

***Problem gambling in Europe:
Why a regulatory authority needed***

Dr Mark Griffiths

Professor of Gambling Studies

International Gaming Research Unit

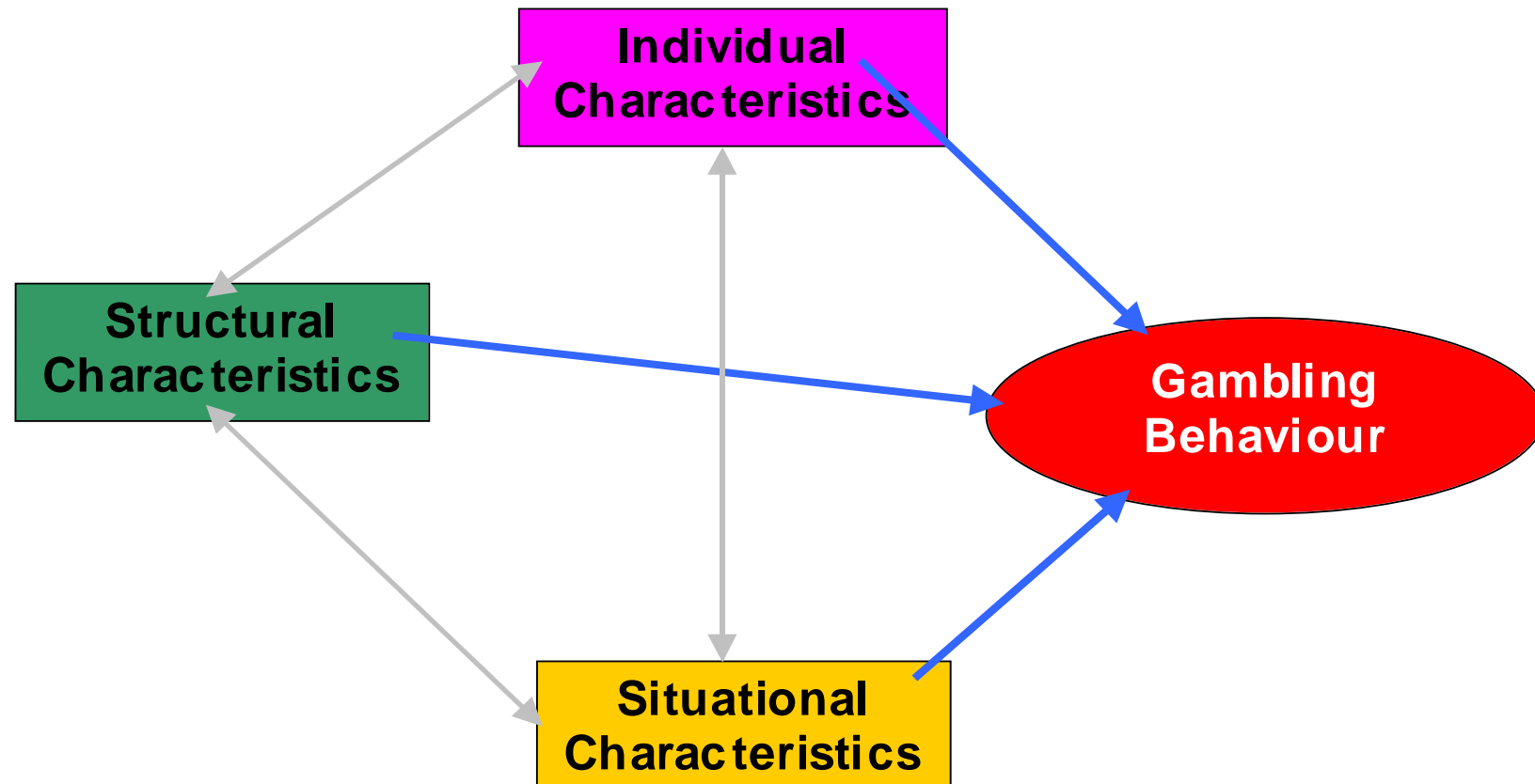
mark.griffiths@ntu.ac.uk

Overview of presentation

- Quality of information
- Problem gambling
- Problem gambling rates in Europe
- Adolescent gambling in Europe
- European problem gambling trends
- Problem gambling helpline data
- Conclusions
- (Importance of structural characteristics)

