

RESPONSIBLE GAME AND THE RELEASE OF BETS: PSYCHOLOGIST'S PERFORMANCE IN CASE OF INTERVENTION

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Abstract: With the regulation of online sports bets in Brazil, as established by Law No. 14,790 and its guidelines through Ordinance SPA/MF No. 1,231, there was a large increase in the number of players and frequent adherence to betting platforms. This growth of people adept at betting games brings to light significant concerns related to mental health, because the game disorder, also known as ludopathy, is characterized by excessive and harmful use of this practice. Mental health studies indicate that exacerbated involvement in gambling can lead to the development of serious psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety and stress, especially in cases of frequent financial losses and repeated attempts to recover the damage. This project aims to analyze the contributions of psychology, with emphasis on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), in the confrontation and combating symptoms associated with game addiction and online bets. Betting houses, popularly called Bets, have their operation legalized by Law No. 14,790/2023 and, from January 2025, will be authorized to work in Brazil within legal parameters, which will make access wider, requiring measures Preventive and treatment strategies focused on the welfare of players. Research will examine how CBT can contribute to the reduction of negative impacts caused by compulsive use of BETs, identifying risk factors and social and psychological influences that lead to the develo-

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ment of this addiction. CBT -specific techniques will be explored to resignify dysfunctional thoughts, promoting greater emotional and behavioral control of players and contributing to relapse prevention.

Keywords: Responsible Game; Psychology; Depression; Addiction; Game disorder.

INTRODUCTION

The growth of betting and gambling platforms, driven by digitalization, global accessibility, and the new betting law – Law No. 14,790/2023 (Brazil, 2023) – has brought to light significant concerns about the risks associated with gambling disorder.

Addiction to electronic games and the internet can be seen through a multifactorial and multidimensional etiology, due to the fact that the patient has both a mental and behavioral disorder (Lemos; Santana, 2012, p. 28).

The phenomenon of betting in Brazil has drawn attention for its direct relationship with mental health problems . Law No. 14,790/2023 and Ordinance SPA/MF No. 1,231/2024 (Brazil, 2023, 2024) established guidelines that require bets to take care of the mental health of players and employees, in addition to encouraging responsible gambling. This scenario creates opportunities for intervention in Psychology aimed at this niche.

To operate legally, as of January 2025, these gaming houses must be based in Brazil, operate on sites with a domain “bet.br” and obtain authorization from the Secretariat of Prizes and Betting (Gaming addiction can [...], 2018). Games of chance can include competitions such as horse racing and soccer games, and depend exclusively on luck, offering a fascination with chance that can involve pleasure and fear, according to Oliveira, Silveira and Silva (2008).

Even with the regulation, there is discussion about the impacts of the release of games, especially on the development of mental disorders in practitioners (Oliveira; Silveira; Silva, 2008). Technology and the internet facilitate access to bets, increasing the risk of addiction and increasing



cases of depression among gamblers (Abreu et al., 2008; Weinstock et al., 2008). The law seeks to curb significant population damage, as analyzed by Juliana Roman and Cintia Lima (2024):

The new law focuses on responsibility, integrity and transparency, establishing strict standards for operating agents, such as the adoption of consumer practices compatible with the Consumer Protection Code (CDC), the full protection of children and adolescents, as disciplined by the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA), the protection of personal data according to the General Data Protection Law (LGPD), the implementation of a robust system aimed at combating money laundering and terrorist financing, preventing fraud and betting manipulation, and encouraging responsible gambling and prevention of pathological behavior.

From a clear and detailed legal framework for the operation of these activities. The Brazilian government intends to increase transparency, promote the safety of bettors, and encourage good practices in the online betting market.

In this work, it will be studied how this process occurs, how bets work, what are the possible symptoms and disorders caused by them and how Psychology can help.

GOAL

The initial objective is to understand the concept of bets offered by houses named as bets, their operation and the possible impacts on the lives of users of these platforms, including the associated risks and consequences. Such issues have gained prominence in society, especially with the growing media coverage and government intervention through inspection, regulation and control of this new type of betting.

After this analysis, it seeks to understand the role of the psychologist in the face of the increase in cases of gambling disorder, to understand how the professional can contribute to the assessment, intervention, preventive treatment, guidance, post-crisis support and to conducting research on gambling disorder and its symptoms.



METHODS

This study is a bibliographic search of scientific literature together with an integrative review, in order to allow a more in-depth analysis of different perspectives on the subject and the synthesis of the results with new studies on the subject, available in the SciELO databases, BvSalud, newspapers of high circulation, news pages, pages of the judiciary and literature through published books.

