

Gambling and Its Consequences – Qualitative Study of Pathological Gamblers



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BACKGROUND: Pathological gambling projects into all aspects of the life of a pathological gambler. The domains of relationships, finance, and health are affected the most. Any effective intervention aimed at preventing and treating pathological gambling must identify such phenomena and address them as a whole. **AIMS:** To describe the impacts of gambling in the Czech Republic at the individual level in the domains of family life, interpersonal relationships, employment, crime, finance, and health. **METHODS:** Semi-structured interviews focused on the impacts of gambling. **SAMPLE:** The sample consists of seven men who are ex-gamblers from the Bohnice Psychiatric Hospital, aged 21–55. **RESULTS:** The range of preferred games was wide: slots, roulette, poker, online bets, and lotteries (such as Keno and Sportka). The amount of money gambled

away ranged from CZK 400,000 to CZK 7,500,000 CZK (€15–280,000). Apart from a chance to have fun, relax, relieve their anxiety, and escape from reality, gambling had a wide range of negative consequences for these persons' lives which included debts, the loss of their freedom and hobbies, unemployment, breakups, the decline of their social status, and psychosomatic and psychiatric comorbidities (including suicidality). Gambling also had a negative influence on the gamblers' families and friends. **CONCLUSIONS:** Besides its financial impact, gambling in its problematic form caused a wide range of negative social and health consequences. The participants reported the disruption of their relationships (especially within the family) as the most painful loss caused by gambling.

KEY WORDS: ADDICTION – GAMBLING – PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLING – IMPACTS – TREATMENT

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