sensible choice and acting upon that choice based on his/her individual circumstances and awareness of the intention of the entertainment experience and its limitations. The key difference between pathological gambling and social gambling is self-control: each social gambling session usually lasts for a set period of time and involves pre-determined spending limits.

In the third chapter, “Pathological gambling treatment”, the author provides a cognitive behavioural counselling model for pathological gambling and analyzes its efficiency after applying it on a group of 119 pathological gamblers who joined Responsible Gambling Program in Romania. The proposed CBT model highlights the importance of changing distorted beliefs and behaviours in reducing the frequency and severity of gambling. It reflects the findings of the literature review of the treatment of pathological gambling. Normalizing reasonable gambling - convincing the client that most people can gamble successfully without committing a moral transgression - is usually the first step in decreasing these fantasies of effortless healing.

The fifth chapter “Psychological profile of the Romanian pathological gambler”, aims to achieve the first systematic and comprehensive study regarding the psychological profile of the Romanian pathological gambler. The results show
that Romanian pathological gambler is more likely to be male, aged between 28 and 38 years old, with a medium level of education; he comes from a family with relational problems at least, in which the father has used coercive methods of education or has been totally absent; consumes alcohol frequently, smokes and occasionally takes drugs. Predisposing factors refer to the moderate level of depression and anxiety; the existence of irrational beliefs about gambling and the existence of a personality disorder, most of the time narcissistic personality disorder.

This book is a guiding manual for therapists and counsellors treating clients with gambling addictions and it also supplies detailed information to help anyone understand gambling behaviours.

References

http://www.dsm5.org/
http://www.easg.org/website/publication.cfm?id=72
http://www.gamblersanonymous.org/