This work can be called a qualitative descriptive bibliographic research: qualitative because it is of partial and limited knowledge, with the aim of understanding the trajectory that led to the problem through the analysis of perceptions; descriptive because it collects data and does not interfere with the analysis, based on the data already obtained; and bibliographic because it uses material already published in databases or magazines, along with books.

To carry out this research, the descriptors responsible gambling, Psychology, depression, addiction and gambling disorder were used in the databases. In them, 1,687 articles containing the keywords described with a periodicity of up to 20 years were found. The criterion used for inclusion was the relationship between the keywords and those that described what was sought, being in accordance with the theme of the work. Among them, 35 articles were selected, and with the descriptive bet, 5 articles were found. In addition to the online research, 4 books were used to construct the references.

The aim of this study was to understand the role of the psychologist in the care of gambling disorders, and how the professional can act responsibly in helping the treatment of this disorder with regard to addiction to online games.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pathological gambling and use of bets

Before getting into the subject, you need to know the definition of bet. According to Marques (2009), the word bet comes from “to bet”, to put an amount of money in a certain game (generally



known as gambling). If the bet is the winner, the bettor will receive its amount with profits.

Within this context, pathological gambling is given great prominence, since it is related to impulse and habit disorders according to the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10) under the code F-63. Pathological gambling consists of frequent and repeated episodes of gambling, dominating the individual's behavior to the detriment of material, occupational, social and family commitments and values (Oliveira; Scott; Silva, 2008). Gambling disorder activates brain circuits of gratification similar to those of pleasurable behaviors, such as eating or having sex. In affected people, these circuits do not work properly, leading to an uncontrollable need to gamble. The craving arises when they cannot bet, becoming intense and contributing to relapses (Tavares, 2008).

Pathological gambling, classified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – Revised Text: DSM-5-TR (American Psychiatric Association – APA, 2022), is described as an impulse control disorder, characterized by persistent and recurrent gambling behaviors that result in significant impairments in the individual's life (APA, 2022). In the online betting environment (bets), these behaviors are intensified due to the ease of access, 24-hour availability, and anonymity offered by digital platforms.

In recent months, dependence on betting has become an alarming issue within Brazilian companies. Easy access to online betting platforms, combined with the growing popularity of sports betting, has led many workers to develop compulsive behaviors (Betting Addiction [...], 2024).

According to the news reported in a widely circulated magazine, bets on bets affect the emotions and beliefs of bettors, being reinforced by social interactions and creating false perceptions. This leads young men to develop the illusion of control over the results. Influenced by friends or family, they come to believe that their victories depend more on their skills, strategies, and knowledge than on luck. This phenomenon is known as a cognitive distortion (Felix, 2024).



Online betting addiction: the BETS platform

Gambling can be a form of entertainment, but its excessive use can result in negative consequences such as gambling disorder (Oliveira et al., 2022). Understanding the factors that can lead a person to betting addiction can help in prevention and treatment.

Just like a drug addict who doesn't drink or take drugs, a person with a gambling disorder will often feel craving if they stop gambling. "Defined as an uncontrollable need to repeat pleasurable acts, enhanced by the impediment to repeat them, craving grows until it becomes unstoppable and is the main cause of relapses" (Institute of Psychiatry – IPq, c2024).

In the first weeks of abstinence, the craving experienced by gamblers is more intense than that of alcohol-dependents. If a player manages to stay away from betting for about 90 days, the intensity of the craving decreases, increasing the chances of successful treatment (IPq, c2024).

With regard to the causes and origins of addiction to electronic games, it is important to emphasize its multifactorial and multidimensional character. Individuals who have this addiction often suffer from both mental and behavioral disorders, reflecting the complexity of this disorder. In addition, there is a strong correlation with biological factors, as well as with the various motivations that lead to involvement with games, such as the search for socialization, personal achievements, or the exploration of new environments. Some scholars point out that risk factors include the life history of players, the use of gambling as a mechanism to escape daily responsibilities, the search for discharging repressed emotions such as anger, frustrations, and sadness, low self-esteem, and low self-efficacy (Oliveira et al., 2022).

Relationship between gambling addiction and depression

Several authors discuss the relationship between depression and problems associated with gambling, questioning how this connection occurs. It is questioned whether gambling disorder is the



cause of depression, due to its negative consequences, such as significant financial losses, conflicts in relationships or increased stress; or if, on the other hand, depression drives the individual to gamble compulsively as a way to fill an emotional or existential void. These aspects still lack more concrete and specific responses aimed at the Brazilian population (Santos, 2019).