GLOBAL MODEL OF GAMBLING BEHAVIOUR

(Griffiths, 2006; Parke & Griffiths, 2007)



Quality of information

- Countries that have carried out national surveys on gambling and/or problem gambling of varying representativeness, quality and empirical rigour (i.e, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, The Netherlands, Lithuania, Sweden and Switzerland).
- Countries that have carried out research on gambling and/or problem gambling of varying representativeness, quality and rigour but at a regional and/or local level rather than a national level (i.e., Austria, France, Hungary, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain).
- Countries where almost nothing is known empirically about gambling and/or problem gambling (i.e., Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland and Portugal).

Problem gambling

- European research has consistently shown that problem gambling can negatively affect significant areas of a person's life.
- Includes their health, employment, finances, and interpersonal relationships.
- In addition, there are significant co-morbidities with problem gambling, including depression, alcoholism, and obsessive-compulsive behaviours.
- These co-morbidities may exacerbate, or be exacerbated by, problem gambling.
- Availability of opportunities to gamble and the incidence of problem gambling within a community are known to be linked.

Problem gambling rates in Europe

- Problem gambling rates in Europe appear to be similar to rates found elsewhere (typically 0.5%-2%), although a few countries (e.g., Estonia, Finland, Switzerland) have reported problem gambling prevalence rates of above 3%.
- Relatively few studies in Europe report prevalence rates for probable pathological gambling. However, results from these studies suggest broadly similar rates.
- For example, the current prevalence rates of probable pathological gambling (scoring 5 or more on the DSM-IV) in Great Britain was 0.3%, in Sweden 0.3%, in Iceland 0.6%, in Norway 0.3% and in Denmark 0.1%.

Adolescent gambling in Europe

- Results from studies in different European countries suggest that problem gambling among adolescents is considerably higher than among adults.
- Although problem gambling among adolescent samples tends to be higher than in adult samples, many of the participants used in these studies are either local surveys and/or use opportunistic or non-representative samples.
- However, in countries where there have been large samples with good representation (e.g., Great Britain), the problem gambling prevalence rate among adolescents is at least four to five times higher than in the adult population.

European problem gambling trends

- In terms of problem gambling by type of gambling, there appear to be some consistent trends across European jurisdictions that have done research.
- Prevalence studies in Europe have tended to report that problem gamblers are most likely to be electronic gaming machine (EGM) players including Estonia, Germany, Holland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.
- Other studies have also found similar results with adolescents reporting that the main type of problem gambling among adolescents is related to EGM play (e.g., Great Britain, Iceland and Lithuania).

Problem gambling helpline data

- Statistics from problem gambling helpline data show a growing proportion of problem gamblers contacting helplines or assessing treatment are identifying EGMs as their primary form of gambling.
- Many European countries report that problem EGM gamblers are most likely to seek treatment and/or contact national gambling helplines including:
 - Belgium (60%), Denmark (72%), Estonia (93%), Finland (66%), France (50%), Germany (83%), Great Britain (45%), Spain (75%), Sweden (35%).

Conclusions

- In terms of problem gambling, slot machine gambling appears to be the most problematic.
- Internationally, a growing proportion of problem gamblers contacting helplines or assessing treatment are identifying EGMs as their primary form of gambling
- However, caution may be required as these results tend to provide an indication of an association between problem gambling and machines and not a definitive proof
- In addition information on displayed around some forms of gambling (e.g., stickers on machines) may be more prominent than for others forms.

Importance of structural characteristics

- Three recent (and major) literature reviews have all concluded that it is widely held that gaming machines are more likely to lead to problem gambling than other forms of gambling
- They also suggested that a range of structural characteristics impact on gambling behaviour as pointed out for many years by other authors.
- Relevant primary structural characteristics include:

Structural characteristics

(Griffiths, 1993;1995; Parke & Griffiths, 2001; 2007)

Example: Slot machines

