ASSESSING THE CORRELATES OF PROBLEMATIC SOCIAL CASINO GAMING

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INTRODUCTION

- Social casino games (SCGs) are popular, free to play simulated-gambling games. Players wager free virtual credits rather than money for the chance to win more virtual credits.

- Although no money is *necessary* to engage in SCGs, players are encouraged to purchase microtransactions (virtual credit for real money) to extend play or access bonus features.

- A growing body of empirical evidence suggests that social casino gaming may lead to future gambling among individuals, regardless of previous gambling history.

- SCGs also share elements of gaming activity. Unlike real-world gambling, which is based on pure chance, SCGs are designed to enhance player enjoyment.

- However, few studies have examined correlates of potential problematic use of SCGs.

- The aim of the present study was to address this empirical gap by assessing the correlates of problematic social casino gaming.

OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESIS

Objectives: Examine the correlates for problematic SCG use.

Hypothese:

H1: Problematic SCG use will be associated with greater engagement of SCGs.

H2:Problematic SCG use will be associated with greater levels of problem gambling severity.

H3:Problematic SCG use will be associated with greater levels of impulsivity.

RESULTS

Playing Habits

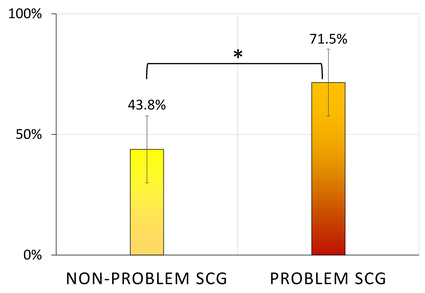

Figure 1. Percent of SCG players who have previously purchased microtransactions. $\chi^2(1)= 23.664$, $p>.0001$.

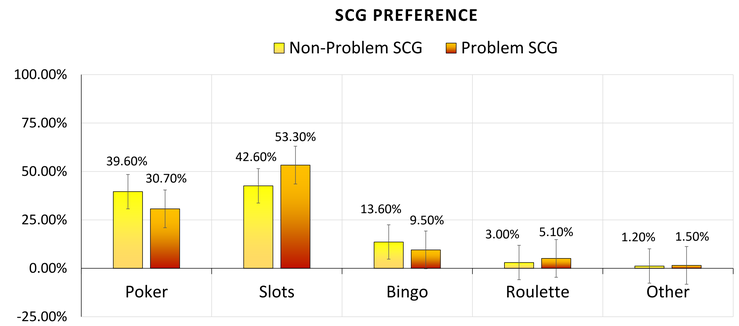

Figure 2. Percent of SCG players who prefer various games. $\chi^2(4)= 5.566$, $p=.24$

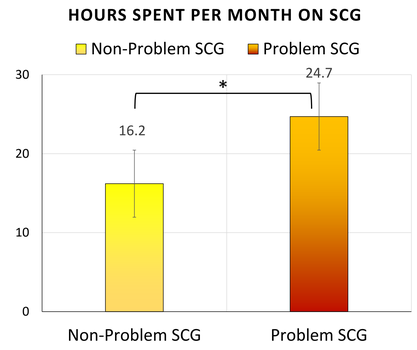

Figure 3. Hours of SCG played per month (average of 3 months). $U= 8167.500$, p <.0001

Motives for Playing

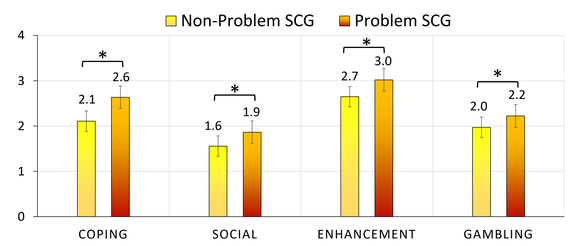

Figure 8. Social Casino Gaming Motives Questionnaire. Mean endorsement of the subscales of the SCGMQ in non-problematic and problematic SCG players. Coping, $U= 6429.500$, p <.0001; Social, $U= 8176.000$, p <.0001; Enhancement, $U= 7928.000$, p <.0001; Gambling, $U= 9734.000$, p =.02

Disordered Gambling Severity

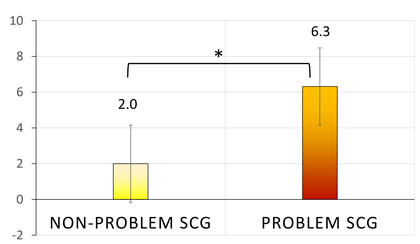

Figure 7. Disordered gambling severity scores of non-problematic and problematic SCG players. $U= 5449.500$, p >.0001

Impulsivity

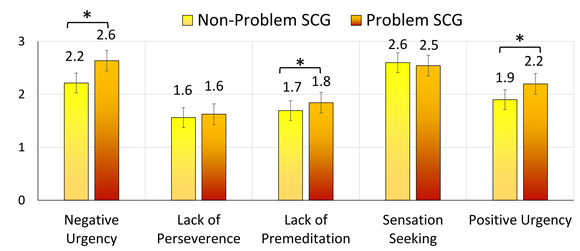

Figure 9. Mean endorsement of the subscales of the SUPPS-P in non-problematic and problematic SCG players. Negative Urgency, $U= 8104.000$, p <.0001; Lack of Perseverance, $U= 10678.000$, p =.235; Lack of Premeditation, $U= 9758.500$, p =.02; Sensation Seeking, $U= 11013.000$, p =.46; Positive Urgency, $U= 8658.500$, p <.0001

METHODS AND ANALYSIS

- Participants ($N= 318$) who currently engaged in SCGs and gambling were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk.
- The average respondent was 37 years old, single, employed, Caucasian, and female. The average yearly income was $25,000-$99,999.
    - No significant difference in demographics was found with the exception of present employment status. Problem SCG users were more often in unclassifiable employment brackets.
- Problematic SCG use (n=137) was identified using an adapted version of the Game Addiction Inventory for Adults (a score of 30+ indicated problematic SCG).

Measures

- Demographics and SCG Play Habits: Face valid measures including basic demographics, microtransactions, motivations, and time spent playing.
- Gambling Scales: Problem Gambling Severity Index.
- Impulsivity: SUPPS-P Impulsive Behaviours Scale.

Analysis

- Chi-square tests were used for categorical variables, while independent samples *t-tests* were used for parametric continuous variables. Mann-Whitney U tests were used if the variable was non-parametric.

CONCLUSIONS

- 44.8% of the participants in our sample reported problematic use of SCGs.
- Problematic SCG use was associated with more hours played per month, a higher likelihood of engaging in microtransactions, greater problem gambling severity, as well as aspects of impulsivity (negative/positive urgency, lack of premeditation).
- However, caution is warranted when interpreting these results, given we did not use a validated measure to assess problematic SCG use.
- Future research examining the risks and harms associated with social casino gaming, particularly on factors independent of problem gambling, would be highly informative.
- The results of the present research may aid prevention by increasing our understanding of unique factors of vulnerability in SCG use.

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