According to experts, most compulsive gamblers face underlying problems such as mood disorder and depression (Gaming Addiction Can [...], 2018). Research indicates that prolonged exposure to gaming can negatively impact mood and psychological well-being, intensifying feelings of isolation and sadness, often linked to depression.

In addition, studies reveal a relationship between the type of gambling and the severity of depressive symptoms. Games that feature excessive competition, immediate rewards, and online interactions can increase frustration and feelings of powerlessness, especially when the desired results are not achieved. These elements, added to the tendency to isolation, can generate a cycle in which gaming addiction and depression feed each other, making it essential to implement psychological, medical and medication interventions, if applicable, and other complementary and alternative therapies appropriate to ludopathy (Gambling addiction causes [...], c2022-2024).

BETS: psychology as a tool for recovery

Health experts note that, with each cycle of game release, there is a significant increase in the number of people who develop gambling disorder and seek help, with this number stabilizing at a higher level than before. The ease of access to games – especially after the release of fixed-quota games in 2018, which can be done through websites and apps – contributes to this increase. In addition, the possibility of placing multiple bets and playing continuously worsens the problem due to the immediate gratifications available 24 hours a day (IPq, c2024)¹.

¹ *Pathological Gambling Outpatient Clinic (AMJO). It is part of the Integrated Outpatient Program for Impulse Disorders at IPq. **Psychiatrist interviewed by IPq interviewers.



As this is a relatively new topic, considering that betting will start its effective operations in January 2025 in Brazil, after the official release of the operating authorization (Brasil, 2023), an analysis was carried out on the website of a company that offers specialized support in the treatment of ludopathy. This company also works as a consultant for betting operators and offers exclusive service to players through a service center, with the purpose of encouraging responsible gambling. The company's mission includes providing support to those in need and assisting companies in implementing safe and conscious practices. This analysis aimed to understand how SOS Player intervenes in cases of ludopathy (Treinamentos [...], c2024-2025).

SOS Player, in the context of psychological approaches to gambling disorder with a focus on bets, offers psychological support for partner bets, with expert and experienced psychologists on the world of online gaming and its problems, promoting a less sick and more sustainable environment for both bettors and their employees (Training [...], c2024-2025).

They also offer tests for the exclusive use of Psychology professionals with active registration with the Regional Council of Psychology (CRP). There are several tests to prioritize early care for possible causes of mental illness, such as gambling disorder and, consequently, various associated symptoms, including depression, and also the treatment of pathological gambling addiction through online or face-to-face, group or individual consultations (Trainings [...], c2024-2025).

The importance of public policies for responsible gaming at BETS

The Brazilian legislation on online betting, sanctioned in December 2023, establishes a series of guidelines aimed at regulating sports betting (Brasil, 2023). Among these guidelines, the requirement that betting operators adopt responsible gaming practices stands out, aiming to minimize the risks associated with ludopathy and, consequently, depression. The new law creates a regulatory framework that not only legalizes betting, but also requires companies to commit to protecting players, which includes the implementation of tools that prevent addiction.



Betting companies (bets) are required to incorporate player protection mechanisms, as required by the new legislation. Among the main measures is the betting limitation, which seeks to restrict the total amount a player can bet within a certain period, and the self-exclusion feature, which allows the player to voluntarily leave the platform for a certain time as a form of prevention (Brasil, 2023). In addition, betting companies must offer psychological support to their users, providing guidance and shelter to players who show signs of problem gambling, including symptoms of depression.

According to Ordinance SPA/MF No. 1,231, of July 31, 2024 (Brazil, 2024), betting operators in Brazil are required to implement gambling addiction prevention programs. These programs should include awareness campaigns about the risks of gambling, as well as offering access to support services for at-risk players, such as psychological guidance and the development of self-control practices (Brasil, 2024).

The State, together with bookmakers, plays a key role in providing psychological resources and assistance to gamblers at risk. The new Brazilian legislation provides that operators provide emotional support lines, psychotherapy and other forms of assistance to players who show signs of gambling addiction. Such measures, in addition to preventing the development of more serious disorders and mitigating symptoms of depression, among others, are essential for the treatment of those who already suffer from ludopathy, promoting a faster and more effective recovery. The joint action of the State with bookmakers is, therefore, indispensable to ensure that responsible gambling is a real and efficient practice in Brazil (Brasil, 2024).

