

Problem Gambling in the Conceptualization of Health Professionals: A Qualitative Analysis of the Discourses Produced by Psychologists, Psychiatrists and General Practitioners

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Abstract : Different conceptualizations of disease affect patient care. This study aims to address this gap. It explores how health professionals conceptualize gambling problem, addiction and the goals of recovery process. In-depth, semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with Italian psychologists, psychiatrists, general practitioners, and support staff (N= 114), working within health centres for the treatment of addiction (public health services or therapeutic communities) or medical offices. A Lexical Correspondence Analysis (LCA) was applied to the verbatim transcripts. LCA allowed to identify two main factorial dimensions, which organize similarity and dissimilarity in the discourses of the interviewed. The first dimension labelled 'Models of relationship with the problem', concerns two different models of relationship with the health problem: one related to the request for help and the process of taking charge and the other related to the identification of the psychopathology underlying the disorder. The second dimension, labelled 'Organisers of the intervention' reflects the dialectic between two ways to address the problem. On the one hand, they are the gambling dynamics and its immediate life-consequences to organize the intervention (whatever the request of the user is); on the other hand, they are the procedures and the tools which characterize the health service to organize the way the professionals deal with the user's problem (whatever it is and despite the specificity of the user's request). The results highlight how, despite the differences, the respondents share a central assumption: understanding gambling problem implies the reference to the gambler's identity, more than, for instance, to the relational, social, cultural or political context where the gambler lives. A passive stance is attributed to the user, who does not play any role in the definition of the goal of the intervention. The results will be discussed to highlight the relationship between professional models and users' ways to understand and deal with the problems related to gambling.

Keywords : cultural models, health professionals, intervention models, problem gambling

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