

PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLING: AN ASSOCIATION WITH ALEXITHYMIA, PERSONALITY DISORDERS AND CLINICAL SYNDROMES

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Pathological gambling (PG) is a disorder recently conceptualized as a behavioural addiction, because of its neurobiological, neurophysiological and psychological features (American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders - 5th ed., 2013; Potenza et al., 2012). PG represents both a social and a sanitary cost, in terms of pharmacological and psychological therapies. The aim of this study was to examine the correlation between personality disorders, clinical syndromes and alexithymia levels in a group of pathological gamblers. Furthermore this study aimed at highlighting a relationship between PG and alexithymia, over and above the relationship between personality disorders, clinical syndromes and PG. Sixty treatment- seeking pathological gamblers and 60 healthy controls were included in the study. Psychological assessment included the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS), the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI-III) and the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20). Pathological gamblers displayed Axis I disorders, such as anxiety, somatoform symptoms, bipolar symptoms, dysthymia, thought disorders and major depression, as well as Axis II disorders such as depressive, antisocial, sadistic, passive-aggressive, self-defeating and paranoid disorders, and greater alexithymia levels. Alexithymia was detected in PG independently from the presence of other psychiatric disorders. Our data show that comorbid psychiatric disorders have been evidenced in PG. Interestingly alexithymia is related to PG independently from other psychopathological disorders, representing a relevant feature, helpful for assessing PG diagnosis and for orienting to the correct therapeutical strategy.

REFERENCES

- American Psychiatric Association. 2013. *American Psychiatric Publishing*
- Potenza et al., 2012 *Psychoph* 219(2):469-490