Group CBT: Fighting Depression Caused by BETS

With the growing popularity of sports betting in Brazil following its regulation in 2023, new mental health challenges emerge, mainly related to gambling addiction, which aggravate depressive symptoms and cause social and financial impacts (Ferreira, 2024; Nancy; Chiara, 2024; Olive tree; Scott; Silva, 2008). Specialized psychologists play a crucial role in the prevention and treatment of



these cases, as directed by the Regional Council of Psychology.

The combination of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) with group therapy is an effective strategy to mitigate depression associated with betting addiction. Yalom and Leszcz (2006) highlight that group therapy allows cohesion, support and exchange of experiences, essential to relieve isolation and emotional suffering. According to Osório (2003), group dynamics help to work on feelings of guilt and shame, common among gamblers, promoting empathy and reformulation of beliefs about addiction.

Judith S. Beck (2013) reinforces that CBT helps patients identify and modify dysfunctional thoughts that aggravate depression. In the context of addiction, CBT helps to restructure negative beliefs about gambling and compulsive behavior.

Studies show that CBT, both individually and in groups, reduces the frequency of gambling and improves self-efficacy, presenting lasting results (Hodgins; Peden, 2007). The approach provides emotional support and practical tools for cognitive and behavioral change, enhancing recovery, including in brief formats.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The expansion of online betting in Brazil has led to a significant increase in the number of people with addiction problems, who spend, on average, R\$ 20 billion monthly on digital platforms (IPq, c2024). This growth affects not only the financial, but also the social and family relationships and mental health of bettors, generating serious consequences such as suicide. A case reported by doctor Gabrielle Foppa, from UFRGS, involved a 28-year-old man who, after accumulating a debt of R\$ 10 thousand in bets, attempted suicide (IPq, c2024).

Since the regulation of betting, more than 2 thousand bets have started to operate in Brazil. Between July 2023 and June 2024, BRL 68.2 billion were moved in bets, equivalent to 0.6% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with BRL 24.2 billion being fees paid and only BRL 200 million in



prizes (José, 2024). In August 2024, Bolsa Família beneficiaries transferred BRL 3 billion via PIX for betting, according to data from the Central Bank (IPq, c2024).

With the new legislation, a portion of betting taxes will go toward mental health, a crucial measure given the rise in gambling-related disorders. Psychiatrist Daniel Spritzer, from the São Pedro Psychiatric Hospital, reinforces that the demand for treatment grows with the legalization of gambling (IPq, c2024). Betting companies invest heavily in advertising and sponsor football, in addition to using digital influencers to promote the game as an opportunity for easy profit, even if the law requires warnings about responsible gambling.

Studies show that gambling addiction is similar to chemical dependence, activating the brain's reward system and generating physical, financial, and social damage. A 2010 study indicates that 1.3% of Brazilians had gambling problems and 1% were considered pathological gamblers (IPq, c2024). Psychologist Ana Yaemi Hayashiuchi explains that, as with chemical dependency, it is difficult to control gambling addiction (IPq, c2024).

Vulnerable groups, such as LGBTQIA+ and low-income people, are especially affected by betting addiction. The LGBTQIA+ population invests considerably in games and runs mental health risks due to the social context. Young people from these minorities, when seeking support on social networks, are exposed to betting ads, which become a dangerous attraction.

Low-income people, who see betting as a chance to improve their financial situation, also end up compromising their income. In August 2024, Bolsa Família beneficiaries transferred approximately R\$ 3 billion to betting (Germano, 2024). The Bolsa Família program is intended to cover basic needs, but many divert this resource to gambling, which compromises their livelihood. After collecting this data, Minister Wellington Dias announced the blocking of Bolsa Família cards for use in betting to avoid compromising the minimum income (Maximum, 2024).

The Minister of Health, Nísia Trindade, highlighted the seriousness of the compulsion to gamble, comparing it to a “pandemic” and reinforcing the need to treat it as a public health issue (Ferreira, 2024).



Given the growing popularity of online betting and its impact on the financial and emotional lives of Brazilians, mental health care should be prioritized. The promotion of responsible gambling, together with the allocation of resources from betting for addiction treatment, is an indispensable strategy. Betting regulation and risk awareness policies are essential steps to mitigate the damage caused by addiction, promoting psychological support and preventing mental disorders. It is essential that psychologists and government initiatives work together to create a safer and healthier environment, helping in the recovery of individuals affected by this problem.

The topic still requires a lot of study, as it is a law in implementation and involves a lot of complexity, including with regard to adjustments to its rules, which can be changed.

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